

Transforming sanitation in India

Stories of change and innovation




A UNICEF & UNILEVER-Domestos
partnership (2022-2025)



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*Real change begins where
collaboration meets conviction
– in the hands of people,
empowered by partnerships.*

Background & Disclaimer

UNICEF INDIA @ September 2025

UNICEF works to promote and protect the rights of children across India.

Background

From 2022–2025, the UNICEF and UNILEVER-Domestos partnership in India has been implemented in sixteen States, namely Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The UNICEF and UNILEVER-Domestos partnership in India envisioned to advance sanitation services across India, promote safety and dignity of sanitation workers and professionalize sanitation works to strengthen the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal 6.2 – to ensure access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all.

The collaboration contributed towards promoting safety and dignity of sanitation workers and professionalizing sanitation services by effective operation and maintenance of toilets, setting up sustainable sanitation services and improving the work environment of sanitation workers. In essence, this partnership with UNILEVER-Domestos aimed to play a pivotal role in shaping a hygienic and dignified future for communities across India. The collaborative efforts were to not only expand the reach of sanitation services but also actively contribute to improving the working conditions of sanitation workers and professionalization of sanitation roles, making a lasting impact on the nation's sanitation landscape.

The partnership between UNICEF and UNILEVER-Domestos has evolved to encompass a broader agenda aimed at achieving safely managed sanitation. The partnership provided support to UNICEF India's sanitation programme, which provided technical assistance to the Government of India and State governments. This collaboration has led to various strategic and innovative interventions across India, including the revitalization of the TISS WASH postgraduate diploma course to strengthen availability of WASH professionals nationwide, introduction of innovative technologies for open defecation free (ODF) Plus initiatives in Rajasthan, development of the sanitation technology park in Bihar, studies to assess equitable WASH access in Gujarat's cities, integrated sanitation worker safety into the regular curriculum in Odisha, MP, Telangana and many more States.

This document presents interventions undertaken at both national and State levels, contributing to the promotion and enhancement of safely managed sanitation services in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 6.2.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| ADO | Apprentice Development Officer |
| AILSG | All India Institute of Local Self Government |
| AMRUT | Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation |
| ASRLM | Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission |
| BCC | Behaviour change communication |
| CEPT University | Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University |
| CMC | Common minimum commitment |
| CSC | Community sanitary complex |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| DAY NULM | Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Urban Livelihood Mission |
| ES | Environmental sanitation |
| FSTP | Faecal sludge treatment plant |
| GIF | Graphics interchange format |
| GIS | Geographical information system |
| HR | Human resources |
| IEC | Information, education and communication |
| ILRT | Institute of Livelihood Research and Training |
| KILA | Kerala Institute of Local Administration |
| KRP | Key resource person |
| LPG | Liquid petroleum gas |
| LSBA | Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan |
| LSGI | Local Self Government Institution |
| MNREGA | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act |
| MoJS-DDWS | Ministry of Jal Shakti - Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| MoPR | Ministry of Panchayati Raj |
| NADEP | Narayan Deorao Pandharipand - A biocomposting technique |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NHM | National Health Mission |
| NLM | National Literacy Mission |
| NSKFDC | National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation |
| O&M | Operation and maintenance |
| ODF | Open defecation free |
| PDS | Public Distribution System |
| PGD | Postgraduate diploma |
| PMAY | Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana |
| PMJAY | Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana |
| PMJDY | Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana |
| PMJJBY | Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana |
| PMSBY | Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana |
| PPE | Personal protective equipment |
| PRI | Panchayati Raj Institution |
| RCUES | Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies |
| RRC | Resource recovery centre |
| SBCC | Social behaviour change communication |
| SBM | Swachh Bharat Mission |
| SBM-G | Swachh Bharat Mission - Grameen |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SHG | Self-help group |
| SHS | Swachhata hi Sewa |
| SIRD | State Institute of Rural Development |
| SIRD&PR | State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj |
| SLWM | Solid and liquid waste management |

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| SUY | Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana |
| TISS | Tata Institute of Social Sciences |
| TNA | Training needs assessment |
| ToT | Training of trainers |
| ULB | Urban local body |
| UMC | Urban Management Centre |
| URC | Urban rural convergence |
| WASH | Water, sanitation and hygiene |

Glossary

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): A government programme that aims to ensure access to safe and adequate drinking water through household tap connections in rural areas. Focuses on community participation and sustainable water resource management. Aims to provide safe and adequate drinking water through functional household tap connections (FHTC) to all rural households by 2024. Focus areas: drinking water supply, source sustainability, greywater management and community participation.

JEEVIKA (Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society – BRLPS): A government programme that aims to empower rural poor, especially women, by promoting self-help groups and enabling sustainable livelihoods. Focuses on financial inclusion, capacity building and convergence with development programmes in Bihar. Promotes agriculture, livestock and non-farm livelihoods. Focus areas: SHG formation, microfinance, livelihoods, health and nutrition.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS): Provides a legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work. Aims to enhance livelihood security and create durable rural assets like water conservation structures, roads and land development. Focus areas: rural infrastructure, water conservation, drought proofing, land development, etc.

National Literacy Mission (NLM): A government programme aimed at promoting literacy among adults and out-of-school children in India, focusing on improving educational opportunities and reducing illiteracy rates.

Public Distribution System (PDS): A government programme that distributes subsidized food grains and essential commodities to low-income households, ensuring food security and nutrition for vulnerable populations.

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY): A government-funded life insurance scheme that offers affordable coverage to individuals, ensuring financial security for their families in case of the policyholder's untimely demise.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN): A government initiative providing direct cash transfers to farmers to support their agricultural needs and enhance their income security.

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): A government accident insurance scheme providing coverage against accidental death and disability, aimed at enhancing the safety net for low-income individuals.

Self help group (SHG): Small groups that encourage savings, internal lending and collective economic activities among rural poor, especially women. Registered with government, it serves as a platform for financial access, skill development and community empowerment. Focus areas: financial inclusion, skill development and entrepreneurship.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM): Launched on 2 October 2014 by Prime Minister of India, aims to eliminate open defecation and promote cleanliness through improved sanitation and waste management. Focuses on behaviour change and construction of toilets and solid-liquid waste infrastructure. Rolled out in two phases viz:

- **SBM-G Phase 1 (2014–2019):** To eliminate open defecation in rural areas by promoting the construction of individual household latrines and fostering behaviour change for improved sanitation.
- **SBM-G Phase 2 (2020–2025):** To sustain open defecation free (ODF) status and achieve ODF Plus villages by focusing on solid and liquid waste management, and continued hygiene promotion through community engagement.

1 National initiatives: Driving systemic change



*Demonstration of faecal sludge management at
a training for master trainers in Assam*

1.1

UNICEF and UNILEVER-Domestos: A partnership for improving sanitation



India has made significant strides towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2, which envisions universal access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene services. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), both through Phase 1 (2014–2019) and Phase 2 (2020–2025), marked a pivotal period in the country's sanitation journey, leading to near-universal toilet coverage and the declaration of India as open defecation free (ODF) in 2019, followed by efforts to sustain ODF status through ODF Plus interventions, emphasizing comprehensive solid and liquid waste management, faecal sludge treatment, wastewater reuse and visual cleanliness.

Out of
5,86,611
villages,



>5,63,155
are ODF plus villages¹
(as on January 2025)

ODF plus village is defined as a village that sustains its ODF status, ensures solid liquid waste management and is visually clean.

However, to sustain the investments made so far, including effective operation and maintenance of the assets created under SBM-G, building capacities of key stakeholders, enhancing skills of sanitation workers and promoting their safety and dignity remains a critical need.

Why this partnership?

To support the Government of India and contribute towards SDG 6.2, UNICEF joined hands with UNILEVER-Domestos in 2018 in the first phase of the partnership to strengthen and promote safely managed sanitation through strategic interventions. This partnership has enabled a comprehensive approach that emphasizes safe toilet operation and maintenance, behaviour

change through effective communication strategies, and the enhancement of the services of local governance through strategic capacity building. These initiatives align with UNICEF India's broader sanitation programme support to government, including policy advocacy, sustaining ODF status, promoting waste management practices, encouraging handwashing with soap and building stakeholders' capacity focusing on equity and gender-transformative communication. This contributes to UNICEF's goal of achieving a cleaner and safer environment for children. In phase two, this partnership has significantly advanced sanitation services nationwide, emphasizing the safety and dignity of sanitation workers. This document highlights transformative progress, alongside the role of innovation and collaboration for safely managed sanitation, paving ways for achieving SDG 6.2.

This partnership led UNICEF to support the Government of India in strengthening safely managed sanitation through Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus goals by integrating waste management and improving sanitation workers' conditions in the national Swachh Bharat Mission. Some of the key milestones achieved during the partnership are given below.

