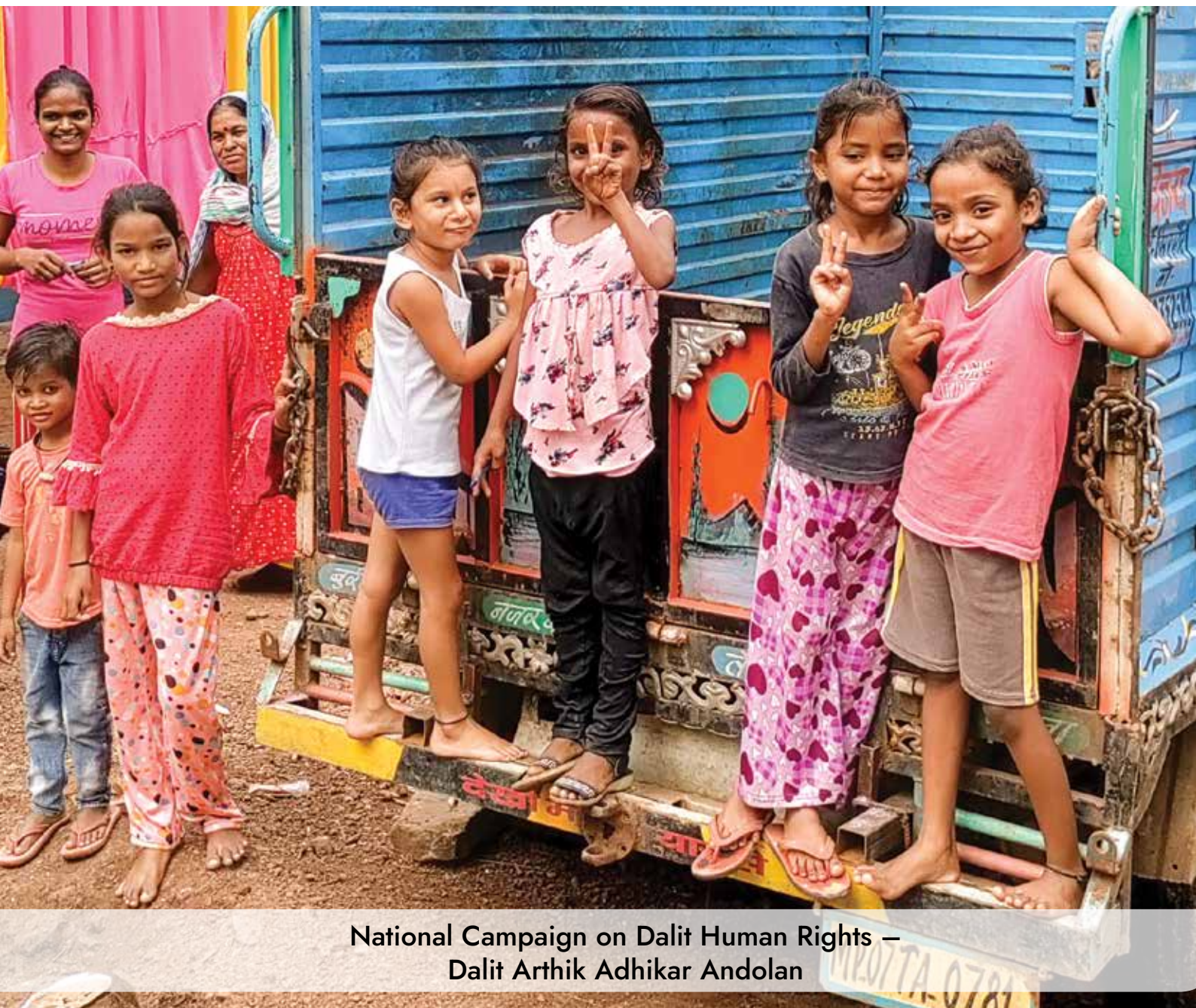


Dalit Women and Girl Sanitation Workers: Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent



National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights –
Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan



About Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan

Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan (DAAA) is a Unit of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and is working towards securing and strengthening the economic rights of the Dalit and Adivasis Community and believes strongly in bolstering the agency of the community. The main vehicle is through access to public entitlements like Livelihood schemes, education, entrepreneurship and asset building through the constitutional provisions of budgetary allocations.

DAAA believes strongly in the inclusion and promotion of marginalised communities in the economy of the country. DAAA makes strategic interventions in public policy, planning, budgeting, advocacy and research and implementation and monitoring of the SCP TSP sub-plans.

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December, 2022



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DEDICATION

To

All the Women & Girls belonging to Communities discriminated on
Work and Descent in South Asia

Particularly Nepal, Bangladesh & India
who, endowed with inborn dignity and inalienable rights,
are questioning the unjust system of centuries-old bondage;

who, in search of their humanity appropriated by dominant forces,
are fearless in fighting to regain it;

who, aware of the UN Policy of Sustainable Development Goals,
are committed to stake their claims towards accessing them;

who, envisioning a better future for themselves and their upcoming generations,
are hopeful of achieving it;

who, deeply imbued with a sense of solidarity of all human beings,
are keen to forge links with them all
to make this world

**A HOME OF ALL,
A HOME FOR ALL.**

Acknowledgements

This study has been a concerted effort we undertook along with the women sanitation workers and manual scavengers. We acknowledge the contribution and strength of all the women sanitation workers and manual scavengers of Pune and Madhya Pradesh who welcomed us and shared their life and experiences with us. Their narratives are the mainstay of our study. The study would not have been possible without them who took the time to speak with the team.

The team is also grateful to the colleagues from the partnering organisations, Dr. Hemangi Kadlak for their support in conducting the primary research and their valuable comments during the preparation of this report. Their support goes a long way in ensuring human rights for the Dalit women engaged in manual scavenging and sanitation work, especially during the critical time of COVID-19.

Foreword

As per the Global Slavery Index 2016, India is home to 8 million people still bonded by the different forms of modern slavery. The gravity and intensity of the problem are on rise almost every day challenging the constitutional provisions of fundamental rights. More than 5 million people in India are working as sanitation workers and 50 percent women workforce are in the urban setting and exclusively work as manual scavengers cleaning and carrying human excreta manually, every day. Unlike other countries, in India, sanitation work is caste-driven and poverty-ridden. The socially outcast communities locally called 'Dalits' are historically and culturally forced into the clutches of this unclean occupation, deteriorating further down with the practice of untouchability, the notion of purity and pollution. The shackles of this work and descent-based discrimination in India has its root back in the Vedic ages when Dalits were historically discriminated pressed under the four castes of the Hindu society. This country has seen many changes technologically, and advancements in science and is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, but still, communities based on caste and descent are bonded to this system of caste that further marginalizes them in the society.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 has prohibited the construction of dry latrines and employment of manual scavengers, but dry latrines are still in existence and women are still cleaning them. Sanitation workers face challenges to enroll in rehabilitation schemes. Women and girls are the worst victims of discrimination often called 'Triple Dalits' lashed by Caste, Gender and Poverty. Adolescent girls are forced to pick up the broom and bucket and follow the elder women of their family due to poverty and the societal pressure to carry on the work succumbing to the fear and terror spread by the dominant caste if any Dalit woman denies doing this menial generational work. The latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows the growing number of crimes against women belonging to the DWD communities along with National Family Health Survey (NFHS) reports showing the worsening health conditions of the DWD women and children in the country.

This report is a product of close interaction and engagement with the women and girls' sanitation workers of the two states in India- Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Understanding the issues and challenges of daily life from their lens, and the hurdles in accessing their rights and entitlements have been the focus of this report. Readers shall find this report insightful and informative about the lived realities and stories of the women and girls discriminated on work and descent. Their voices are unheard and their lives are invisibilized due to the stigma attached to what they are doing. This report will further provide the readers with an analysis of existing schemes and budget allocation for the sanitation workers in the country and the lacunae which must be imperatively addressed by the government and society at large.

I would like to thank the many brave and bold women who told us their stories despite the risks and daily struggles, their grit and determination will hopefully lead to changes and the complete elimination of this practice. I would like to thank Juno Varghese and Kalpana Bishwakarma for this research report, Adikanda Singh, Dolly Paswan, Manish Kumar and Rashmi Beck for providing the data; Aparna Prabhu, Prachi Salve, Rihanna Mansuri for the primary data collection and inputs.

I also appreciate Fr. Aloysius Irudayam, Mr. Paul Divakar Namala, Sweta Ghimirey and Dr. Vinayaraj for your inputs and guidance. I hope this can be used as a tool to further strengthen the campaign for the elimination of women engaged in manual scavenging. Thus, I anticipate and believe that this report shall be their voice and their stories must be heard NOW to take urgent action!

In solidarity,



Ms Beena Pallical
General Secretary
National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights -
Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan

Abbreviations

1.	CDWD	COMMUNITY DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT
2.	CSO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION
3.	ILO	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION
4.	NCRB	NATIONAL CRIME RECORD BUREAU
5.	SDG	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
6.	RTI	RIGHT TO INFORMATION
7.	PEMSR	PROHIBITION OF EMPLOYMENT OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS AND THEIR REHABILITATION ACT
8.	ST	SCHEDULED TRIBE
9.	SC	SCHEDULED CASTE
10.	ADRF	ASIA DALIT RIGHT FORUM
11.	FGD	FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION
12.	GDP	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
13.	NFHS	NATIONAL FAMILY AND HEALTH SURVEY
14.	ACAR	AMBEDKAR CENTRE FOR ACTION AND RESEARCH
15.	EWS	ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTION
16.	SNDT	SHREEMATI NATHIBAI DAMODAR THACKERSEY
17.	PCRA	PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACT
18.	POA	PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES
19.	SRMS	SCHEMES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE MANUAL SCAVENGERS
20.	NSFDC	NATIONAL SCHEDULED CASTE FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
21.	NBCFDC	NATIONAL BACKWARD CLASSES FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
22.	NSKFDC	NATIONAL SAFAI KARAMCHARIS FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
23.	MGNREGA	MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT
24.	FY	FINANCIAL YEAR
25.	CES	CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT STUDIES
26.	NSSO	NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY OFFICE
27.	SECC	SOCIO ECONOMIC AND CASTE CENSUS
28.	PDS	PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SCHEME
29.	BE	BUDGET ESTIMATE
30.	NCHDR	NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS
31.	UN	UNITED NATIONS
32.	UNICEF	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

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Executive Summary

“Slavery does not merely mean a legalised form of subjection. It means a state of society in which some men are forced to accept from others the purposes which control their conduct.”

