

Caste extracts from: [Health, Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers: An Initial Assessment.](#)” By World Bank, ILO, WaterAid, and WHO. 2019.” World Bank, Washington, DC.

“Low-grade, unskilled sanitation workers often face social stigma and discrimination. This is especially true when sanitation is linked to a caste-based structure and often allocated to castes perceived to be lower in the caste hierarchy, such as in India and Bangladesh, where sanitation work is perceived to belong to the Dalit caste. This stigma compounds the social ostracizing and limitations on social mobility that workers face and often results in intergenerational discrimination, where children of sanitation workers often struggle to escape the vicious cycle of limited opportunities and sanitation work.”

“[In Bangladesh] Many live in segregated sweeper colonies, which are unhygienic slumlike areas offering poor and overcrowded living conditions. Dalits (low-caste Hindus) and Christian and Muslim Bengalis”

“Manual scavenging was prohibited in India by the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act (1993). In 2013, the law was extended and clarified to include insanitary latrines, ditches, pits, railway tracks, sewers, and septic tanks in the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act. This law calls for rehabilitation of manual scavengers and provides support for alternative employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. In practice, however, there remain several challenges to the implementation of the laws and emancipation of sanitation workers in India, such as the denial of authorities of the practice since the prohibition. Other challenges include combating the systemic discrimination Dalits face, which affects their education and real opportunities to become entrepreneurs, and the multiple layers of subcontracting that enable manual scavenging to continue without oversight or enforcement of laws by local authorities (Human Rights Watch 2014). Progress has been made in advocating for sanitation workers’ rights and identifying appropriate solutions. Many local and international organizations (for example, Safai Karmachari Andolan, Navsarjan Trust in Gujarat and so on) continue to raise awareness and empower sanitation workers through capacity building and guidance and supporting leveraging trade union mechanisms to support sanitation workers. Standard operating procedures for cleaning sewers and septic tanks have been developed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to eliminate hazardous cleaning, prevent accidents and casualties, and limit the risk of diseases resulting from improper practice of cleaning of sewers or emptying of septic tanks.”

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Health, Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers

An Initial Assessment



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WaterAid