¹ Source: SBM-G Dashboard

From 2022–2024



4,614

master trainers trained



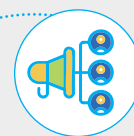
28,251

sanitation workers trained



1,47,980

village representatives trained



54 million

people reached with sanitation and hygiene and communication messages



Field visit of master trainers during a training at SIPRD in Guwahati, Assam

Some key milestones achieved during the partnership

2022

- **Co-creation workshop** with participation of UNILEVER-Domestos and UNICEF representatives in Maharashtra to develop and understand the need to professionalize sanitation work
- **Partnership with a technical agency** (Urban Management Centre (UMC), Ahmedabad) to strengthen and roll out interventions
- **Training needs assessment (TNA)** of sanitation workers and other stakeholders conducted in **selected Gram Panchayats across four States** (Gujarat, Odisha, Telangana and Bihar)
- Development of **a toolkit with 16 modules, a handbook for sanitation workers, and communication materials** on sanitation workers' safety viz. a bilingual poster, four GIFs, games and a short Hindi film with English subtitles

2023

- **Field testing of 16 modules** developed in two States – Gujarat and Bihar
- **Four-day residential training for 51 key resource persons (KRP)** across 16 States of India
- **2,303 MTs** in 16 States trained
- Over **14,886 sanitation workers** in 16 States reached
- **21 million people indirectly reached** with key hygiene and sanitation messaging

2024

- **2,311 MTs** trained
- Over **13,365 sanitation workers** reached
- UNICEF convergent action with State governments led to the master trainers **orienting/training 82,496 elected representatives** (called sarpanches or chiefs) of rural local self-government authorities (gram panchayats) **and service providers**
- **24 million people indirectly reached** with key hygiene and sanitation messaging

Literature review for developing the sanitation workers' toolkit



A literature review to inform the development of a toolkit for sanitation workers was initiated in February 2022. The effort was to study and analyse the existing literature on the safety and dignity of sanitation workers. It was found that the lack of capacities and support to the sanitation workers across all the responsibilities they bear was a major bottleneck to achieving safely managed sanitation for all. A sanitation workers' toolkit and adequate capacity-building investment was therefore required to critically support and address this priority in the sector.

Before a toolkit for sanitation workers could be developed, it was first important to review the landscape of relevant existing material in India. Therefore, a short literature review was conducted:

- To learn how others have defined, interpreted and used key sanitation services and worker capacities concepts
- To identify data sources that other agencies and writers have found relevant and used in efforts related to sanitation work
- To identify existing content evidence that can be helpful in the process of developing the sanitation kit
- To identify what has and has not been investigated and worked on in terms of a sanitation toolkit, which can be used by sanitation workers in both urban and rural spaces
- To contribute to the field by moving relevant research on sanitation services forward
- Equip sanitation workers to carry out various sanitation activities in rural areas and perform their duties safely and efficiently.
- Use a scientifically developed toolkit to safely guard worker's health.
- Position the sanitation worker as a service provider and helping develop an enabling environment for providing professional sanitation services with optimum service standards.
- Develop workers with professional skills and aspirations using suitable technical tools and safety equipment and following robust operational procedures.
- Ensure professionalization to help address dignity and appreciation/recognition issues for sanitation workers.
- Support government programmes and initiatives to reach and sustain ODF status in communities; support the achievement of ODF Plus status, including clean villages with functional solid and liquid waste management systems.
- The toolkit aimed to ensure sanitation facilities are well maintained and remain operational through

Once the literature review was conducted and stakeholders discussed the way forward, the sanitation workers' toolkit was developed to emphasize on the following:

professional upkeep; as maintaining toilets promotes regular use, ensuring that new sanitation behaviours are sustained.

Key components and challenges of sanitation work

Sanitation work in rural areas in India is diverse, including toilet cleaning, sewer maintenance, faecal sludge handling, street sweeping and waste disposal. However, many workers operate in informal and hazardous conditions.

Challenges include the following:

- Lack of mechanization and low usage of personal protective equipment (PPE) exposes workers to severe health risks.
- Limited training and professionalization lead to unsafe practices and low recognition.
- Low wages and informal employment make it difficult for workers to secure stable livelihoods.
- Gender disparity, as many sanitation workers, particularly women, lack necessary protections and face additional discrimination.



Health checkup for sanitation workers in progress in Karimnagar, Telangana

Key gaps and recommendations for toolkit development

The literature review highlights gaps in existing sanitation worker training and support, especially in rural areas. The toolkit sought to address these by the following recommendations.



Recommendations for the development of the toolkit



Institutionalizing **capacity building** at the rural level through **government partnerships and master trainers** to ensure widespread adoption



Standardizing **sanitation worker training** to include **safety protocols, mechanization techniques, financial literacy** and **advocacy skills**



Ensuring **PPE availability and usage** to protect workers from health hazards



Providing **gender-sensitive training and policy recommendations** to improve **equity** in the workforce



Developing a **monitoring and accountability system** to ensure **proper employment conditions, fair wages** and **safety measures**

The development of a toolkit for sanitation workers was crucial for professionalizing sanitation work, ensuring workers' safety and dignity, and supporting India's national sanitation goals. By leveraging existing policies and training models, UNICEF aimed to create a practical, scalable toolkit that enhances sanitation services while improving the lives of sanitation workers, particularly in rural India.

Background note on engagement modalities of sanitation workers in India



The background note on the current status of engagement modalities of sanitation workers in India was prepared in February 2022. This served as a base document for the co-creation workshop for developing the Sanitation/WASH Workers Engagement Toolkit on 6–7 June 2022 at the UNICEF Mumbai field office in Maharashtra. This note stemmed from a dedicated broad review of the existing situation of engagement of sanitation workers, the modalities, the conditionality and government orders in four selected States (Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) in early 2022. This note provided a foundational understanding of rural sanitation worker engagement and highlighted areas requiring urgent intervention.

This background note was developed based on documents received from State governments, from Panchayats and on interviews with relevant officials, PRI members, CSO members and sanitation workers, focusing on:

- Functions of sanitation workers
- Engagement/employment details (how are they engaged, duration, who employs them, selection process, eligibility, safety concerns, etc.)
- Payment modalities, including basis of remuneration (standard rate, performance-linked, etc.), amount, source of payments, etc.

It was observed that very few States had harmonized policies for the engagement of sanitation workers in villages, and the selection, appointment and engagement of sanitation workers were left at the behest of Gram Panchayats. Although a few GPs might have developed effective protocols for employing these workers, there was a need to develop standard modalities for the engagement of these workers, considering the huge quantum of work and time-scheduled nature of the activities.

Key findings

Sanitation workers perform essential tasks such as cleaning public and institutional toilets, emptying septic tanks, sweeping roads, cleaning drains and collecting waste.

Responsibilities vary by State, with **some regions engaging workers through NGOs or SHGs** instead of **directly employing individuals**.

Inconsistent employment structures exist across States. While **Bihar and Maharashtra employ individuals directly**, **West Bengal primarily engages** workers through **NGOs or SHGs**.

Remuneration varies widely from State to State. E.g., payment in Bihar is **INR 3,000 per month** whereas in Uttar Pradesh it is **INR 25,000 per month**.

Payments are sourced from different funding mechanisms, including Gram Panchayat funds, SBM-G, 15th Finance Commission Fund, State budget, etc.



Recommendations for strengthening the sanitation workforce

The background note shared the following recommendations:



Develop a **structured policy framework** at the State or national level to **streamline recruitment, payment, job responsibilities** and **protections for sanitation workers**



Have **structured incentives** and **fair wages** to improve financial stability



Formulate **State-level policies** defining sanitation workers' roles, rights and protections



Conduct **awareness campaigns** to **improve community respect** for sanitation workers



Provide **PPEs to sanitation workers**



Create a **database** and formalize **employment contracts** to help sanitation workers **access government schemes** and **demand better working conditions**, and track sanitation workers and **link them with skill development programmes like PM-DAKSH**



Engage the **private sector** and **CSOs in training programmes** to enhance service quality



Mandate **regular health check-ups, insurance** and **medical coverage** for workers



Best practice from Pirangut Gram Panchayat in Maharashtra, 2022

- ❖ A best-practice model where the **Gram Panchayat employs sanitation workers with structured contracts, fair wages** (INR 10,000 to INR 12,000), **health insurance** and **protective gear**.
- ❖ During **contractual engagement**, each worker is paid **INR 10,000 per month**.
- ❖ During **permanent engagement**, each worker is paid **INR 12,000 per month**.
- ❖ Payment was done through **Gram Panchayat funds** allocated for health and sanitation.

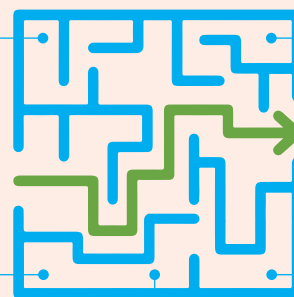
Challenges faced by sanitation workers in rural areas

Data deficiency:

The absence of a centralized database makes monitoring and policymaking difficult

Lack of formal recognition:

Many sanitation workers are not officially recognized due to the absence of a uniform definition



Social stigma:

Sanitation workers often face discrimination and low social status

Safety concerns:

Most workers do not receive adequate protective gear or safety training

Poor wages and job insecurity:

Many workers are engaged on a contractual basis with delayed payments and no job security

The UNICEF & UNILEVER-Domestos co-creation workshop: Shaping sanitation solutions



With numerous assets being created under SBM-G, the sanitation workers formed the crux to maintain uninterrupted sanitation services through these assets. However, in rural spaces, these sanitation workers exist and work in an unstructured way and are not prioritized. For collaborative work between UNILEVER-Domestos and UNICEF on the engagement and system strengthening of sanitation workers to ensure sustained safe sanitation in rural areas, the co-creation workshop was organized on 6–7 June 2022 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The co-creation workshop reflected on the current engagement of sanitation workers in terms of their roles, responsibilities, capacities, training systems and work opportunities while focusing on best practices, challenges and bottlenecks in the sanitation worker system in the context of scalable, safe sanitation in India. This workshop was organized with representatives from UNILEVER-Domestos, UNICEF UK, UNICEF India, UNICEF partner organizations, including Urban Management Centre (UMC), Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES), local government, employers' and workers' organizations.

Resources created during the workshop



Draft content for capacity development of sanitation workers, as well as their employers and engagers, including technical aspects, business models, etc.



Priorities and suggestive content for tools and approaches for **engaging water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service providers**



Suggestive ideas for innovative communication materials, assets, and approaches to promote the role of WASH workers so they can perform work with safety and dignity

5 job roles in focus for sanitation workers in rural areas



Cleaning of toilets: community sanitation complex, institutional toilets and household toilets



Desludging/emptying of septic tanks/pits



Drain cleaning



Street sweeping



Waste collection, sorting, treatment, etc.