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

India is home to 1.4 billion people belonging to diverse cultures, customs, languages, and religions and one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Indeed, the country has a rich heritage, and its contribution to the global family is immeasurable and a pioneer of the non-violence movement. Like every other civilisation, India witnessed many rise and fall. The battles for Human Rights were and are being fought every century, every day. India fights its battle for Human rights every day and in every aspect. The largest democracy is still bonded by the prevalence of modern slavery and its manifestation in different forms and intensities. The constitution of India has guaranteed fundamental rights for Indian citizens. It is operated through the three wings of government, but often we have witnessed the misbalance and the havoc created as an outcome.

The manifestation of modern slavery-like practices is prevalent in society. More than 8 million are bonded by one form of slavery or another, as per the report published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). India ranks 135th in the Global index of the gender gap. As per the Oxfam report on inequality kills, the economic disparity between the top 10 most affluent in the country and the remaining is very high and ever-expanding. The surge of the COVID-19 pandemic made the rich richer and inversely affected the bottom class. Who is this bottom class? These historically and socially discriminated communities are based on caste,

work, and descent. They are forced into the vicious cycle of the intergenerational slavery-like practice of forced labour because they are born into a specific class. Here, a person's caste supersedes their virtue. The ideology of caste-based social hierarchy plagues society so formed which has dismantled human rights systematically in the community. More than 5 million people in India are into sanitation and manual scavenging work in India, not by choice but by force. Forces powerful as religion, caste, class, and poverty. The bondage thus created is for the whole bloodline which follows. Sanitation work is exclusively mandated to the 'Dalit' community, a community discriminated against on work and descent.

Sanitation work in India is caste driven. The perspective and the mentality of society, taking them as lesser humans, denied them equal rights to live and to be treated equally and as a human. The prevention of atrocities act was passed in 1989 to safeguard the lives of scheduled castes and tribes. However, the current NCRB data shows that atrocities are increasing. By the end of the year 2021, 70,818 cases of atrocities against Dalits were pending, which means 96% of cases of atrocities against Dalits were pending in court. Even today, Dalit women and girl sanitation workers are forced to manually clean and pick the human excreta from dry latrines and carry them overhead in the wee hour. The earnings depend upon the mercy of the dominant caste household to whom they provide service. Denial to do the

Sanitation work in India is caste driven. The perspective and the mentality of society, taking them as lesser humans, denied them equal rights to live and to be treated equally and as a human.

same would incite violence, abuse, and torture to them and their families. Moreover, women are raped to provoke the community and ignite terror among the Dalit Community. As per the data, three Dalit women are raped daily, and 13 are murdered daily.

India is a signatory to the global community forum of the United Nations and aspires to reach the 17 Sustainable development goals by 2030. Set goals on reducing poverty & inequality, gender justice, water, and sanitation are closely related to the DWD community more than any other community as their survival surrounds this area, and their marginalisation has direct roots in this area. Thus, the DWD community, especially women and girls, must be considered when considering the sustainability of these SDGs.

DWD women and girls' sanitation work are the most deprived and marginalised section within the Dalit community. They are often called "Triple Dalit" because they are discriminated against three times more than their male counterparts. In rural India, women and girls of the DWD community are exclusively working as manual scavengers of the dominant caste neighbourhood and manually cleaning the human excreta, and 50% of the urban sanitation workers are women working as toilet cleaners, sweepers, garbage pickers and are forced to do manual labour without the provision of protective gear or some time with a poor quality of safety kits such as gloves and mask.

Even during the pandemic access to safety gears hardly reached most DWD communities.

The threefold discrimination of caste, gender, and poverty has led DWD female sanitation workers into the vicious cycle of injustice and inequality. They are forced to do manual scavenging because they are not educated. In India, education is still a privilege that is preferred mainly for boys than a girl, and with poverty at home, education is denied for girls in extreme poverty; as a result of which, we see minor girls picking garbage with their siblings carried in the bag and are given off to early marriage. Patriarchy is an added burden to this when women and girls are expected to manage and balance the domestic chores with the scavenging work along with the responsibility of taking care of their minors and elders in the family and also become the victim of domestic violence by their alcoholic husband and male figure in the family. DWD women and girl sanitation workers are discriminated against both outside and inside of their homes; unlike other women of the Indian society, they cannot stay home and manage household chores which somehow minimises the external violence and discrimination, but the women of DWD community are denied of every right and freedom and left vulnerable in every alley and avenue of the society. It is to be remembered that the majority of crimes against women and half of the cases of atrocities against scheduled caste and scheduled tribes are of the violence and crimes against the DWD women simply

because of their caste, work, and descent. At work, there is no equal pay, no financial and job security, no facilities for transport to the far-off workstation, and no provision of safe and clean drinking water and equipment. These women and girls are unorganised labour with no rights and privileges. There is no upward movement in this socially, culturally, and historically mandated forced work.

This study is a small endeavour to understand the key issues and challenges pertaining mainly to the DWD women and girl sanitation workers in the country who are succumbed to this intergenerational forced labour, a form of modern slavery that is continuously enslaving a whole community because they are born to a particular caste, work, and descent. The intersectionality of caste, gender, and poverty, as one of the sections of the study, explains how women and girls are bonded by this vicious cycle and are openly exploited in many forms by society and the national reports on the

crimes against them and lack of consideration of the DWD women and children in the SDGs are also highlighted to argue the sustainability scope of the SDGs particularly SDG 5,6, 7,8 and 10. Commendable work and findings of various Civil society organisations, Women groups, research institutes, National data and survey reports, and focused group discussions conducted in the states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are the backbone of this study. This study is a product of all those voices, arguments, and findings gathered from primary and secondary data sources. In community settings, the focus group discussions were conducted with the DWD Women and girls sanitation workers in these two states. As a result, insight into some active Civil society organisation & research institutes were gathered from these states. In addition, critical informants individuals were also reached who belong to this community and are working actively for the DWD women and girls sanitation workers.

Some of the Major findings and arguments

- The existence of dry latrines and women manual scavengers from the DWD community questions the Human rights enshrined in the fundamental rights of articles 14,15,17,21 and so on. As per the 2011 Census, there were 2.6 million dry latrines in India and 5 million DWD communities engaged in sanitation work, with 50% women in the urban sector and manual scavenging mandated to women only in rural areas. As per the latest report published by The Wire, the RTI filed by them shows that 70 % of manual scavengers in 14 Indian states are women.
- A.

- The identification of Manual scavengers under the PESMR act of 2013 has refused to identify a large number of DWD women as manual scavengers for them to access the
- B. Rehabilitation of Manual scavengers' schemes on the ground of their migration and lack of documents. The migration issue must be adequately addressed by providing a solution so that these women are not left behind and denied their rights and entitlement.

- Despite the existing Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes act of 1989, the NCRB report shows an increase in the case of atrocities and crimes against women, indicating the poor execution of the deeds on the ground and lack of cooperation and caste-ridden mindset of the service provider and the Bureaucracy. As said, 'delayed justice is justice denied' and so is the situation of the DWD community in the country.
- C.

Some Recommendations

- A. The diversion of allocation of ST/ SC schemes has to be curbed, and more direct strategies which percolate down and reach the DWD community should be made and ensured. The rehabilitation has to be multi-dimensional for the accurate restoration of the DWD community.
-

- B. Laws and enforcement for the protection of the rights of the DWD community have to be made stringent and timely execution of scheme benefits is crucial for the benefits to be reached by the DWD community for their rehabilitation. SOP should be made to identify the manual scavengers through a survey that is not ambiguous and should also consider the migrated community from one region to another.
-

- C. The government must ensure that the private agencies and hiring companies are responsible for the safety and security of the sanitation workers in their workspace, along with the provision of modern tools and equipment which ensure their safety at work.
-

- D. The international bodies are to understand and acknowledge the issue of DWD communities in India, communities which are discriminated against, work and descent, and represent the large workforce in the informal sector of the countries denied justice and Human Rights. The Human Rights Defenders at the national, regional, and global levels are to be supported and heard, paving the way for the equal representation of the DWD communities in the global platform to discuss and debate the Human Rights issue and the need for the policy and mechanism to eliminate this discrimination based on work and decent.
-

- E. The government database and reports are to be made transparent and accessible to the people to understand the ongoing situation at home and how the solution can be debated, discussed, and implemented for the eradication of manual scavenging in the country and rehabilitation of those engaged in this occupation through a multi-dimensional approach to solution and sustainability of the same.
-

1. Introduction

India and Global Indexes of 2022

India is one of the largest democracies in the world and the most populated country in the world. India is known for its rich histories, cultures and languages, Yoga, colourful cities and many other things. India is also a home to some of the biggest multi-millionaires of the world and many important global political personalities, scientist and other eminent personalities have their roots in India. Indians are still a huge workforce in the American and the European countries and the recent trends in the migration also highlights the massive migration of Indian nationals to the Arab countries such as Dubai, Qatar and other countries. Our people are providing excellent services in the field of science and technologies, business, medicine etc in most of these countries. On one hand, India seems to be developing and progressing rapidly but on the other hand, millions of the people are still struggling for the basic necessities of life.