A literature review on the existing initiatives on capacity-building of sanitation workers and recommendations was carried out in anticipation of the workshop. An approach paper, "Background Note on the Current Status of Engagement Modalities of Sanitation Workers in India," was developed.

A strategic road map was designed to professionalize sanitation work and promote the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.



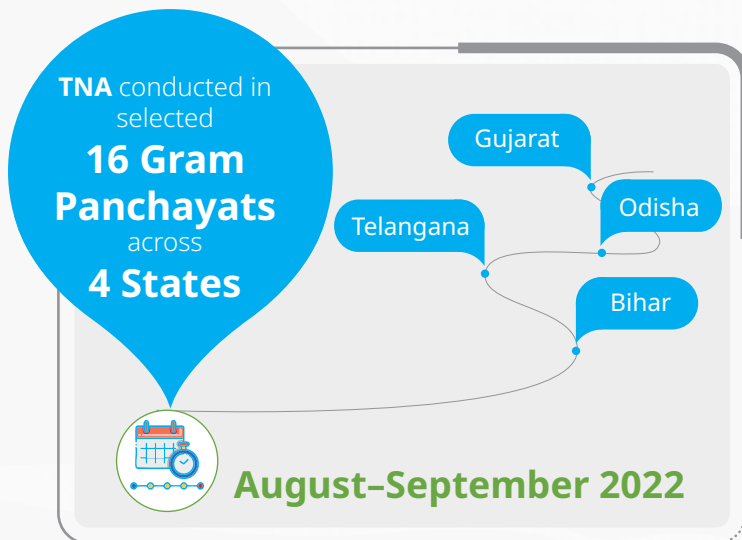
UNICEF and UNILEVER-Domestos stakeholders coming together for the co-creation workshop in Mumbai, Maharashtra



1.5

Assessing training needs for professional sanitation work

A training needs assessment (TNA) was planned to assess and understand the status of sanitation work and workers engaged in sanitation service and their training needs.



Training of trainers using a poster that highlights the rights and entitlements of sanitation workers in Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Highlights of TNA

Key informant interviews with Gram Panchayat functionaries and other agencies engaged in the employment of sanitation workers (block level, district level officials and private sector agencies) to **understand the knowledge gaps** about the engagement modalities, including awareness and sensitivity towards the safety and dignity of sanitation workers in rural areas.



Assessment of sanitation workers' engagement in cleaning community, public and institutional toilets; road sweeping; door-to-door waste collection; managing waste processing facilities.



Assessment of master trainers' understanding of subject knowledge, skills and capacity for **training delivery to sanitation workers** engaged in Gram Panchayats.



Surveys conducted for ground truthing during the TNA

| Stakeholders | Surveyed numbers |
|--|------------------|
| Gram Panchayat functionaries (Sarpanch, Deputy Sarpanch, Talati, Village Secretary, School and Anganwadi Principal) | 16 |
| Sanitation workers (cleaning of institutional, public and community toilets; cleaning of sewer line and maintenance hole; street sweeping; and waste collection) | 20 |
| Master trainers (engaged for training related to sanitation work) | 15 |



Key findings of TNA

- Social taboos and discrimination against sanitation workers still exist.
- Need to enhance the capacity of the Gram Panchayat to manage human resources (HR) and monitor sanitation work.
- No dedicated fund is allocated to Gram Panchayat to engage sanitation workers or for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of sanitation infrastructure. Gram Panchayats manage sanitation activities through their own funds.
- No dedicated funding source is allocated for sanitation activities.
- The availability of ad hoc sanitation workers hinders adoption of model contract agreements.
- There is an unavailability of basic needs in the workplace, such as water for handwashing, cleaning or drinking, toilets, etc.
- Sanitation workers do not use personal protective equipment (PPE) or safety gear during work due to unavailability, discomfort, being unaware of its importance, or issues of affordability.
- Need to sensitize and build the capacity of sanitation workers and Gram Panchayat functionaries on the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.
- Desludging and emptying of pits as a sanitation service is not provided by most Gram Panchayats. Residents directly contact private service providers for the service unregulated.

1.6

The safety and dignity toolkit for sanitation workers



UNICEF partnered with a local partner based in Ahmedabad, Urban Management Centre (UMC) to enhance the capacities of master trainers, sanitation workers and other stakeholders. Resource materials were developed in 2023 to help professionalize sanitation work and promote the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.

1

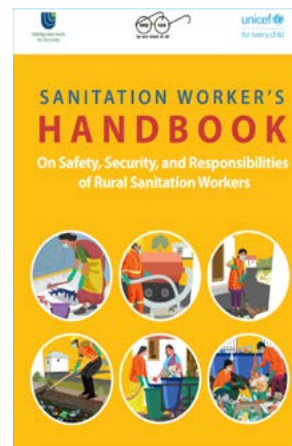
A **toolkit** was developed, which served as trainers notes for master trainers, comprising 16 modules. The training content was developed and utilized to train the master trainers, janitors and sanitation workers.



Toolkit for master trainers (in English)

2

A **bilingual handbook** for sanitation workers.



Sanitation worker's handbook (in English)

3

Four bilingual posters* on the following topics:

- Dignity of sanitation workers
- PPE kits to be used by sanitation workers
- Rights and entitlements of sanitation workers
- Adopting the right practices for sanitation services

*Many States have translated them in their local languages such as Tamil, Bengali, etc.



Posters on safety and dignity of sanitation workers (left - in English; right - in Hindi)

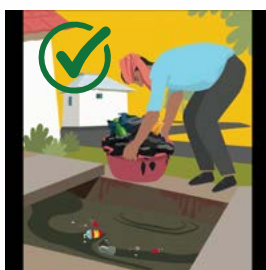
4

A **short film** on the dignity and social inclusion of sanitation workers (in Hindi with English subtitles).

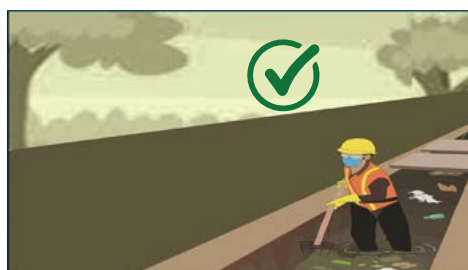
5

Five bilingual GIFs on the following topics:

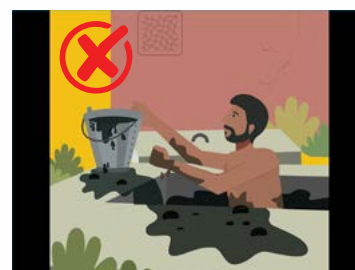
- Wrong practice: Manual scavenging
- Ensuring the safety of sanitation workers while working
- The legal implication of manual scavenging: Fine and imprisonment
- Use of PPE kits by sanitation workers while sorting solid waste
- Right practice of drain cleaning by sanitation workers



GIF on right practice of drain cleaning (in English)



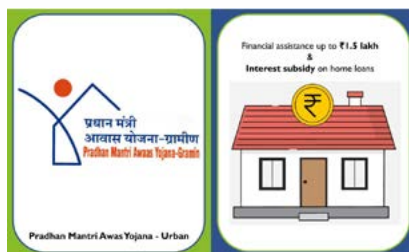
GIF on PPE kits for safety of sanitation workers (in Hindi)



GIF on manual scavenging (in English)

6

Two games on (i) benefits and schemes available for sanitation workers; and (ii) use of PPE kits and possible hazards.



Game on pairing schemes with their benefits for awareness generation



Games on pairing possible hazards and use of correct PPE kits

7

Certificates for master trainers and sanitation workers on completion of their trainings.



Certificate for master trainers (in English)



Certificate for sanitation workers (in Hindi)

1.7

Building State-level capacities for promoting sanitation workers' safety and dignity



Capacities of the local governance and service providers on 3 Fs: Finance (funding sourcing and management); Functions (roles technical and managerial skills); and Functionaries (capacitated in-house HR or capacities to outsource) are most crucial for sustaining sanitation services. Under the aegis of this partnership, UNICEF designed and rolled out a strategic cascading capacity-building plan.



Training of KRPs on the safety and dignity of rural sanitation workers in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in April 2023

Key resource persons (KRPs) were identified from each State and a four-day residential training was planned. The detailed toolkit, developed for strengthening the work environment of rural sanitation workers focusing on their 'safety and dignity,' was disseminated through the four-day residential training of 51 KRPs from 16 States at Ahmedabad, Gujarat from 4–7 April 2023. Experts from UMC facilitated the training. To cross-learn and understand field reality, participants



Participants flipping through a toolkit for master trainers during the residential training in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

also visited three villages in Ahmedabad, Gujarat and interacted with Panchayats, contractors as well as sanitation workers engaged in these identified villages.

These 51 KRPs went back to their respective States and trained 4,614 master trainers at the State and district levels in two years, i.e., 2023 and 2024. To assess the knowledge and understanding of the master trainers, pre- and post-tests were conducted using UNICEF's RapidPro platform. These master trainers were equipped with knowledge to train sanitation workers, create more master trainers and sensitize local government councils. This was initiated to strengthen their knowledge and capacities on sanitation, advocate to prioritize the safety and dignity of sanitation workers and professionalize sanitation work. These 4,614 master trainers trained 28,251 sanitation workers on their safety and dignity across 16 UNICEF-supported States. Over 5,000 sanitation workers were linked with various social protection schemes.



Demonstration on donning and doffing of PPE kit by KRPs during the training in Ahmedabad, Gujarat



4 DAY RESIDENTIAL TRAINING

4-7 April 2023 | Ahmedabad, Gujarat



51 KRPs trained from 16 States



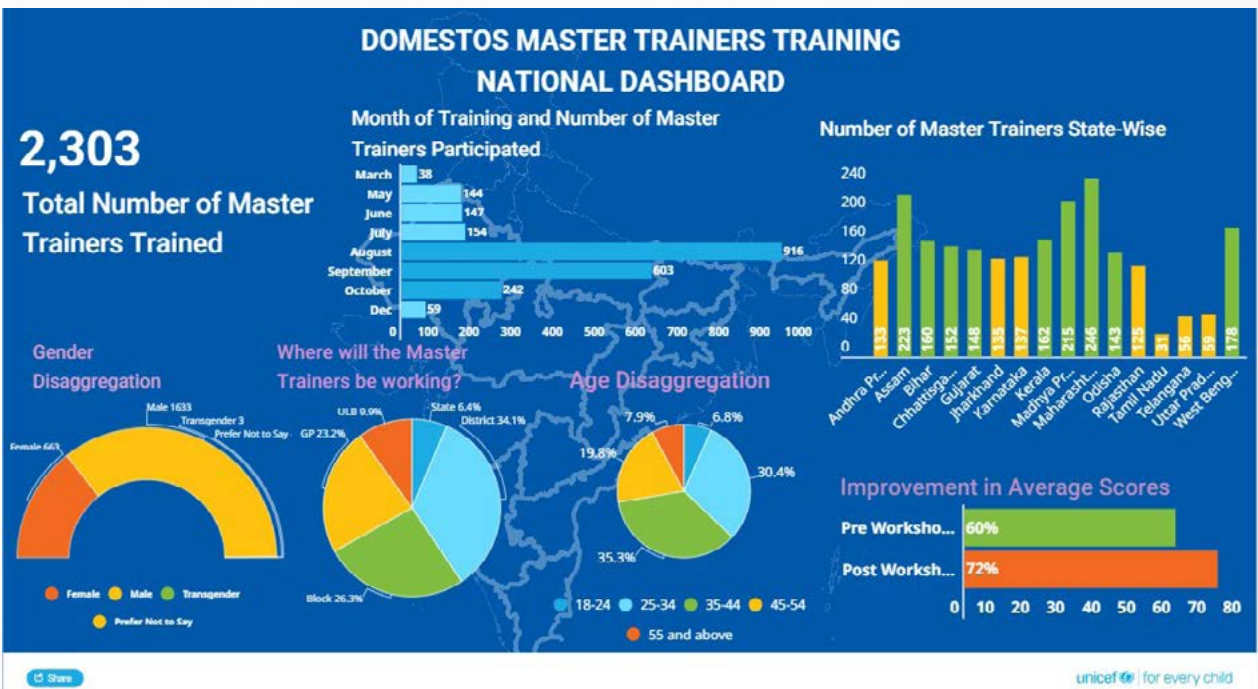
4,614 master trainers trained at State and district levels by the KRPs



Presentation of action plan at the residential training in Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Field visit conducted in three villages of Ahmedabad, Gujarat as part of the residential training



A national dashboard was developed to capture the data of the master trainers' training at the State level in 2023



Group photo of KRPs and officials at the 4-day residential training in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in April 2023

1.8

Strengthening sanitation in India: Supporting the Swachh Bharat Mission (G)



Achieving sustained outcomes requires strategic policy reforms. UNICEF's ongoing advocacy and collaborative dialogues with the Government of India and sector partners have resulted in significant government policy revisions and the formulation of new frameworks where necessary. This partnership has been pivotal in advancing safely managed sanitation and implementing innovative interventions under the ODF Plus framework. These efforts have contributed directly to the broader goal of achieving SDG 6.2. These efforts were supported by the UNILEVER-Domestos partnership.

Advancing the safety and dignity of sanitation workers

Since 2022, UNICEF's national-level advocacy efforts with Central/State governments have prioritized enhancing the safety and dignity of rural sanitation workers. This sustained engagement achieved a significant milestone in 2024 when the Government of India integrated this focus as a core theme in its annual SBM-G campaign, 'Swachhata hi Sewa' (15 September–2 October). Furthermore, directives were issued to ensure linking sanitation workers with 10 existing government social protection schemes, reinforcing inclusive development practices and improving welfare outcomes.



Poster circulated during the preparatory phase of 'Swachhata hi Sewa' by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India

Partnering with TISS: Building skilled human resources for sanitation

To address the shortage of skilled professionals in the sanitation sector, UNICEF partnered with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to revamp the existing postgraduate diploma (PGD) in WASH. Though UNICEF-TISS partnership is a long-standing one, the change in the flagship programmes and the need for professionals on climate change and WASH was critical, and hence, the course curriculum was revamped to fit the current context. This academic collaboration envisions developing WASH professionals with knowledge and skills in strengthening the O&M

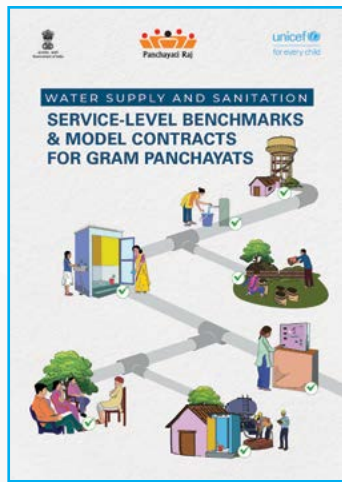


Presentation of group work by students during their PGD WASH course in 2024-25 academic session at TISS, Mumbai campus

of toilets and contributing to ensuring sustainable service delivery. This initiative strengthens HR in WASH and climate change sectors, producing trained professionals equipped to drive SDG 6.

Setting service-level benchmarks for rural sanitation

Recognizing the absence of service-level standards and benchmarks for rural sanitation services, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) to develop benchmarks and self-assessment protocols for local self-governance institutions like Gram Panchayats in 2023, this initiative resulted in a joint advisory letter from MoJS and MoPR (joint DO letter dated 19 September 2024), directing States to implement these standards and enhance service delivery effectiveness.



Manual on service-level benchmarks and model contracts on water supply and sanitation

Promoting occupational safety through standard operating procedures

Responding to a request from the MoJS, UNICEF collaborated with a technical agency to conduct field research and identify essential safety gear tailored to specific job roles in rural sanitation. This partnership led to the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) that safeguard the occupational safety and well-being of sanitation workers.

Enhancing climate-resilient sanitation infrastructure

UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) to assess the resilience of existing sanitation infrastructure and contribute to designing climate-resilient systems. These efforts ensure continuous sanitation services during emergencies, strengthening disaster preparedness and response in vulnerable regions.



Address by Jitendra Srivastava, IAS, Joint Secretary, DDWS, Government of India, at the inception workshop on climate-resilient sanitation infrastructure in New Delhi in September 2024

Strengthening advocacy and government communication strategies

UNICEF has played a pivotal role in communication and advocacy, collaborating with the Government of India and State Governments to disseminate targeted messages during the annual SBM-G campaign, 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' (15 September–2 October 2024). These efforts have successfully enhanced public awareness and mobilized communities towards improved sanitation practices.



Poster celebrating 10 years of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen developed in 2024

2 State-level stories of transformation



Women participants being imparted training using innovative games on WASH in Dindigul, Chennai



Participants learn about government welfare schemes and their benefits through pairing games at SIPRD-Assam

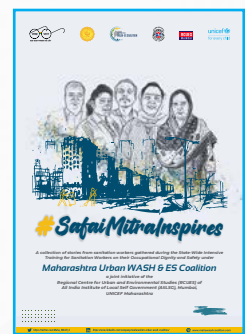
2A. Capacity building and behaviour change for safe sanitation

2A.1

Maharashtra: A transformational journey for sanitation workers



In Maharashtra, a transformative initiative has been reshaping the lives of sanitation workers by aligning dignity with safety. The 'State-wide Intensive Capacity-Building Programme for Sanitation Workers,' led by Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES) at All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), Mumbai, under Maharashtra Urban WASH and Environmental Sanitation (ES) coalition, in partnership with UNICEF Maharashtra and the State Government, acknowledges sanitation workers as essential to community health and sustainability. Despite progress under initiatives like SBM 2.0, sanitation workers still face unsafe conditions, financial instability and social stigma. This programme tackled these issues through a two-phase training model – training master trainers and empowering grass roots sanitation workers across the State.²



Book on
#SafaiMitraInspires
developed by UNICEF and
partners in Maharashtra

Transformative training: A two-phase model



² Statewide Intensive Capacity Program of Sanitation Workers on their Occupational Safety and Dignity - https://www.mahawashcoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Statewide-Intensive-Capacity-Building-Programs-on-Occupational-Safety-and-Dignity-of-Sanitation-Workers-in-Maharashtra_MAHAWESC_April-2024.pdf

Addressing gaps and building a sustainable future

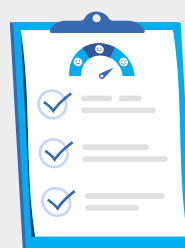
The programme highlighted systemic gaps, such as workers' limited awareness of rights and benefits. Participants received reflective jackets, gloves, masks and handbooks outlining safety guidelines to bridge these gaps. These resources symbolized acknowledgement and respect, empowering workers to embrace safer practices.

Maharashtra's initiative established a foundation for systemic change, advocating for regular training, refresher courses and interdepartmental collaboration.

The programme envisions a future where sanitation workers are recognized as key contributors to public health and sustainability. It demonstrates how education and collaboration can drive meaningful change, transforming lives and building a more equitable society.

Stories of impact: From awareness to empowerment

Madhuri Dhotre, a street sweeper from Baramati, exemplifies the programme's impact. A widow and mother of two, Madhuri's confidence and safety practices improved significantly after the training. "Now, I feel much more confident," she said. Her newfound awareness of PPE usage and hygiene practices not only safeguarded her health, but also inspired her colleagues. Ravindra Ramesh Selote, an engineer-turned-master trainer, shifted his focus from task management to advocating for worker dignity. His efforts included organizing health camps and training sessions emphasizing PPE usage, resulting in reduced health issues and increased pride among workers.