As per the Oxfam report on 'Inequality Kills,' in 2021, the incomes of the 100 wealthiest people in India hold half of the country's wealth, whereas the remaining shares are only 13 percent. During the Covid 19 Pandemic, 84% of Indians' income declined massively, and the number of Indian billionaires increased to the contrary. The report further highlights how the allocation to health has fallen and the

need to generate revenue to invest in education and health. Privatizing health and education is another enabler of growing inequality in the country. Looking at the ranking of India in various global indexes in 2022, India ranks 2nd in global population, 136th in the World happiness report 2022 (United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network), 135th in the global gender gap report 2022 (World Economic Forum) it was 140th earlier, which indicates improvement. Ranks 180th, a bottom position in the Global Environment Performance Index 2022 (Yale and Columbia University researchers). India ranked 107 out of 171 countries in the Global Hunger Index.

At the bottom of this growing inequality, marginalisation, and injustice, many people of a particular community are trodden at the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. This community has been forcefully kept there all the time. This community is the people who are discriminated on the ground of caste and descent and are known as 'Dalit' in India. And within this, Dalit women and girl sanitation workers are at the bottommost of the bottom. The genesis of this discrimination and marginalisation based on work and descent goes back to the times of Vedas, which divided the Indian society into different caste hierarchies such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras, and Dalits were so impure that their existence was not even acknowledged and thus dumped below the order created by the people belonging to the topmost section of this hierarchy.

Women and children are disproportionately affected by forced labour. 99% are victims of the commercial sex industry and 58% in other sectors, and 4 million people are in forced labour imposed by state authorities.

Sanitation works as a form of Modern Slavery in India.

Modern slavery is acknowledged in sustainable development goal 8, and all 193 countries are the signatories to this global goal to be achieved by 2030. The goal is committed to “take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.” India is one of the signatories of the same. Indian constitution prohibited slavery through The Indian Slavery Act of 1843. The term modern slavery has not been legally acknowledged or used, but the forms of contemporary slavery are prevalent in India, like in many countries of the world.

As per the report, ‘The Global Estimates of Modern Slavery’ published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are 50 million people bonded by Modern Slavery globally, and India ranks 53rd with 8 million persons in modern slavery among 167 countries worldwide. There are 5.4 victims of modern slavery for every 1,000 people worldwide, and 1 in 4 victims of modern slavery are children. Women and children are disproportionately affected by forced labour 99% are victims of the commercial sex industry and 58% in other

sectors, and 4 million people are in forced labour imposed by state authorities. The study published by ADRF states, “India has the highest absolute number of people living in modern slavery worldwide, followed by China and Pakistan.” In India, Sanitation work in India is caste-exclusive work and one form of modern slavery. More than 1.5 million people are engaged in sanitation work, and 98% of them are Dalits. With 50% of women working as sanitation workers in urban areas, Manual Scavenging of human excreta is exclusively done by women in Rural India.

Sanitation work in India is still done manually and at large with bare hands and age-old tools such as brooms, shovels, sticks, buckets, and weaved baskets. In addition, sinkholes, utility holes, and sewage demand the person to handle manually sinking in the dirty water and poisonous gases, compromising the safety of one’s life. According to Safai Karamchari Andolan, 472 manual scavengers died between 2016 to 2021.

Sanitation work: Historical and Cultural Discrimination based on Caste and descent.

The four Varna/ Caste system in India has its roots back to the Hindu doctrines. People were

divided by the Varna according to the work they do and thus that become their entitlement. The Brahmins were the top most group who were temple priest, followed by the Kshatriyas- the military or the ruling class, Vaisas were business class people such as merchants, agriculture farmers, cattle rearing etc. and the last varna in this order is Sudra who were placed at the lowest level of the caste hierarchy and were mostly engaged as artisans and the labourers. Below the four distinguished Varna lies Dalits who are called the most impure, unclean and termed as untouchables. Dalit communities are social group who are mostly engaged in the unclean occupation in the country such as manual cleaning of the human excreta, dead animals, Leathers work and other unclean business. Caste division is believed to be the divine law created by God himself and must be followed by the Human being without any questions. The ancient scriptures from Rig Vedic period and manusmriti talks about the chaturvarna and functioning of the society. Deviance from such assigned function would mean denial to God's order. Such religious and cultural sanctioning of work has done injustice to those who falls on the lower strata of the caste division, as they are termed polluted because of their work, untouchable because they touch, cleans the dirt, human excreta and other unclean things. This socially sanctioned occupation robbed them of dignity, freedom, and of course a humane way of life. Dalit are outcast and thrown away from the mainstream society, their hamlets and villages were always made to be secluded, far from the other community and common resources. There is hardly any mention of the lives of Dalits, their stories and their history in historical textbooks. Dalit has always been oppressed in many ways and their stories never found their way into our historical textbooks.

Because of the cultural sanctioning of sanitation work to Dalits, the whole community and generations are caught in the vicious cycle of oppression and poverty. Even the domestic animals in India gets more respect, love and compassion than any living Dalit human. There is no upward mobility in the social hierarchy

for Dalit. Even at this 21st century, Dalits are far behind, years behind to justice, equality and social freedom. No matter how educated, efficient and competent one is, a Dalit is Dalit first, no Dalit is immune to rub the tag of 'untouchable' from their head, the society is blinded to see other than the tag of Dalit. Dalit's work and services are accepted, but respect is denied. Most Dalit communities, collectively called 'Dalit,' are the most prominent communities discriminated against based on work and descent. It is to be noted here that this discrimination also exists in other religious societies. No Dalit in this land and Diaspora communities are free from the shackles of the caste they are born into. This Historical discrimination has given birth to cultural, social, economic, and Political bias against the CDWD in India.

It 'is still at large Culturally and socially forced labor.

In India, religion and culture are rooted so deeply in the social fabric that not a single person is free from the obligations it puts on the people. These religious obligations, cultures, and customary practices challenge the rationality and radical thoughts it perceives as foreign to its belief system. The generational transfer of caste identity has ruined the lives of Dalits into the hand of the dominant caste and the system they thrive on. Dalits are forced to do menial and caste work, and there is no room for escape as society never lets you forgive that Dalits are untouchable and impure. Thus no one would spare them rooms to choose any other profession that one is entitled to. Caste-based discrimination is an everyday reality for the Dalit; in some parts of the country, in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, Dalits are still not allowed to work in slippers in the upper caste neighbourhood, Women manual scavengers are forced to work in the wee hour before the upper caste neighbourhood wakes up, the job needs to get done by then. These women have to stand in the distance to get paid

in overnight surplus food of the upper house or paid Rs. 30 per household per month. Dalits are still denied to use of shared water resources, denied entry to the temple, and must walk within distance so that their shadow does not cast over upper caste people. Recently in Rajasthan, a schoolboy was beaten to death by the headmaster because he drank water from the pot for the upper caste teachers. In another incident, two minor Dalit girls were hung up by trees after being raped by upper-caste men. Sanitation workers are socially sanctioned work for Dalits. Their work has always been their identity for society. However, there are numerous instances when Dalits are denied their capacities, education, and skills, forcing them back into the pit of sanitation work, a work considered Impure, unclean, and untouchable.

Denial of Basic Human Rights, freedom of choice, and right to equal opportunities are compromised.

In India, casteism has questioned the foundation of its democratic ideas and principles laid in the Constitution of India. The fundamental rights of Articles 14,15,16, 21, and 22 talk about the rights and freedom of the Indian citizen irrespective of Caste and Creed, race, sex, religion, occupation, etc., but an entire Dalit community of India struggles to live even a decent life, a typical peaceful day and night. Denial of fundamental human rights is at every level against the DWD community. The practice of untouchability though legally prohibited, is still practiced in India, which has stolen the basic human rights in Indian society. Dalits are considered lesser humans in society. Their dignity is compromised, and the violence against the DWD community is an everyday incidence, as per the NCRB data, per the NCRB report of "Crime in India" for crime-related statistics in 2021, by the end of the year 2021, 70,818 cases of atrocities against Dalits were

pending which means 96% cases of atrocities against Dalit were pending in the court. Freedom of choice and freedom to profess any profession has been culturally and institutionally denied to the DWD communities. The children of the DWD communities are socially expected to continue the sanitation work and pass it on to the next generation. Children of garbage pickers, sewage cleaners, and manual scavengers can still be seen working with their parents in cleaning work. During the Covid 19 pandemic, as shared by the workers that the children of sanitation workers were picked from homes by the contractors for work due to shortage of labours. People were scared to come out of their house and sanitation workers were forced to pick contaminated dirt and garbage from the containment areas as well and there was no denying of work. They were forced to do it to sustain their lives.

Rohith Chakravariti Vemula, a Ph.D. scholar at the university of Hyderabad, and Dr. Payal Salman Tadvi were forced to commit suicide because of severe bullying, discrimination, and abuse in this society. Their education, aspiration, skills, and struggles were strangled by Casteism because the upper caste is entitled to mock and degrade any Dalit irrespective of one's education, capacity, talent, etc.; nothing matters more than 'Caste.'

The predominance of upper caste and the systematic discrimination and marginalisation of DWD communities has restricted their upper mobility. This intergenerational work is a fixed periphery that has boxed the DWD community, and there is no upper movement, promotion, and improvement in working conditions, wages, and others. Due to this forced and socially mandated forced labour, most Dalit lack the skills and capacities to help them step outside the box and try alternative livelihood options.

Intersectionality of Caste, Poverty, and gender in DWD on Dalit women sanitation workers/ Dalit women sanitation workers as CDWD from the spectrum of Caste, Poverty, and Gender.

It is said that Dalit women are triple Dalit meaning they are the most marginalised and vulnerable due to their Caste, Gender and Poverty. According to UNICEF, India is home to 31 million orphaned children, with nine out of Ten being girl children. UNICEF reports further that in India, it is estimated that every year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India; still, 16 percent of adolescent girls in the country are married. Poverty, gender, and caste are some of India's decisive determinants of child marriage. This points to CDWD children being this context's most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. India is home to diverse cultures, customs, and communities, histories beyond texts and verbal sharing. Women in every culture are somehow always marginalized, oppressed, and discriminated against in one form or the other in every community existing in India.