Assessment of sanitation worker training in Maharashtra: Insights from a recall survey

In 2024, at Maharashtra, a **recall survey** was conducted to assess the recall status of training provided to sanitation workers. Out of 3500 sanitation workers trained across various districts in 2023, 1,100 were randomly selected for feedback on their training experience.

The results were overwhelmingly encouraging, with **94 per cent of the surveyed sanitation workers reporting that the training was highly beneficial**. Respondents indicated that they are **now consistently using safety gear while performing their duties** and are **availing various social protection schemes**. This positive response underscores the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing the safety and well-being of sanitation workers.



Awareness training programme for sanitation workers in Thane, Maharashtra

2A.2

Bihar: Engaging supervisors for professionalizing sanitation work

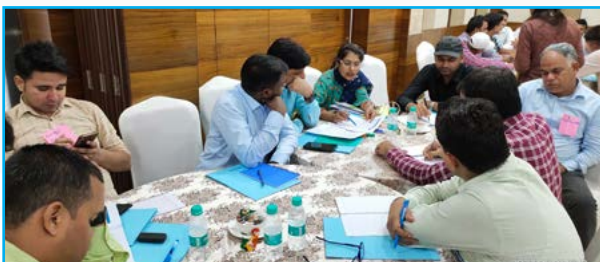


In Bihar, sanitation supervisors are strategically positioned across rural and urban areas to strengthen sanitation programmes. In rural settings, the Gram Panchayats are mandated to implement sanitation initiatives under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) framework. Most Gram Panchayats have designated sanitation supervisors.



Practical demonstration on donning and doffing PPE kits in Bihar

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of sanitation services, UNICEF Bihar, in collaboration with Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA) Phase II, provided technical assistance through a local partner – the Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT). A two-day capacity-building workshop for sanitation supervisors was conducted, incorporating field visits to empower rural Bihar's sanitation workforce with advanced skills in solid and liquid waste management (SLWM). This initiative supported the ODF Plus programme.



Discussion on the safety, security and dignity of sanitation workers in Patna, Bihar

Participants and district coverage

- A total of 873 sanitation supervisors were trained across 17 districts.
- The cohort included 85 female supervisors (9.7 per cent), underscoring the importance of advancing gender-inclusive recruitment strategies.

Key outcomes

- The training programme linked 13,775 Swachhata Karmis (sanitation workers) to social security schemes.
- Participants demonstrated significant knowledge gains, with average assessment scores improving from 8.29 (pre-assessment) to 13.91 (post-assessment) – a 69 per cent increase.
- Each sanitation supervisor developed an actionable plan, including ward visits, community engagement on SLWM and strategies to promote user charge collection for sanitation services.

This training underscored the importance of strengthening institutional capacities and technical expertise to sustain ODF Plus outcomes, promote inclusive participation and reinforce rural sanitation systems in Bihar.

Training methodology



Presentations and visual demonstrations on key SLWM concepts

Group discussions and peer exchanges to foster shared learning

Group exercises designed to develop practical implementation strategies

Field visits to observe and analyse real-time practices

Pre- and post-assessments, with data digitally recorded for evaluation and impact measurement



Trainers being awarded certificates on completing the ToT in Patna, Bihar

Uttar Pradesh: Upholding safety and dignity for sanitation workers in Kasganj district



Declaration of ODF Plus Model village under SBM-G Phase II is a culmination of efforts to manage solid and liquid waste of the village, as well as maintaining visual cleanliness. In most of the villages of the district, sanitation workers are engaged to maintain cleanliness. They clean the village roads, garbage points, drains, choked soak pits/leach pits, CSCs, toilets in government buildings, etc. and while doing so, they face various occupational and health hazards. UNICEF's advocacy with the State Government and district administration highlighted the need to emphasize the safety and dignity of these sanitation workers.

Realizing the importance of this issue, SBM-G, Uttar Pradesh, with the support of UNICEF, organized trainings for master trainers on the safety and dignity of sanitation workers in three regions, **Aligarh, Gorakhpur & Lucknow**. District Consultants, Block Coordinators and Apprentice Development Officer (ADO), Panchayat from Kasganj district also attended the trainings. The trainings included classroom lectures and group work, followed by a field visit. The participants realized the occupational hazards and the social challenges faced by sanitation workers. This created a sense of responsibility among the participants to take action for the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.



Disposal of waste using proper safety gear

As part of this intervention, the participants from Kasganj organized a training in Kasganj district in which 60 participants including block level officials and 49 sanitation workers from 7 blocks attended.

The training was jointly facilitated by the key resource person (KRP) and the master trainers.

This district training in Kasganj led to the issuance of an order by the District Panchayat Raj Officer to all ADO (Panchayat) to provide safety kits to all sanitation workers working in the villages. The letter specified that the ADOs should ensure that the safety kits from the funds of the Gram Panchayats are available to sanitation workers and that they use them during their work. Following the instructions, safety kits were made available to all **548 sanitation workers** of the district from the Gram Panchayats. Strict supervision was done through the district/development block level ODF war room. Photographs of the cleaning works with safety kits were obtained regularly. This has resulted in sanitation workers wearing safety kits while they were on duty and in action. This initiative by the Panchayati Raj official sensitized the sanitation workers on how the use of PPE kits can protect them from many diseases and hazards. This highly motivated the sanitation workers to use PPE kits, while they are engaged in RRCs to handle waste, pulling e-rickshaws to collect waste and working in CSCs. Smt. Meena Devi, CSC caretaker of Mamu Gram Panchayat under Kasganj block, said, "It feels good when I clean the CSC wearing gloves, mask, apron and shoes. It not only keeps me clean, but also gives me a sense of respect". The sanitation workers were also felicitated by the district team during the national campaign in September 2024 (Swachhata hi Sewa 2024).



A rally of waste collection vehicles driven by women in Odisha

2B. Innovative solutions and demonstration models

2B.1

Rajasthan: Innovating for ODF Plus through Gram Swachhata Rath



Innovative waste management solution driving ODF Plus sustainability in Rajasthan

Under the SBM-G Phase II, UNICEF Rajasthan has introduced an innovative approach to strengthen the ODF Plus status by promoting effective solid waste management practices. In collaboration with a local partner, UNICEF facilitated the development of a groundbreaking low-cost waste collection vehicle currently operational in two Panchayats of Pratapgarh district. This initiative addresses key challenges of waste collection, transportation and overall sanitation maintenance, contributing to the vision of visual cleanliness in villages.

A holistic approach to sanitation and waste management

Visual cleanliness in villages is a core objective under SBM-G Phase II, focusing on regular waste collection, street cleaning, drain maintenance and optimal use of sanitation and SLWM assets. To address logistical and operational challenges in achieving these goals, UNICEF provided technical support to design and implement an innovative motorbike-mounted waste collection vehicle named as "Gram Swachhata Rath". This multipurpose vehicle ensures efficient management of SLWM services while enhancing accessibility in diverse geographical settings.

Facts about Gram Swachhata Rath

- The **modification cost of the motorbike**, ranges between INR 1 lakh to INR 1.5 lakhs (USD 1,100–1,700),* making it an **affordable solution** for local governments to use in sanitation work.
- The **materials used for the vehicle's construction** include mild steel with a steel-plated coating inside, ensuring **durability and resistance to damage from waste**.
- **Second-hand** or **unused motorbikes** can be **repurposed** for this innovation.
- The **operational cost is significantly lower** compared to alternatives like e-vehicles or tractors.
- This is **particularly advantageous in western Rajasthan**, where e-vehicles face challenges and tractors are unsuitable for narrow lanes.



Sanitation workers with the Gram Swachhata Rath in Udaipur, Rajasthan

*as on 2024

Key features of the innovation

- Door-to-door waste collection**
The vehicle has **separate compartments for wet, dry, menstrual, and hazardous waste**, enabling proper segregation at the source. This feature also serves as a **behaviour change communication (BCC) tool**, encouraging communities to adopt waste segregation practices.
- Drain cleaning capability**
The vehicle includes a **pressure pump** and a 300-litre water tank mounted beneath it. A long hose attached to the pump **ensures effective cleaning of drains, even in narrow lanes**.
- Cleaning institutional and community toilets**
The high-pressure water system **efficiently cleans community sanitary complexes (CSCs)** with minimal water usage, supporting hygiene and sustainability in sanitation infrastructure.

Impact on the broader community

- The vehicle promotes community-wide participation in sustainable waste management practices by simplifying waste segregation and collection.
- The integration of innovative features like the pressure pump aids in maintaining the cleanliness of drains, CSCs and other public spaces, contributing to the overall health and hygiene of the village.
- The model encourages scalability, potentially replicating it across other regions to strengthen ODF Plus sustainability.

Through training and capacity-building initiatives under innovative practices, the State has motivated various Panchayats to scale up the initiative and integrate the same within the O&M system at the village level. The vehicle's adaptability and cost-effectiveness make it ideal for wider adoption compared to the other vehicle options mentioned in the guidelines, offering a sustainable path forward in achieving SBM-G. This initiative underscores the importance of technical innovation, community engagement and strategic partnerships in driving transformative change in rural sanitation.

Gram Swachhata Rath

Functionality and accessibility

- The vehicle operates effectively across various village setups, whether densely populated or scattered.
- A reverse gear and gearbox system enhances manoeuvrability in confined spaces, making collection and transportation to resource recovery centres (RRCs) seamless.

Worker dignity and livelihood

- The hydraulic system eliminates the need for manual handling of waste, while promoting dignity and safety for sanitation workers.
- The vehicle includes compartments for storing tools, cleaning supplies, and safety gear, ensuring a well-equipped and secure work environment.
- It offers a livelihood opportunity for sanitation workers, as the vehicle can also be used to provide services in neighbouring Gram Panchayats.