The caste factor is the birthmark of every Dalit woman she cannot get rid of. Caste overrides capacity, skills, aspiration, and, most importantly, the fundamental rights to live life with dignity, freedom of choice, and every human right established for humanity. More than 1.5 million Dalits working as sanitation workers in the country face caste-based discrimination daily. Dalit women are forced to do caste-assigned work without vertical or horizontal movement. There is ample incidence in the country where the Dalit children were forced to clean the toilet, school premises, and even beaten to death because of caste. Dalit women and girls are more vulnerable to atrocities and other crimes than other women and girls of different castes

because of their caste identity. Dalit women as CDWD are cheap bonded labour in India. As per the PRIA report, 50% of urban sanitation workers are women in India. Women manual scavengers are the primary workforce in rural areas. Caste has indeed denied them their fundamental rights and freedom guaranteed by the constitution of India.

'Caste work' as a Discrimination on work and descent is something that no one in Dalit communities can escape; in fact, society would never let you forget the caste you are born in. In the largest democracies of the world, India is still crippled by the caste system, which often questions the foundation of its democratic ideas and principles, which are laid in the Constitution of India.

Their caste has forced them into this pit of sanitation work, and there is no escape from the shackles of caste. Discrimination in the workplace is prevalent in the form of physical, sexual, mental, and verbal abuse because of their work and descent. They are called by their caste name and not by their name with an intent to attack their dignity. Dalit Caste and surname are often regarded as degrading insults in society. They are indeed socially and culturally forced labour in India. In Rural India, Women sanitation workers, especially those working as manual scavengers, start collecting Human Excreta in the wee hours when the whole neighbourhood is still sleeping. Although safety kits and measures were barely given to them even during the COVID-19 pandemic, their safety was compromised, as shared by the respondents during the discussion, that they were handed gloves, masks, and sanitizer were of low quality and could not be used regularly.

Generational poverty is another aspect that has made this CDWD the country's most marginalised and vulnerable community. This again has its roots in caste discrimination created centuries ago fuelled by the Patriarchal social institution. As per the all-India report on the agriculture census of 2015-16, only 9% of the country's total land is owned by Dalits. It is to be noted that Dalit women are still struggling to fight for their land rights within their families. As

94 million

Dalits out of 283 million live in Multi-dimensional Poverty

1.5 million

Dalits work as sanitation workers in the country

9%

of India's total land owned by Dalits

Intersectionality of Caste, Poverty, and Gender in DWD

75% Dalit women face problems in accessing healthcare

55.9% Frail women are Dalits women of the age group 25-49 years.

per the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021, 94 million Dalits out of 283 million live in Multi-dimensional Poverty. Sanitation workers CDWD earns nearly Rs 900/-per month in some parts of the country, Rs 4000/- in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra even to this day, as shared by the women from this community during the discussion. Yet, not a single woman owns a home or other property.

The cascading effect of poverty can be seen in every aspect of their daily life. As per the NFHS data, 75% of Dalit women faces problems in accessing health care, and the average age of death for Dalit women is 14.6 years younger than for higher caste women. As per the NFHS report, 55.9% of frail women are Dalits women of the age group 25-49 years. The atrocities against Dalit women are also on the rise.

Gender demarcates the privileges, confines freedom, and induces vulnerability among the women of this community. Being a woman has added one more burden in the life of these sanitation workers and girls. Dalit women 's bodies are battlefields for wars between men of different communities. According to the NCRB data, atrocities and crimes against women have increased. As per the source, the issues of rape against SC women and minors account for 7.64%, and kidnapping of women and children accounts for 17.8% of SC women.

Adolescent girls are forced to follow the footprints of their mothers and women generations before them. In rural areas, girls are compelled to go for manual scavenging with their mothers early in the morning. If their

working mothers fall sick, girls are forced to work on their behalf, and there is no denial; otherwise, the upper caste people would threaten them and force them to work by any means. Women in rural areas exclusively do manual scavenging. It is indeed socially and culturally sanctioned forced labor. They are compelled to balance both work and domestic chores without any fault. Adolescent girls are given off to marriage when a suitor is chosen by their family and within their caste only. Gender roles are tough to break free from for the community. For all the menial work they do, in rural areas, women are paid less than Rs.30.00 a day and sometimes delivered in food grain, which is not enough to sustain the family. In urban settings, women are paid less than men, and their job demands continuous bending. The prolonged struggle has evoked many diseases related to skin and breathing problems due to their regular contact with dirt and garbage.

These women face daily verbal, sexual, and mental abuse from their male counterparts, contractors, and supervisors. Because they are unorganized labourers, they are not given any leave or other perks, and even a day's rest would risk them losing half of their monthly wages. They are also the victims of domestic violence at home, as found that the majority of the men engaged in sanitation work are into alcohol and substance abuse. Although most of the respondents during the FGD shared that alcohol consumption is common among men, sanitation workers and domestic violence at home are sometimes familiar scenarios.

Sustainable Development Goals and DWD community.

India is a signatory to the sustainable development Goal 2030 and working towards achieving the 17 SDGs. These 17 Goals are universal and complement the development goals of all the existing countries. Altogether, achieving these 17 goals would provide a holistic and sustainable development essential to sustain all life, habitat, and ecosystem, in short, our planet EARTH.

'Development is Subjective'. Perspective and the narrative differ from one to another. Development is often calculated in terms of GDP, advance in science, technology, medicine and other feats, it is meant to make life easier every day. All these development in different sectors are also divided unequally, and many a times it is inaccessible and unattainable by the DWD community in India.

In the context of India, the Sustainable development goals seem very promising and desirable. However, India's economic disparity between the mainstream society, Dalits, Minorities, and Scheduled tribes is remarkable. This gap has been fuelled more by the COVID-19 pandemic, which shattered the economy of every country. As per the report published by Oxfam, 40 new pharma billionaires were created during the first year of Covid 19 Pandemic, and the income of 84% of households fell in the year 2021. The wealth of the Indian Billionaire shot up by 39% in Covid. The rich became more affluent during the pandemic expanding the economic gap further between the rich and the poor. As per the article in The Hindu, in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 crores of school children suffered, of which 84% were from rural areas. As per the same report published by Oxfam, dropout rates were likely to increase among Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim children. Women lost their employment during the pandemic, and Oxfam report says that women's unemployment rose by 15%, resulting in a loss of India's GDP of 15 trillion rupees. It is sad to

acknowledge that the report stated that 23.5% of women were less likely to be re-employed after the pandemic.

SDG 6, clean water and sanitation, is one of the crucial goals which all countries aspire to achieve. These goals are imperative and essential for the basic survival needs. As per the report published by International Development Enterprises (IDE) in India 76 million people are without access to safe drinking water and India has only 4% of worlds' fresh water. Women in the country spend 150 million worm days every year for fetching and carrying water which of calculated accounts to loss of 10 million rupees a year.

Unfortunately, billions of people are still struggling for clean and drinkable water. In many third-world countries, water is one of the most misused resources as a result of human action, which has jeopardised the life of other organisms that share the same habitat and ecosystem as humans. India has a diverse relief and habitat with unequal distribution of natural resources. In many parts of the countries where drinking water is readily available, DWD communities are denied access to such natural water resources because of their caste and the notion of caste pollution. Due to these, women and adolescents walk miles and miles to fetch water from distant places.

The gender factor is one of the crucial factors in the country's wealth creation, especially in India. Patriarchy is deeply embedded in the social fabric of the nations, which in fact, has a direct relation with the countries' economy and development aspects. Women comprise one of the large workforces of the countries, leading in the agriculture, labour, and tea industries. Drudgery has resulted in many life-threatening diseases among women reducing their lifespan. Despite spending half of their time in manual work, they are paid less than men for the same and equal work based on gender. Therefore, their security, health, and well-being are compromised and seldom considered. Talking about Gender, People who do not conform to the societal norm of

identifying their sexuality have the battle to face lifelong apart from other life struggles. People belonging to LGBTQ+A are not even accepted by society and still struggle to be acknowledged for their existence in society and government data, workplaces, public places, etc.

After the Lifting of the pandemic-induced lockdown, these SDGs have become essential and the need of the hour. The class and caste hierarchy are crucial in India as it is a parameter that decides the future, freedom, and entitlement that one shall have in this lifetime. The socio-economic inequalities in India are determined by many factors apart from income factors. Determinants such as caste and creed, education, gender, etc., are prominent factors in defining inequalities in India.

SDGs 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 of all 16 goals are some core areas where the DWD community is marginalized and discriminated on the basis of caste, work, and descent. In India, these goals cannot be achieved unless it addresses the DWD communities as the most disadvantaged and backward having less accessibility to safe drinking water, gender equality and equal opportunity. Education, clean water and sanitation, gender equality, decent work, economic growth, and reduced inequalities goals are intricately linked to Caste in India. The report "Caste discrimination is blocking the progress on the SDGs, published by BONDS, has thrown light on the SDGs and their relevance to caste and inequalities. As per the statistic published by AISHE 2019-20, the total enrolment of Schedule caste in India is 5657672(Male:2854313, female-2803359), whereas the total enrolment of students in higher secondary in that year was 38536359 (male- 19643747 and female -18892612). As per the UNICEF report, the dropout of DWD children from elementary schools is 51%. as per the report published by Matters India, the rate of drop is high among the age group of 6-14 years among DWD children. 5 million DWD communities are into sanitation work where the safety and hygiene are compromised, 50% of women sanitation workers are working in urban areas, and almost all the women manual

scavengers of DWD community are paid less than Rs.30 a day. The economic disparity in India is alarming, with the top 10% of Indians owning 50% of entire countries' well.

As mentioned, caste factors must be recognized and addressed when discussing sustainable development goals. Therefore, consideration of the DWD community in ensuring the sustainability of the sustainable development goals is unavoidable in the context of India.

51% Rate of dropout of DWD children from elementary schools

5 million DWD communities are into sanitation work

50% women sanitation workers work in urban areas in unsafe conditions

15% increase in the rate of unemployment among women in the first year of the pandemic

15 trillion Loss to India's GDP due to women's unemployment during the pandemic

2. Methodology

Swadhikar is working closely with the communities discriminated against based on work and descent in different parts of India, majorly on the economic rights of Dalits and Adivasi. This study focuses on understanding the challenges and issues the CDWD women and girls face in their workplace, home, and society and the challenges they face in accessing the government schemes and programmes, especially in terms of Alternative livelihood opportunities in the country.

About the Study, Objective, Methodology & Limitation

The objective of the study.

- A. To understand the challenges specific to these CDWD communities in India, their socio-economic status, working conditions, and their impacts on their overall well-being. The discussion shall also be directed to bring light to the various aspects of the Physical, Social, Psycho-Social, and financial standings of the CDWD.
 - B. To understand their perspective on alternative livelihood options, their challenges in pursuing other earning opportunities, and their awareness of the various government livelihood schemes and programmes.
 - C. To understand the views of Civil society organisations that are working closely with CDWDs and Key informant individuals, especially individuals who were/are in this forced labour, and their opinions in eliminating this discrimination based on work and descent in the country.
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FGD with Women sanitation workers in Pune, Maharashtra

Methodology

Review of Literature and Shadow report (Secondary data Collection): Government data and reports from their official website such as NFHS 4, 5, NCRB data, Census 2011, and reports and findings published by Water.org, Oxfam along with the articles and journals published by the different print and digital media were also referred for the study purpose.

Focused group discussion (Primary Data collection): In Maharashtra, 2 FGDs were conducted separately with CDWD, who is currently working as a Safai Karamchari on a contractual basis under Pune Municipal Corporation. This meeting was conducted in Ramnagar, Bhopkhel Pune, and another with a garbage-picking woman at Thergaon Police station, which was selected by the respondents themselves for their convenience. They are working as contractual labour under Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation.

In Madhya Pradesh, 2 FGDs were conducted in Shivpuri Municipal areas and 1 in Ratoli village of Orcha block of Tikamgarh district. Respondents from Shivpuri are working as contractual safai karamchari under Shivpuri Municipal corporation. Additionally, a mixed group FGD was also conducted in Shivpuri on the premises of Shivpuri Nagarpalika.

Interviews with Civil society organisations and critical informant individuals:

Civil societies organisations such as ACAR (Ambedkar Centre for Action and Research), Pune, and Manners organisation in Madhya Pradesh were reached. In addition, interaction with the team engaged closely with the CDWD was done to understand the problem which is exclusive to the CDWD, the current status, and relevance of the government programme and schemes for them, and what are their views and suggestion for the welfare and upliftment of the CDWD in the country.

Some key individuals, such as the Ph.D. scholar, women still engaged in sanitation work/ professing other livelihood means, were also interviewed by the study team in a different part of the country.

Limitations of the study

This study had limited access to the latest data on manual scavenging and sanitation workers from the government website. Therefore, only a few could be accessed, and it relies on the shadow reports published by national and international organisations, research institutes, and printed news media for its secondary research. Two states of India, i.e., Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, were taken for conducting the study as these two states; as the prevalence of manual scavenging and sanitation work by the DWD women and girl sanitation work is high and ranks in the top five states with the bulk of manual scavenging and existence of dry latrines in the state.

3. Empirical Findings

Socio Economic status

In both Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the Valmiki community is exclusively working as manual scavengers. Women in Maharashtra shared that their ancestors migrated from the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and others many centuries back when kings ruled India, and some migrated during the colonial period.

Access to basic amenities

They have access to public resources such as PDS, residences (both Kaccha and Pakka houses), water sources, public toilets, temples, hospitals, banks, etc. In Pune, housing has been provided by the cooperation allotted to their forefathers and passed on to them as they are still engaged in that business. In case of other scheduled caste apart Valmiki communities involved in garbage cleaning and segregation of waste, they do not own houses and live in a kutch house in slums making access to clean drinking water and toilet and sanitation facilities difficult and compromised. Many of them do not have Ration cards and have not accessed government schemes and facilities apart from PDS.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Valmiki community residing in both rural areas has less access to fresh and clean drinking water as they have to walk a mile to fetch water, and it's solely the

responsibility of women and young adolescents to bring water for the family. Moreover, it is common to find that some of the people of this community do not have a Ration card, or Aadhaar card with them, which hinders their accessibility. Simultaneously, mismatched and faulty documents are another major hindrance for them to access public services.

Work and Income

In both states, most women work on a contract basis and are allotted in banks and other public/private offices. They are paid based on daily wage for their service and seldom get leave. The fear of losing their job lingers daily, restricting them from taking a break even in sickness; thus, there is a constant fear of job security. They are allotted work in the outskirts areas of the city and seldom provided transportation for the same; many manage to reach the workstation in a garbage van. As shared by the respondents, one person earns up to 15 thousand rupees per month. In some families, the children of the manual scavengers are working in other sectors and making money which also helps to meet the family expenses.

In contrast, the women garbage pickers suffer the most as they are not paid by the Municipality and instead have to depend upon the money given by the houses they work for. There is confusion among the people as they think that the garbage pickers are salaried and paid for by Municipality;

Women shared that most began to work as manual scavengers and garbage pickers after marriage, mainly around the age of 20. It was a heart-wrenching experience; almost everyone felt dirty within and cried bitterly.

therefore, many households refuse to pay them for their services. As a result, they earn around Rs.4000 per month, which is meagre to meet their needs. Children of the garbage pickers are also compelled to support their parents in collecting garbage to earn money that would add to their family's monthly income. These women have to pick up dead animals and carcasses as well.

In Madhya Pradesh, All the Respondents from the Ratouli village of Tikamgarh districts were found to be working in the Indian Army Cantonment. They are paid timely and regularly. They are paid a monthly salary of Rs.6000/- and work two shifts. Both men and women work in the cantonment. It was shared by the respondents that there is no harassment or discrimination in the workplace, and they are treated with respect. However, the respondents from the Shivpuri districts shared a workload and stress at work. There are no transport facilities provided if work is given in the outskirts of the cooperation areas for which they have to walk on foot or travel in a public vehicle at their own expense, which is not reimbursed. Apart from this, they have to have their brooms and cleaning tools, and only a collectors' cart is given to them by the corporation. Moreover, there is no leave provision, even for sick days.

Impact on Psycho- socio and Physical health

The prolonged hour of continuous bending over and struggle has resulted in severe and mild back pain in most women. In addition, some of the women have caught skin diseases and ailments such as swollen legs, fungal infections, and rashes in their hands and legs due to their continuous exposure to dirty water and garbage, most prominently among the garbage pickers who have to segregate the wet and dry waste manually without wearing gloves. Some women also have developed some difficulties in breathing, primarily among older women.

Women shared that most began to work as manual scavengers and garbage pickers after marriage, mainly around the age of 20. It was a heart-wrenching experience; almost everyone felt dirty within and cried bitterly. Their eyes were tearful when they shared their experiences. Some shared that they could not eat food after coming home as all the dirt and garbage they cleaned would flash before their eyes. It was evident from their sharing of experiences that this work has made them feel a lesser human and unclean both inside and outside and something that hurt their soul. They shared that with time, they become accustomed to this as there are no other means to earn bread for the family. It is disheartening to know

that these women manage to use the waste clothes they find in the garbage if their periods start while working. Their hygiene and safety are dangerously compromised. Sanitation workers in Pune shared that they do not have any alternative job opportunities as they are not educated, and the morning working hours give them time to pay attention to their domestic chores and children afterward. Patriarchy has added a burden over their shoulder, which forces them to exhaust their energy and time in managing both domestic and outside work, and there is no escape.

At the workplace, they are judged by their appearance and work. Most of them shared that they do not sit inside the premises of the municipality office and often choose to sit in secluded areas, making them invisible to many. This prolonged discrimination has mentally made them think they should be sitting outside the office and distant from the public. Alcohol and tobacco abuse are prevalent among men. Men shared that it helps them forget about their work and that they must clean dirt, sewage, insects, and worms by hand. Domestic violence exists, as shared by the respondents, but there is a sense of acceptance and compromise for domestic violence among the women.

Sometimes children also keep themselves distant from their parents as they come home with foul odour and dirt, making them feel bad for their work. There is no scope for asking for a hike in salary, leave, and relaxations as they are under contractual work, and asking for such would jeopardize their job.

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 Pandemic was indeed the worst nightmare for every human being. The cascading effects of which are unfathomable. The situation of the sanitation workers was gross and horrific up to the point that their life and safety was compromised as if they were immune

to COVID virus. They were given gloves, masks, and sanitizing kits by the corporations but were given only once or twice, and due to the poor quality of such, they could not use the same for a prolonged period. They had to buy their kits for safety.

As shared by the respondent, the workload had increased so much that it affected them mentally as they were helpless to voice their problem and ask for their safety too. They worked day and night and were posted in containment areas as well, where even the garbage van denied entering, so they were forced to walk by foot and collect garbage irrespective of its type, door to door, as no one would come outside to throw the trash further adding their burden as they had to carry heaps of garbage over their head. Many of them had developed swollen legs and sore feet. Women shared that they had to move dead and rotten animals off the road, and some men and women were forced to carry the dead bodies of the COVID-infected people and burn or bury them as no hospital employees were ready to do that.

Respondent shared that due to this continuous discrimination and compromise, they were forced to act as if they would never catch COVID and were immune to it because if refused, they would lose their job and starve to death. Hence, there was no escape or light at the end of the tunnel. They shared that sometimes, the contractors would come home to pick them up even during sick days and take their children in as their replacement; having the option to say no is a luxury that not everyone can afford. Their lives were at stake every day, every hour. Every one of their families was exposed to the virus as there was no luxury for isolation space.