Left - 300-litre water tank fitted in the vehicle for drain cleaning, CSC cleaning, etc. Right - the hydraulic system for emptying waste showing separate chambers for biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste



Innovative sanitation vehicle with bifurcation for biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste

2B.2

Madhya Pradesh: Dignity card for sanitation workers



Sanitation workers are the backbone of urban and rural cleanliness but often face numerous social and economic challenges, including lack of access to basic amenities, health care and social security issues. To address these challenges and integrate sanitation workers into the broader social protection framework, the Government of Madhya Pradesh introduced the 'dignity card'. Till December 2024, approximately 3,880 sanitation workers were linked with dignity cards.

This unique initiative seeks to uplift sanitation workers by linking them with various social welfare schemes, ensuring access to essential services like housing, health care, education, employment and financial inclusion. By bringing these schemes under one platform, the dignity card aims to reduce sanitation workers' hurdles and create a seamless pathway for workers to benefit from government programmes that improve their quality of life. The 'dignity card' link the workers with the following 12 programmes:

| योगना का नाम | | हॉ / नही | योगना का नाम | हॉ / नही |
|---|--|----------|------------------------------|----------|
| आवासक प्रदानमन्त्री आवास योजना (पीएमएवाई) | | | स्वच्छता उग्रामी योजना (SUY) | |
| घरेलू नल कनेक्शन: अटल कायाकल्प और शहरी परिवर्तन मिशन (AMRUT) जल जीवन मिशन (JIM), कोई भी राज्य योजना | | | पीएम जन धन योजना | |
| शौचालय / आईएचएचएल: स्वच्छ भारत मिशन | | | राशन कार्ड | |
| मिजली: पीएम सहज मिजली हर घर योजना (सौभाग्य) | | | मनरेगा जॉब कार्ड | |
| एलपीजी: पीएम उज्ज्वला योजना | | | पेंशन योजना | |
| स्वास्थ्य कार्ड और स्वास्थ्य बीमा: आयुमान भारत | | | आधार कार्ड | |
| स्वास्थ्य बीमा: पीएम जन आरोग्य योजना (पीएम-जेएवाई) | | | अन्य | |
| टीकाकरण: मिशन इन्द्रधनुष | | | | |

Dignity card for sanitation workers in Madhya Pradesh

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** A housing scheme providing affordable housing to the urban and rural poor, ensuring every Indian has a home.
- **Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SUY):** A scheme designed to provide self-employment and wage employment opportunities to urban unemployed individuals, promoting sustainable livelihoods.

The dignity card does not only links the sanitation workers with the social protection schemes, but also keeps a track on the benefits being availed by them.

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):** An initiative focused on improving urban infrastructure and ensuring essential services like water supply, sewerage and green spaces in cities.

- **Saubhagya Scheme:** A programme providing electricity connections to all households in rural and urban areas, enhancing access to power for better living standards.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:** A scheme that provides free liquid petroleum gas (LPG) connections to women from below-poverty-line households, promoting clean cooking fuel and reducing indoor air pollution.
- **Ration Card:** A government-issued document that enables eligible households to access subsidized food grains and essential commodities through the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) Job Card:** A card issued under the MNREGA scheme that guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household, ensuring livelihood security.
- **Pension Scheme:** Various government schemes provide financial support to senior citizens, widows, and disabled individuals, ensuring a basic income for vulnerable populations.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** This scheme is also known as Ayushman Bharat. This health insurance scheme provides coverage for secondary and tertiary health care services to economically disadvantaged families.
- **Mission Indradhanush:** An immunization programme increasing vaccination coverage

among children and pregnant women, ensuring protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):** A nationwide campaign promoting cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene across India, focusing on eliminating open defecation and improving waste management practices.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** A financial inclusion scheme providing universal access to banking facilities, enabling people to open bank accounts and access financial services easily.

The dignity card is thus a groundbreaking step towards recognizing the contributions of sanitation workers and ensuring their well-being. The initiative empowers these workers with opportunities for improved livelihoods, health and social security by connecting them to a wide range of social protection schemes. It underscores the Government's commitment to inclusive development and sets a precedent for other States to adopt similar measures. Ultimately, the dignity card not only enhances the socioeconomic conditions of sanitation workers but also reinforces their sense of dignity and pride in their invaluable contributions to society.



Dignity cards distributed to sanitation workers by the district administration of Ashoknagar, Madhya Pradesh



Demonstration on the use of PPE kit for master trainers in Madhya Pradesh

2B.3

Odisha: Innovative initiatives on sanitation



Availing desludging services in rural households

In rural Odisha, many households use single-pit toilets that need regular desludging. To ensure this, Gram Panchayats have been tagged for scheduled desludging. With UNICEF's support, this system has been strengthened through policy improvements, trainings and awareness campaigns. A toll-free helpline (18001030072 and 14420) has been introduced for rural areas, helping households easily request pit emptying. Group desludging using cesspool vehicles makes the process more affordable. Gradually, communities are getting motivated to avail these services, which will eventually contribute towards SDG 6.2.



Desludging of single pit in progress in Angul, Odisha

Programme feedback on urban-rural convergence for FSSM

The Government of Odisha, in association with UNICEF, has initiated a unique and unparalleled approach under the urban-rural convergence (URC) programme wherein PRI, the Drinking Water Department and the Housing and Urban Development Department have tied up to provide faecal sludge management services to rural areas with no sewer systems. A study is commissioned by UNICEF Odisha to assess institutional and operational issues emanating from this programme and to address issues of technology performance, financial constraints, institutional capacity gaps and understanding behavioural dynamics, market linkages and business models. The study is being conducted in seven districts of Odisha. The outcomes of the study will re-engineer and reshape faecal sludge management of Odisha, which other States may emulate.

FSSM programme scope

Coverage:
7 districts
of Odisha



Focus:
Rural areas
without sewer systems

2B.4

Telangana: Health care record cards for sanitation workers



Swachhata Hi Sewa (SHS) 2024 was organized nationwide from 15 September till 2 October 2024. In the rural areas of the Karimnagar district of Telangana, focus was given to the core service providers in the sanitation value chain, i.e., the sanitation workers. They play a significant role in enhancing public health outcomes and advancing Sustainable Development Goals related to sanitation.

In Karimnagar, over 3,500 sanitation workers operate in both rural and urban settings. Most rural sanitation workers were not availing social protection schemes or free health check-ups. As one of the innovative initiatives under SHS 2024, the Karimnagar district administration under the leadership of the District Collector, Ms. Pamela Satapathy, IAS, along with the technical support of UNICEF, developed a 'health care record card' to be provided to all the sanitation workers of the district. During SHS 2024, a comprehensive health check-up was organized in which 2,959 sanitation workers attended, covering both rural and urban. Each worker received a **'health care record card'** to track health issues and interventions at local health care facilities. This record helps understand sanitation workers' health history, facilitating health care providers to prescribe

appropriate treatments. Additionally, a specialized eye check-up camp identified 52 workers with cataracts, all of whom have now been referred for free surgeries.

These initiatives represent significant steps towards establishing a safety net for sanitation workers, promoting their health while ensuring their dignity and safety within the sanitation value chain.



Sanitation workers with health care record cards during Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 in Karimnagar, Telangana



Health care record cards being distributed by Deputy Commissioner Smt. Pamela Satapathy in Karimnagar, Telangana



Health care empowerment transforms Karimnagar's sanitation workers as 'Swabhav Swachhata, Sanskaar Swachhata' takes root during Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024

2B.5

Bihar: Sanitation Technology Park in Muzaffarpur district



Since 2014, Bihar has significantly improved sanitation through efforts under SBM and LSBA. Increased toilet coverage, community-led campaigns and heightened hygiene awareness mark significant milestones, with Muzaffarpur emerging as a model district. However, challenges persist in achieving universally safe, sustainable sanitation, particularly in rural areas. Continued investment and innovation are essential to move from basic facilities to resilient systems for all.

Inauguration of the Sanitation Technology Park

UNICEF in collaboration with the district administration of Muzaffarpur and with technical support from ILRT, developed the Sanitation Technology Park in Sakra Block of Muzaffarpur district in Bihar. This marks a significant milestone in the district's sanitation journey. Featuring climate-resilient sustainable sanitation technologies like raised toilets with bio digester, eco-san toilets, constructed wetlands, magic pits, junction chambers, rainwater harvesting structures, Narayan Deorao Pandharipand (NADEP) composting, waste stabilization pond, and constructed wetland. The park serves as a demonstration and training hub for local officials, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, and community stakeholders on sanitation.

On World Toilet Day, 19 November 2024, the Sanitation Technology Park was inaugurated by Mr. Subrat Kumar Sen, District Magistrate; Mr. Shreshta Anupam, Deputy Development Commissioner; and Ms. Margaret Gwada, Chief of UNICEF Bihar. Children and Jeevika self-help group (SHG) members led the inaugural proceedings, welcoming and guiding dignitaries through the park. Innovative low-cost sanitation technologies and products were also displayed. All these interventions emphasized the benefits and the linkages between sanitation, child rights and community well-being.

Way forward

The Sanitation Technology Park was highlighted as an effective demonstration hub, training centre and resource facility for exposure visits to build capacity among officials, PRI members and community stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on the need for district and block administrations to take ownership and ensure maintenance of the park. The District Magistrate agreed, underscoring the importance of replicating these tested models across other Blocks of Muzaffarpur to effectively scale safely managed sanitation services.



Low-cost sanitation products being displayed at the Sanitation Park in Muzaffarpur, Bihar



Training of master trainers on safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Jaipur, Rajasthan

2C. Strategic collaborations and convergence

Rajasthan: A common minimum commitment for sanitation workers - focusing on 3Cs



A Mission rooted in dignity and rights

UNICEF, in coordination with SBM-G Directorate, Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Rajasthan, focused on strengthening ODF Plus sustainability through planned intervention on enhancing skills, safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Rajasthan through concerted efforts initiated in 2023. Recognizing their contributions and challenges, UNICEF Rajasthan spearheaded the innovative **common minimum commitment (CMC)** initiative to uplift and empower sanitation workers, ensuring they receive the respect and dignity they deserve.



Madan Dilawar, Honourable Minister of Panchayat, Rajasthan, along with UNICEF officials, addressing a meeting of common minimum commitment (CMC) in Udaipur, Rajasthan

The 3 Cs approach: Convene, catalyse and converge for change

In 2023, UNICEF Rajasthan convened the CMC as a collaborative platform to address the complex needs of sanitation workers. Guided by a holistic approach, CMC focuses on five pillars: capacity-building, pledging resources, fostering innovations, forging collaborations and influencing policies. By partnering with government departments, civil society

organizations (CSOs), and private entities, the initiative seeks to enhance the safety, skills and social inclusion of these workers.

A central feature of the initiative is the development of master trainers, who are instrumental in reaching over 2,200 sanitation workers through capacity-building programmes and **act as catalysts to address the key barriers**. These programmes equip workers with essential skills, provide access to PPE, and link them to social welfare schemes.

As a part of this engagement, more than 150 master trainers, including Government-line departments, NGOs, corporates, the Sarpanch and private sanitation contractors, were trained to further reach out to sanitation workers to enhance their skill, safety and dignity.

A one-day 'Round-table Meeting on CMC' under the chairpersonship of the respected Minister was held on 22 August 2024 in Jaipur, Rajasthan, to understand various initiatives implemented by partners for enhancing the skills, safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Rajasthan. The partners included the line department, SBM-G, NGOs, private contractors, corporates and the Sarpanch.

Building skills and dismantling barriers

Capacity-building sessions under the CMC framework have been transformative. Sanitation workers received training in technical skills as well as health, hygiene and financial literacy. Recognizing the unique challenges women sanitation workers face, health camps were organized to address issues like hypertension and diabetes. Social barriers tied to gender, caste and self-stigma were tackled head-on, fostering greater acceptance and inclusion.

In Udaipur, for instance, sanitation workers participated in community cricket tournaments, breaking down stereotypes and strengthening ties with their communities. Innovations, such as mechanized waste collection vehicles, have further enhanced workplace safety, reducing hazardous manual practices.

Engaging urban and rural communities

The CMC extends its reach to urban settlements, where partners have connected workers with the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) for financial assistance. Gram Panchayats have embraced community ownership in rural areas, involving local leaders and residents in sanitation campaigns.

The acknowledgement and support of Sarpanchs have created a ripple effect, inspiring neighbouring villages to adopt similar practices.

Innovating for sustainability

From app-based data collection to fostering partnerships for health camps, the CMC emphasized innovation. Mechanized cleaning processes and systematic waste management are reducing the physical burden on workers, while ongoing collaborations aim to expand access to social security and health schemes.



CMC meeting in progress in Jaipur, Rajasthan

UNICEF's role in documenting best practices ensures that these innovations can be scaled up and replicated across Rajasthan.

Creating a positive environment for sanitation work

Priorities for the future

Develop a comprehensive database of sanitation workers

Enhance mechanization

Scale up health camps

Influence State-level policies to formalize sanitation work



PPE kits and posters on display for stakeholders during a CMC meeting in Udaipur, Rajasthan

The heart of the movement

At its core, the CMC is about transforming lives. It is about ensuring that sanitation workers, who risk their health to keep our surroundings clean, live with dignity, safety and pride. The initiative is improving sanitation systems and creating a more equitable society by addressing systemic inequalities and building a culture of respect and collaboration.

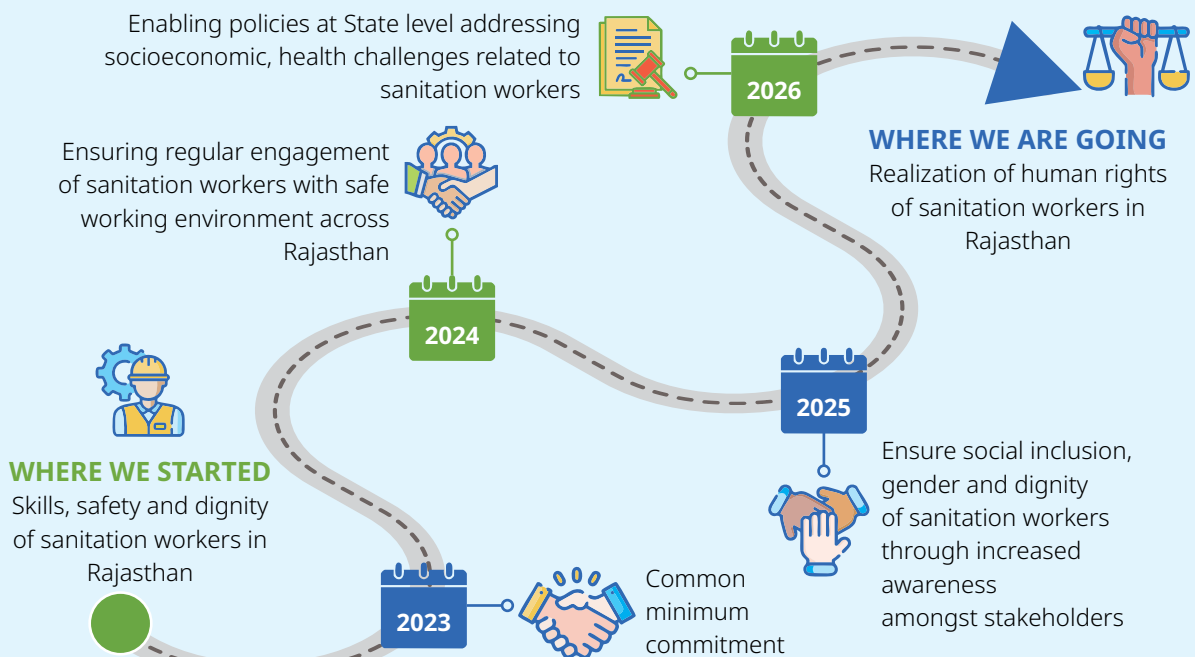
The ripple effect of change

The impact of the CMC is already visible. Workers now feel valued and empowered, communities are cleaner and more inclusive, and collaborations have strengthened the ecosystem of sanitation management. The initiative has become a model for leveraging partnerships to achieve systemic change, inspiring other States to adopt similar approaches.

A movement for dignity

The story of Rajasthan's CMC is one of hope and resilience. It is a testament to the power of collective action and the transformative potential of recognizing the dignity and rights of every individual. Through CMC, UNICEF and its partners have improved the lives of sanitation workers and set a benchmark for inclusive development.

Plans for reaching milestones ahead



West Bengal: Community-led WASH solutions in Jitujuri, Purulia



Background

The SBM-G Phase II guidelines recommend treating biodegradable waste at the household or community level and managing plastic waste at the block level. Effective waste management systems, implemented by Gram Panchayats, are essential for a healthy rural environment rather than placing responsibility solely on households.

In Jitujuri Gram Panchayat, Purulia, 31,822 households generate 153.17 kg of solid waste daily, equating to about 56 tons annually, with 130 grams of waste per person per day. The waste management process includes generation, collection, transportation, segregation and disposal. Plastic pollution, exacerbated by poor infrastructure and low awareness, poses a significant threat to public health and cleanliness.

Rural households generate around 15.9 grams of plastic waste daily, often managed through burning, burying, reusing or selling. Addressing these issues through sustainable solid waste management practices is vital for a cleaner, healthier environment. With technical support from UNICEF, the Purulia district administration has implemented a solid waste management unit to improve public health and environmental cleanliness while promoting safe waste management practices.



Solid waste management unit in Jitujuri Gram Panchayat, Purulia

Progress and results

Collection and transportation

Effective waste collection and transportation are essential for a sustainable solid waste management system. In Jitujuri Gram Panchayat, the following measures have been implemented:



Waste segregation at the solid waste management unit in Jitujuri Gram Panchayat, Purulia

1. Waste was sorted in colour-coded 10-litre bins: green for biodegradable waste and blue for non-biodegradable waste. Awareness campaigns were also organized to promote the segregation of waste.
2. 100-litre community bins were strategically placed in market areas.

3. Four drivers operated e-karts with separate containers engaged for waste collection from households and markets.
4. The waste collected was transported to treatment sites for processing.
5. SHGs, namely Upajati Maa Mahila Samiti and Maa Tara Mahila Samiti, engaged in the solid waste management unit.
6. Four sanitation workers were engaged from each SHG for waste segregation and processing.
7. The total expenditure for the project amounted to INR 44 lakhs (USD 52,634), funded through multiple sources like SBM-G, 15th Finance Commission, MGNREGA, etc. This multi-source funding approach ensured the financial sustainability of the project, facilitating the successful installation of the required units.

Solid waste management processes and disposal

- Jitujuri Gram Panchayat utilizes sustainable practices to manage biodegradable waste and convert it into useful products through pit composting, vermi-composting, etc.
- Jitujuri Gram Panchayat has established a robust system for managing non-biodegradable waste through recycling waste, reusing non-recyclable, non-biodegradable waste by creatively repurposing it into decorative items, etc.



Vermi-composting at Jitujuri solid waste management unit, Purulia

- Secured landfilling operations are employed to manage this non-recyclable inorganic waste effectively.

Outcome

- Systematic waste sorting, collecting, transporting and processing have markedly improved public health and cleanliness.
- The use of colour-coded bins for household waste, community bins for market waste and local groups for management duties has enhanced community involvement and accountability.
- Pit composting and vermi-composting have reduced biodegradable waste and produced valuable compost for agriculture.
- Recycling and reuse of non-biodegradable waste have minimized environmental pollution and supported the local economy.