The respondents shared that many of their family members lost their jobs which made them the only breadwinner of their families. Therefore, it was tough to provide three square meals for the families. Children also suffered and were exposed to COVID-19 as their parents struggled daily with the virus. However, as shared by the respondent, they did not get infected by the virus. They believed that their



Women sanitation workers of Pune, Maharashtra

deities protected them, and even though they got some sore throats and symptoms, they did not go for a test for fear of losing jobs and somehow recovered without any medicines.

Education of Children

Children of both manual scavengers and other sanitation workers are going to school and college. Some of the children are studying in private schools. In Pune, they shared during the discussion that they admitted their children to private schools, as per the provision of RTE, a reservation for children from the EWS category. Still, their children complain that they are neglected and not given attention like other children. Because of this, they become weak in their studies and fail their examinations, forcing their parents to readmit their children to government schools. Some children help their mothers with work after school. The children are neglected and discriminated against in school.

In Madhya Pradesh, most of the manual scavenger's children go to government schools, and some pursue bachelors in the town's colleges. Although in rural villages, children have to go to other nearby villages for higher education, the chances of dropping out are high during this transfer period from primary to secondary. Additionally, it was observed that the children could not write their names even

though they were in 8th standard. Children at Anganwadi centres are also being discriminated against based on caste. For example, they are not allowed to sit inside with other children and are given food outside of the premises, due to which children have stopped going to the Anganwadi centres.

Due to the lack of a Caste certificate, many children struggle to go for higher education as they do not get any stipend. They found that the Caste certificate, which was authorized in their native land (states their forefathers migrated from), was not treated as valid. Those with the caste certificate faced many difficulties as the process required residential proof per the norms. A large number of children still do suffer from this problem.

Discrimination faced at home, community, and work settings.

CDWD women and girls are the ultimate victims of discrimination at all levels. Most respondents said they started working as manual scavengers after getting married very early. As a result, they were compelled to work in the wee hours and also manage the household chores simultaneously, due to which children do not get proper attention and nutrition, further

risking their well-being. It is to be noted here that Maharashtra comes under the list of states having the maximum number of children undernourished and wasted.

There are seldom any exchanges between the families of the upper caste and lower caste in the neighbourhood. CDWD can take food from the upper caste but cannot offer anything to the upper caste. Even children are forbidden from entering upper-caste households, especially in Madhya Pradesh. Some respondents in Madhya Pradesh highlighted that even if children mistakenly touch the upper caste while playing and running around, a fight occurs where children are embarrassed and sometimes beaten by them. The unspoken discrimination between upper and lower castes and intangible separation is there in the neighbourhood, and seldom are people from both communities seen sitting together in a comfortable ambiance.

At work, they are discriminated against based on their caste and occupation. In Pune, it was shared by the respondent that the level of discrimination has reduced to a certain extent than what it used to be before. Many women work in private banks and offices where they are treated fairly, and the working conditions are also conducive. It was also noticeable that the women were audacious and upfront compared to those from Madhya Pradesh. Also, the discomfort among the men and women was visible in Madhya Pradesh in a manner of sitting in a group with people of different sex in the same premise for group discussion. Women shared that there is no relaxation in work, and they have to bear the expense of travel for work if they are allotted a position in the outskirts. In Madhya Pradesh, women shared that there is no facility for drinking water and other amenities in their working areas, and has to entirely depend on the mercy of the people to give them water to drink.

Discrimination at the workplace is prevalent in the working areas under the Municipality, as noticed from sharing of the respondent of both states. Women working in private banks and the cantonment areas were upfront. They

seemed pretty satisfied with the treatment they get in their working spaces. On the other hand, women engaged in garbage picking and working as manual scavengers on a contractual basis under the supervision of cooperation are discriminated against mostly in their workplace. There is no fixed payment rate and working hours; they do not have any leave facilities and are provided with no tools and equipment except the garbage cart. The women engaged in garbage picking are the most discriminated group regarding wages and salary. The corporation does not pay them; instead, they depend on the money they get from the households they service, who often misunderstand them and refuse to pay them reasonably. There is no grievance redressal mechanism for them. Sometimes they make less than Rs.4000 a month for their hard work.

Access to Government Schemes and Programmes

Surveys and studies conducted by some reputed organizations such as Wateraid.org have found that people engaged in manual scavenging and those who no longer work as the one is interested in trying alternative livelihood options.

Schemes and programme benefits can only be accessed if one knows their entitlements. For marginalized people, be it social, financial, etc., access to information is a big challenge in the rural pockets with lesser transport and communication facilities. One must walk miles and miles to access services only to be returned empty-handed. Moreover, accessing any benefits of schemes and programmes requires proper and adequate identification and legal documentation. During the pandemic, it was horrific to witness that CDWD and vulnerable communities residing in the remote pockets of the country were unable to collect the PDS and other food commodities simply because they did not have any legal identification cards and due to mismatched documents.

Lack of awareness

There needs to be more understanding among manual scavengers and CDWDs regarding their rights and entitlement. They need to be made aware of the basic fundamental rights and entitlements. What are the steps taken to reach them with information? It is illogical to expect CDWD to be well informed of their rights when there is discrimination at every level and in every aspect. Even if they wish to know, want to find, and ask questions, they are discriminated against on the ground of untouchability right from the neighbourhood, panchayats, blocks, and so on.

During the discussion, the respondent shared that they face discrimination based on caste and occupation. They shared that they are ill-treated in Public and Private Banks, Hospitals, and service centres. Verbal harassment is often very abusive and demeaning, and they instead choose to sacrifice their rights for their self-respect. In some cases, as shared by the respondent, the distance of the service centres from their residence is another major hindrance to accessing the schemes as the transportation/mobility cost is another burden to their meagre income followed by the lengthy procedures which demand their times and number of days has to be spent on queue. So, no one would risk their daily wage for the same.

The need for valid documents

The need for valid documents to access the scheme is another hurdle. It was found that some of the respondents do not have a Ration card, Aadhaar card, and caste certificates, due to which they become not-eligible for reaping the benefits of the scheme meant for them. When asked about the reason for not having the same, it was shared that they are required to provide proof of residing in the state for 50-plus years, which they cannot produce; their

forefathers had no such documents in place. Moreover, their caste certificates which they drew from their place of origin, mainly from Panchayats, are not treated as valid in the city by the authority.

FGD with women sanitation workers at Shivpuri Municipal Corporation Premise



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“The intergenerational nature of caste discrimination condemns women to a life of exclusion, marginalization, and disadvantage in every sphere of life. Many of those women are denied an education and economic opportunities, and perform dangerous and unprotected work, including modern forms of slavery”.

Manisha Devi,
a young Dalit activist.

”

It is sad to mention that the shackle of caste is rooted so deeply in society that it has left no way for the CDWDs to break this vicious cycle. Respondents shared that they have tried other earning means, such as opening little shops and working in shops and stores, but all in vain, as no one turns up to buy things from their shops and stores, and they are not given any work except cleaning work. Society marks their eligibility and capability by their caste. Thus, leading them back to the same old pit. Only a few respondents were aware of the SRMS and the provision of the loan amount for taking alternative earning options.

Most respondents were a part of the Self-Help Groups; in Maharashtra, women have formed groups where they collectively save money and lend money to the members for minimal interest. These groups are associated with microfinance banks such as Bandhan Bank and others. But in Madhya Pradesh, respondents shared that these groups are not functional and have closed down mostly. When asked if they have invested money in any business or if the group is collectively doing business and earning profit from the same, it was shared that they have not invested in any industry. Unlike some SHGs in other parts of the countries where these groups are given skill enhancement and various training on starting a business, they have yet to be reached with such facilities and information from any sources.

When asked about women respondents about their interest and demands for alternative livelihood, they shared that the government should take some steps to provide them opportunities along with back-ups such as capital, capacity and skill enhancement training, and sustainable means of earning. For example, women are interested in weaving, tailoring, and incense-making work. But that is possible and feasible when the stigma in society is challenged.

4. Response of Civil Society & State

Civil Society Organisation's Response to Discrimination in the CDWD Community and States

There are several civil society organisations working directly with the CDWD in India, such as the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, Safai Karamchari Andolan, Dalit Solidarity, Charity aid Foundation, Water aid, Oxfam, etc., at the national and regional level, which are working for the Human rights and justice of the CDWD at various level. In addition, organizations such as MANNERS and BHEEMA Foundation Are working directly with the community in the state of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, building and generating awareness among the communities about their rights and entitlements, capacitating them to access the schemes and facilities and policy advocacy with the government for the justice and welfare of the CDWD.

CDWD is a human rights issue and should be viewed in the light of bringing justice and equality to reduce the marginalisation, vulnerability, and mainstreaming of the CDWD with the rest of society. WaterAid has presented the grim realities of the lives of CDWD and how the marginalisation of CDWD has cascading and ruining effects in all aspects of the socio-economic, political, and others and views CDWD as a forced labour, bonded by the shackles of Casteism, poverty, and gender, and the systemic and institutional discrimination that has fuelled the growing disparity between the CDWD and the rest of the society is an ac.

Oxfam and WaterAid conducted many baseline surveys and studies

Ms. Anitai Bhimrao Chahuan, of Sabitri Mahila Mandal, Pune, more Sabitribai Phule has to evolve from women. Educate, organise, and agitate, as quoted by Babasaheb B.R Ambedkar. She firmly believes that the law and order of this country should protect and promote the dignity, freedom, rights, and education of women so they to walk hand in hand with society, live a life of grace, and change the course for her upcoming generation.

Adv. Priyadarshi Telang, Co-Founder of ACAR, states that multi-dimensional action is required to address the issue of CDWD if our goal is to bring justice to CDWD and eradicate the practice of manual scavenging in reality. Because it is not only a caste issue or poverty issue, it is a matter of dignity and justice, and it has every right to make each an equal Human in this world. Establishing legislation, acts, schemes and programmes only to address their poverty and physical security is not enough, but a multi-dimensional approach addresses their basic survival needs; education, physical, economic, and mental rehabilitation is required simultaneously.

Dr. Hemangi Kadlak, Assistant Professor at SNVT Women's University, Churchgate, Mumbai, and defender of the Human Rights of women and girl sanitation workers, comments that there is a need to focus on the education of women and we have to make sure that these women get high-status jobs. Furthermore, the present policies and schemes need to be adequately implemented, and there is a need to broaden the definition of manual scavengers. She further suggests that we must emphasise creating more livelihood options in this community, especially among women.

Response of the State

Indian constitutions have passed many legislations and acts related to Health, Education, Social, and Financial Security. Still, we shall look into specific legislation directly related to the DWD community women and girls' sanitation workers in India.

Indian constitution has passed many legislations for the protection of the right of Indian Citizens and some special legislation for safeguarding

the rights of the marginalised section of the community. Concerning the DWD community, the constitution acknowledges the practice of untouchability and the discrimination attached to it. Accordingly, it has passed much such legislation which addresses the issue of CDWD. The implementation and relevance of this legislation is a matter of discussion, but we would look first into the bill still in existence in the country.

Legislations

Article 17 and other fundamental rights

This article declares that the practice of untouchability is offensive and will be a punishable offence. The word untouchability is written under inverted comma indicating the word to be understood from the perspective of Hindu society, where a section of people are termed as untouchable and impure because of their caste and descent. Other necessary fundamental rights incorporated in article 14, 15, 16, 17, and 21 are some of the core fundamental rights of the Indian citizen, which condemns and declare that discrimination based on caste and creed, race, sex, and linguistics is punishable under the Indian Penal code (IPC) and vouch for the freedom of choice, right to decent life and equality before the eye of law is the significant provisions of this constitutionally guaranteed act.

- 1.

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.

This act is rooted in Article 17 of the Indian Constitution. This act was formerly known as The Untouchability (offences) act, 1955, but in 1976 it was renamed the Protection of Civil Rights act (PCRA) 1955. This act acknowledges the violations based on Caste, Punishment according to offences, and legal action in accordance. This act was a stepping stone for the other acts established after that.

- 2.

Scheduled caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act,1989.

This act is commonly also known as the POA act. Several amendments addressed the loopholes in the previous act, and the latest modification was done in 2018. this act has clearly defined the atrocities against the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe done by the people of another caste. Moreover, it has distinctly limited the attached to specific offences. Under section 14 creation of a special court, and section 15, the appointment of Special Public prosecutors is some of the essential components added to the act. The practice of manual scavenging and forced labour are also brought into the ambit of this act.

- 3.

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013(PEMSR)

4. This act is of fundamental importance to the DWD community. The act has clearly defined and prohibited manual scavenging in the country and has banned dry latrines. The act has directed a survey at the local, district, and state levels to identify the manual scavengers in the country and their occupational rehabilitation by providing them with one-time money transactions for alternative livelihood through the SRMS schemes under the act. This act has mentioned the employers' duties and the classified safety kits and manuals that should be provided to sanitation workers.
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Schemes for the rehabilitation of the Manual Scavengers SRMS

5. This scheme is rooted in the PEMSR act of 2013 as a safe house for those engaged as manual scavengers to come out of manual scavenging work and try alternative livelihoods by accessing the loan provisions under the schemes to rehabilitate themselves financially. The project's objective is to promote and provide alternative livelihood to the identified Manual Scavengers in the country, give them credit on a loan for starting other income-generation livelihood means, and provide them with skill enhancement training to be employable in other occupations. This scheme is implemented through National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Cooperation (NSKFDC).
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PM- DAKSH yojana

6. This scheme was launched in the year 2020-21 by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. This scheme's target beneficiaries are the youth aged 18-45 years belonging to SC/ST, OBC, De-notified tribes, and Safai Karamcharies (Sanitation workers). This training is implemented free of cost through three Corporations such as National Scheduled caste Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC), and National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC).
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FGD with the valmiki women at Shivpuri

Analysis of Livelihood Schemes for the DWD community in India.

The Indian government adopted many significant policy measures to address caste-based discrimination and violence for the communities discriminated against on work and descent, known as 'Scheduled Caste or Dalits'. The scheduled Caste Component Plan is one measure initiated in 1979 that mandates fund allocation to the SC population. This is currently applied to all the significant ministries/departments directly impacting SC development.

The analysis below is based on the data collected from the union government's Detailed Demand for Grants, particularly Statement 10A in the Expenditure Profile of Union Budget 2020-23 published by the Ministry of Finance for allocating funds for SCs. We have compiled, tabularized, and analysed the data about allocations towards Dalits, particularly about livelihood and entrepreneurship, from the above-noted sources. The data reflect the percentage of Dalits for various livelihood and entrepreneurship-related schemes in the last three financial years. Across these three years, allocations were mainly seen under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry

of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Department of Rural Development.

The figure below reflects the allocation for Dalits in the last three financial years for the programmes related to livelihood and entrepreneurship under Statement 10(A).

In the FY 2020-21, the total allocation towards the livelihood and entrepreneurship-related schemes was Rs.21425.19Cr, followed by Rs33782Cr grant in the FY 21-22 and Rs.39293.45Cr in the FY 22-23. However, a deeper analysis of the schemes reveals that in most of the years, there has been an enormous allocation towards general and non-targeted schemes. Our study shows that the allocation allocations towards targeted schemes have been minimal across the years, with Rs.1757Cr allocated in FY 20-21, followed by Rs.20270Cr in FY 2021-22 and Rs. 17684.5Cr in the current financial year. This increasing trend for non-targeted schemes is disturbing as these schemes may/may not benefit the community on the ground.

Across all the financial years, there has been a considerable allocation towards MGNREGA, a non-targeted scheme. In the last financial year, there was an allocation of Rs.9310Cr, while this

Fund Allocations for Dalits

Financial Year	SC Allocation for livelihood and entrepreneurship-related schemes (in Rs Crs)	Targeted Allocation (in Rs Crs)	Non-Targeted Allocation (in Rs Crs)
2022-23	39293.45	17684.5	21608.95
2021-22	33782	20270	13512
2020-21	21425.19	1757	19668.19

financial year, the budget was Rs.15380.88Cr. MGNREGA is one of the most significant rural employment guarantee programmes. Although the programme is a substantial source of livelihood option, considering the scheme's wage component, including it under the Development Action plan for SCs is entirely against the Niti Ayog guidelines of the Component plans. Similarly, another primary non-targeted allocation has been towards Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojana with a budget of Rs.2667Cr in the FYs 2021-22 and 2022-23 and Rs.2605.37Cr allocation in the FY 2020-21. This scheme is a general scheme that provides comprehensive insurance coverage against crop failure to stabilize the farmers' income. This scheme has a vague target for the most marginalised Dalit and Adivasi farmers. Additionally, several recent reports have highlighted the minimal share of SC farmers enrolled under the scheme. As per the scheme guidelines, farmers without land records and lease agreements cannot access the projects, putting them entirely out of reach for the most marginalised farmers.

The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment introduced the Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) in 2007 to aid the rehabilitation of 'former' manual scavengers transitioning to other occupations. However, over the last three years, there has been a reduced allocation trend towards this scheme. In FY 2020-21, there was an allocation of Rs.110 Cr, which was reduced to Rs.100 Cr in FY 2021-22, and in the current financial year, it has been further reduced to Rs70Cr. This comes as a rude shock considering the significant number of people from the SC community still involved in manual scavenging despite the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act, 2013, with a greater emphasis on rehabilitation. Additionally, women engaged in manual scavenging, mainly cleaning dry latrines, are not recognised as manual scavengers. In recent research by WaterAid, CES and ARUN have highlighted the issue that despite having the required documents, many of the women engaged in manual scavenging are not enrolled as people who are employed as manual scavengers. As a result, they have been

excluded from several commitments made under the PEMSR Act and Self-employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS). Most of the time, Dalit women are employed in the informal sector and are exposed to job-related insecurities and discrimination. Dalit women lack access to income-earning assets and regular employment and depend mainly on wage labour. As per NSSO data in 2009–10, 38 percent of Dalit women were self-employed compared to 62 percent of upper-caste women—this indicated that access to permanent sources of livelihood was not equal within the category of women.

National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC) is an apex corporation looking into the overall socio-economic upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis, Scavengers, and their dependents throughout India. However, the budgetary allocation has been reduced over the years under the same. In the last FY 2022-22, the budget for National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation was Rs.50 Cr which has been drastically reduced to Rs25Cr in the FY 2022-23. This reduction in allocation comes at a time when many people across the country are still engaged in this work.



Photo taken with children of sanitation workers.

5. Some stories of Courage and determination

Munni Valmiki

Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh

Munni Valmiki, a mother of seven children, is an inhabitant of Dehelkhand, Block Maheva, Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh. After her marriage, she was forced to do manual scavenging as this was the traditional work their in-laws had done for generations before. She learned and started picking the human excreta from the dry latrines with her mother and sister-in-law, and worked as a manual scavenger for 20 years after her marriage as this was the only job that was, she could do in the neighbourhood which is corrupted by the practice of untouchability and casteism. She and her family faced discrimination every day. One of the family members left the village because they were mentally and physically harassed when they refused to work as manual scavengers.

Munni shares that the dirty work left her with many skin and other diseases, but there was no possible way out due to violence and lack of other resources. Her children were discriminated against and had to carry utensils to school for the mid-day meal. Children were victimised by these caste and untouchability practices at very early ages. She was paid for all her work in leftover food and two sets of second-hand clothes a year. She was worried for her children as the children would be dragged into this vicious cycle of poverty just like her. She refused to do manual scavenging once, and the upper caste villagers continuously tortured them and warned them to either do manual



scavenging or leave the village. As a result, one family member left the town because of growing harassment from the upper caste people.

Munni and her family came in contact with the Bundelkhand Dalit Adhikar Manch and learned how their work had denied them their dignity and rights. Slowly after continuous follow-up by the team, she decided to leave this dirty work and try any other position but not go back to manual scavenging. Today she and her husband work as daily wage labour outside the village, earning less but are happy to come out of this work. Her children are going to school, and she hopes that education will help her children create a better life for themselves. Unfortunately, she has not received any rehabilitation benefits from the government, but that does not stop her.



Renu Ambedkar

Jhansi, Madhya Pradesh

her village And also gave tuition to the children of her town. She was then admitted to schools, and there was no looking back. She took a vocational course on beauty parlour along with her studies to self-support her education.

Today she is the breadwinner of her family and looks after her elderly mother, brother, sister, and children. In addition, she looks after the educational and other expenses of her younger brother and her sister's children. Currently, she has opened little shops where she has employed a few boys from her community and girls in her parlour. She continuously encourages them and fellow community women and girls to stand up for themselves and try alternative livelihood means. She shared that She is not appreciated in her village as she is a successful woman who broke the gender and caste barriers. She plans to open coaching centers for the community children to provide them with educational support.

Renu Ambedkar is a woman of 32 years, is a resident of Babina village, Jhansi, and currently pursuing a BA.LLB has run a beauty parlour for 14 years and legally registered her organisation a few months back for providing beauty parlour training to the Dalit and other community girls. Renu prefers to write Ambedkar as her second name and does not prefer to be tagged with her actual surname. Both her parents were permanent employees of government manual scavengers at Babina Panchayat. She has a family of an elderly mother, two brothers, and one sister. Her father expired in the year 2016. Renu was very good in her studies, but her father stopped both daughters from attending school and pursuing education after seven standards. Renu's elder sister was given off to marriage at a very young age while her brother continued their education. She missed two years of school due to this. She was discriminated against and denied an education because of the patriarchal mindset of her parents that she was a girl and education would be of no use to her. But Renu did not lose hope for herself; during her dropout years, she started earning a small amount of money as a Mehendi artist in

***“We shall overcome
and success will be
ours in the future.
The future belongs
to us” - Savitribai
Phule.***

Savitribai Phule

6. Major Findings

Major Findings

1. DWD community women and girls are the most marginalised section of people within the DWD community, which are at the bottom of the social, economic, and political hierarchy of the country, the statistical data of NFHS 4, 5, NCRB reports, SECC data indicates the marginalisation of the DWD women and girls in terms of health and well-being, education, atrocities, and violence, etc. They are engaged in the most menial work of manually handling human excreta. The least-paid workers in the country often receive leftover food from the houses they provide services.
2. They are devoid of receiving any benefits, perks, and other facilities in their worksite, especially those working as contractual labour. The privilege of taking sick leave or a day off is out of their reach, and they are the victims of physical, mental, sexual, and verbal abuse in the workplace. Moreover, the grievance redressal mechanism is almost non-functioning for contractual workers.
3. Lack of awareness and dissemination of information related to SRMS is one of the hindrances to accessing the rehabilitation benefits by the DWD community. In addition, due to a lack of valid documents such as Aadhaar Cards, Ration Card and Caste Certificates, they cannot access govt schemes and programmes such as PDS, reservation in education, Health schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, Housing Schemes, skill development programmes, and others.
4. The generational discrimination based on work and descent has pushed them further from their rights and entitlements. Women and girls find it more difficult to break these shackles due to gender stereotyping, caste, class, and gender. Girls are given off to marriage at an early age as they are taken as a burden to the family, and it was found that most women were pushed into manual scavenging right after marriage. They are churned between balancing domestic and work life.

5. As soon as the girl enters puberty and her menstrual cycle starts, it makes them more vulnerable to dropping out of school and diseases related to sexual and reproductive health as they are discriminated against in accessing and seeking health facilities and services due to casteism and abuse by the service providers, due to lack of awareness and information on health and hygiene, girls are forced to use unclean clothes as a napkin during her periods, married women become vulnerable to anaemia, non-institutional delivery, missed anti natal check-ups and other related diseases which further jeopardise her and the infant's life. It is to be noted here, as per the UN study, Dalit human dies 14 years younger than women from another caste on average..

6. DWD Women working as sanitation workers under Municipal corporations on a contractual basis are more disadvantaged and discriminated against at the workplace than the permanent ones. This is because they are dependent on their contractors. When the current contractors lose the tender with Corporations, they become vulnerable to losing their daily job as there is no security even though the legal framework directs the employer to retain 80% of the working employees when the contracts are terminated and handed over to the new contractors.

7. Occupational health and safety concerns are compromised due to the prolonged engagement with dirt, toxic gases, and contaminated liquid, skin diseases are prevalent, and the continuous struggle has caused back pain in many women.

8. One of the main reasons for their inability to give up manual scavenging and try alternative livelihood is because their forefather was provided with residential quarters with amenities such as drinking water and toilets. Therefore, if they give the work, they are obliged to surrender the quarters and start from scratch as their income is insufficient, which would encourage them to take risks.

9. The budget allocation for the Safai Karamchari Finance & Development Corporation has been reduced to half this financial year than the previous year, with the present funding being Rs.25 Cr which further jeopardises the meagre income earned by the sanitation workers in the country with 5 million people engaged in sanitation work.

10. As required under the PEMSR act, DWD communities can only access the benefits under the SRMs after producing all the required documents and credentials to the corporation. This is because they still need to be identified as manual scavengers.

11. DWD women and girls are daily wage labour and lack access to alternative permanent sources of livelihood in comparison to the women of other communities, as per the NSSO data of 2009-10. In addition, they are landless wage labour, and most do not own livestock to generate alternative income.

7. Recommendations & Conclusions

Recommendations To The State, National, And International Bodies Of Human Rights Defenders.

1. Acknowledging the issue of the manual scavengers and other sanitation workers and the intergenerational trap of discrimination based on work and descent by the state. However, the state must address the problem of accessing the existing schemes and programmes for the DWD communities, as DWD communities cannot access the projects and programmes.
2. Strict action should be taken against employers who employ women as manual scavengers, and they should be tried under the POA act. In addition, the contractors and private agencies who hire the DWD communities for the sanitation work should be held accountable, and measures should be in place to ensure their safety and security at work, especially the women and the girls engaged in the sanitation work.
3. The national Safai Karamchari Finance Development Corporate should allocate money to ensure the rehabilitated women would be given training and access to alternative livelihoods.
4. Schemes like SRMS should be made more multi-dimensional. They should provide a way out to the DWD communities by providing sufficient financial assistance and ensuring their need for basic amenities such as housing, water, sanitation, health, and education, as the marginalisation is not only occupational but rather multi-dimensional. Furthermore, holistic rehabilitation schemes and programmes should be established with proper implementation mechanisms.

5. Water.org, during their survey, found that even after submission of all the required documents for accessing SRMS, they are not being identified and acknowledged as a beneficiary under the scheme, due to which the DWD communities are lacking behind and unable to access the benefits of the projects which stands even though a little, a chance to break the bondages. This process needs to be sped up so that beneficiaries can receive their share.

6. Access to better health care and education has to be ensured for the DWD community by creating effective mechanisms to bring and capacitate them to access the schemes and other information. Furthermore, vocational programmes for DWD women and girls should be made more accessible. They should be allowed to be included on the excuse of false documents and requirements.

7. The state should take stringent action and mechanisms to protect the right, dignity, and freedom of the DWD community by continuously monitoring Human Rights violations, violation of labour law, minimum wages, and atrocities against the community.

8. Social audits of the existing schemes and programmes for the communities are to be conducted, and the diversion of fund flow meant for the DWD communities should be checked and stopped.

9. Modernised tools and technology should be introduced, and community members should be trained to use this technology. Their safety has to be prioritized along with wages for their work.

10. We strongly recommend the eradication of Dry latrines and manual scavenging thoroughly. The Indian Railways should vow to end manual scavenging while installing bio-toilets in the rail coaches is a step forward to address the issue.

11. The representation of the DWD community at the ground, national and international levels should be made accessible to voice their issues themselves and provide them a platform to defend and debate their case and call for action at both national and international levels to protect their human rights and establishment of just and equal society for all.

12. Accessibility to government data and reports has to be made available for the people which helps the Human Rights defenders in defending the rights and interests of the DWD community and reformative solutions could be proposed by Civil society organisations.

13. Networking of Civil societies and human rights defenders is to be promoted at all levels so that the issues of the DWD community are addressed, impact, and influence the country's policy framework for the welfare of the DWD Community. Furthermore, they must ensure equal pay for equal work, safety, and security of the DWD women and girls sanitation workers across all the states.

14. Abolition of all direct human contact with faecal matter during sanitation work.

15. Ensuring social security provisions for persons engaged in sanitation work, particularly from DWD communities, in terms of pension, social security, and universal primary healthcare, including maternity benefits other than rehabilitation support.

16. They are building public consciousness around the issue of manual scavenging and the rights of sanitation workers to transform the experiences of the people engaged in manual scavenging and sanitation work.

17. Revisit and strengthen the budgetary allocations and their direct benefits under the 'Welfare of Scheduled Castes (Statement 10A)' by practical participatory, accountability, and transparency mechanisms with robust social audit and grievance redressal measures in planning, designing, and implementation stages for all the schemes for the welfare and development of the persons engaged in manual scavenging/sanitation work

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Dalit Women and Girl Sanitation Workers:

Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

This report is a product of close interaction and engagement with the women and girls' sanitation workers of the two states in India- Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Understanding the issues and challenges of daily life from their lens, and the hurdles in accessing their rights and entitlements have been the focus of this report. Readers shall find this report insightful and informative about the lived realities and stories of the women and girls discriminated on work and descent. Their voices are unheard and their lives are invisibilized due to the stigma attached to what they are doing. This report will further provide the readers with an analysis of existing schemes and budget allocation for the sanitation workers in the country and the lacunae which must be imperatively addressed by the government and society at large.

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights –
Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan