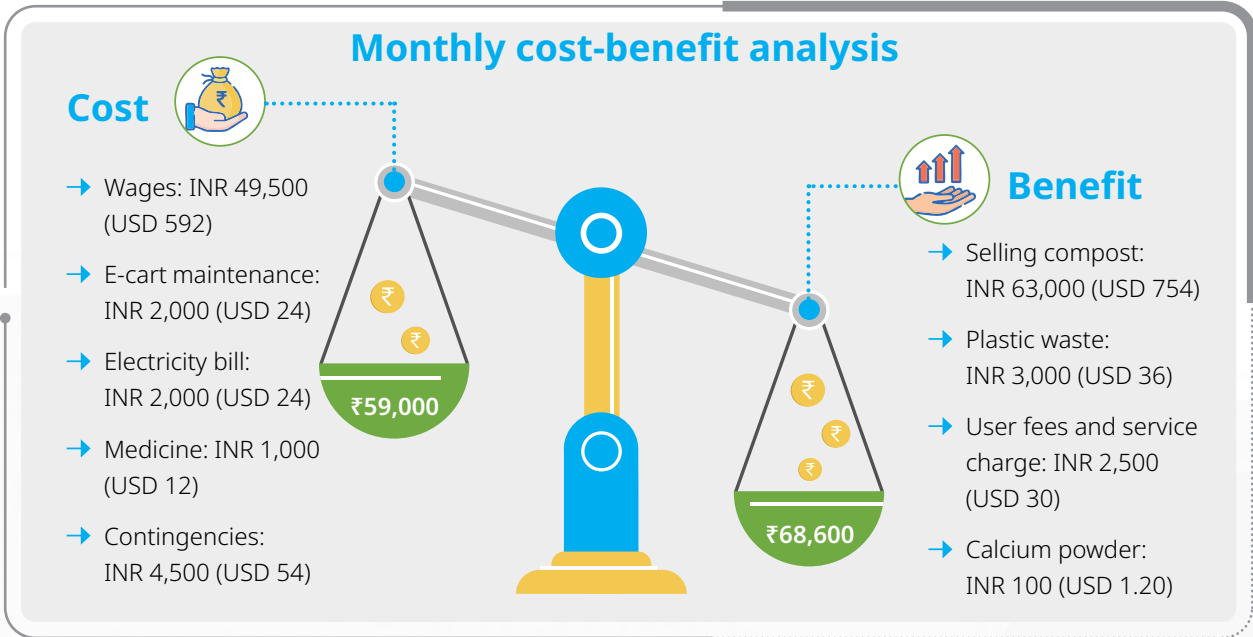
Cost-benefit analysis

The total income generated from the project to date amounts to INR 17.535 lakhs (USD 21,000).³ This includes INR 12.96 lakhs (USD 15,540) from compost manure, INR 0.975 lakhs (USD 1,170) from vermicompost, INR 0.85 lakhs (USD 1,020) from plastic recycling, INR 0.25 lakhs (USD 300) from calcium powder sales, INR 0.10 lakhs (USD 120) from the sale of tree saplings, and INR 2.4 lakhs (USD 2,880) collected as user charges from households and shops.

Challenges

- ❖ Segregation at source
- ❖ Infrastructure limitations
- ❖ Biomedical waste management
- ❖ Sustained community engagement
- ❖ Financial sustainability

³ 1 USD = INR 83.50, as of January 2025.



Floriculture at Jitujuri solid waste management unit to generate additional income



Women workers at the solid waste management unit in Jitujuri Gram Panchayat, Purulia

Lessons learned

Monitoring and evaluation
Regular reviews enhance efficiency and address gaps.

Community involvement
Local SHGs, like Upajati Maa Mahila Samiti and Maa Tara Mahila Samiti, are key to effective waste management.

Segregation strategies
Colour-coded bins improve waste segregation quality.

Recycling promotion
Local recycler partnerships reduce waste and support the economy.

Technological integration
Composting and vermi-composting manage biodegradable waste and produce valuable compost.

Madhya Pradesh: Ashoknagar district leads the way in worker dignity and empowerment



In the heart of Madhya Pradesh, Ashoknagar district stands as a testament to progress in sanitation and hygiene, driven by the collaborative efforts of district administration and UNICEF. SBM-G has made significant strides in improving rural sanitation in the State. However, it is evident that the success of these initiatives depends heavily on the front-line workers – sanitation workers – who ensure the functionality of these systems.

Sanitation workers, often referred to as ‘Safai Mitras,’ are essential for maintaining public health and hygiene. However, they face numerous challenges, including hazardous working conditions, inadequate protective gear and social stigma. Despite these obstacles, they remain committed to their roles, underscoring the urgent need for improved working conditions and recognition of their contributions.

To address these challenges, Ashoknagar’s district administration, led by Mr. Subhash Kumar Dwivedi, District Collector and Mrs. Neha Jain, Chief Executive Officer, initiated a comprehensive plan to create a supportive environment for sanitation workers. With technical assistance from UNICEF, they launched capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and safety of these workers.



Health drive for sanitation workers in Madhya Pradesh

Highlights of Ashoknagar

- ❖ **100 per cent sanitation workers** were **mapped and linked** with PM Kisan Yojana, Literacy Mission, PMJJBY, PMSBY and PDS.
- ❖ Out of 320 sanitation workers, **275 sanitation workers are regularly paid.**
- ❖ Chief Executive Officer, Ashoknagar launched **Mission Swabhiman** where updates on interventions related to sanitation workers are **reviewed weekly.**
- ❖ Chief medical health officer issued a **circular on health card for regular health check-up of sanitation workers.**
- ❖ "**Snehabhoj**" was organized, where DC, DM and sanitation workers, **have food together.**

The initiative began in August 2023 with district consultation sessions that laid the groundwork for a strategic approach tailored to the unique challenges faced by sanitation workers. The administration developed a comprehensive strategy that identified key issues and set clear objectives to improve working conditions. This included integrating capacity-building and social behaviour change communication (SBCC) components into the District Action Plan to prioritize safety and dignity.

Challenges

- ❖ **Resource allocation** for training and equipment
- ❖ **Societal stigma associated with sanitation work**, which can be addressed through awareness campaigns
- ❖ **Logistical challenge** of ensuring effective training alongside daily operations

A significant aspect of this initiative was the establishment of a cadre of master trainers equipped with enhanced technical skills in sanitation practices. These trainers were responsible for cascading their knowledge down to sanitation workers at various levels – district, block and village – ensuring widespread access to training. Each Gram Panchayat identified at least one sanitation worker for thematic tasks, registering them with local authorities for better support.

Training programmes were conducted to enhance the competencies of sanitation workers, ensuring they could perform their duties effectively and safely. Health camps were organized with local health departments, providing essential medical screenings tailored specifically for sanitation workers. This initiative addressed immediate health needs and emphasized the importance of hygiene in their daily work.

The district administration ensured sanitation workers had regular access to essential supplies, such as PPE and necessary tools. Financial resources were mobilized through Gram Panchayats using 15th Finance Commission funds. The sanitation workers were given dignity cards linked to significant social protection schemes like PM Kisan Yojana, Literacy Mission, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and PDS.⁴ This safety net enhances the well-being of sanitation workers and provides economic safety.

To shift public attitudes towards sanitation workers, SBCC campaigns were launched to foster respect and understanding of their crucial role in maintaining public health. Regular monitoring and evaluation ensured accountability and provided opportunities for ongoing improvements based on participant feedback.

The results have been promising. Over 62 per cent of sanitation workers have enhanced their skills regarding ODF Plus sustainability practices. Access to essential supplies has improved significantly; many now have PPE kits that enhance their safety while performing their duties. Additionally, a substantial number of sanitation workers have gained access to various government-sponsored social schemes, providing them with economic security.

The district administration's initiative of Ashoknagar exemplifies how targeted interventions can empower sanitation workers while improving public health outcomes in rural areas. Equipping these individuals with the necessary skills and fostering an environment of respect and dignity paved the way for sustainable sanitation practices that benefit entire communities – an endeavour supported wholeheartedly by UNICEF's commitment to enhancing lives through better hygiene practices in Madhya Pradesh. This initiative not only uplifts the lives of sanitation workers but also strengthens community health standards across Ashoknagar, creating a ripple effect that fosters overall development in the region.



"Snehabhoj" – a feast where district officials and sanitation workers share meals together in Ashoknagar, Madhya Pradesh

⁴ Refer to Glossary on page x

Assam: UNICEF-SIPRD partnership on strengthening sanitation services



Assam adopted a convergent approach to professionalize sanitation services and promote the safety and dignity of sanitation workers. State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD), Assam, a premier institute for training and research in the broader field of Panchayat and rural development, planned and rolled out comprehensive cascading training programmes in a phased manner at both the State and district levels. CSOs, media houses and certified cesspool operators also participated in the training. The training programme aimed to empower sanitation workers by providing them with essential knowledge on legal provisions, safety practices and the effective use of PPE.



Training of master trainers on safety and dignity of sanitation workers at SIPRD-Assam, Guwahati

During the training, the regular use of PPE kits, various social protection schemes and possible ways of mechanizing hazardous work were discussed. To maximize outreach, master trainers were selected from all relevant departments in urban and rural scenarios, creating an

To sensitize the elected representatives of local self-governance, SIPRD, in collaboration with UNICEF, trained 979 Gram Panchayat Secretaries and Accredited Engineers of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department online.

enabling environment for strengthening urban-rural convergence in the State. A detailed training schedule was planned, spanning two and half days, with residential facilities organized for all participants, including field visits for hands-on experience.

Sanitation workers training programme in Assam



225
master
trainers
from various
departments



1,525
sanitation
workers
across 10
districts

Convergence at the district level

To strengthen the district and grass roots intervention, UNICEF provided technical support to SIPRD to enhance convergence with line departments to identify sanitation workers engaged in rural and urban areas. The convergent actions were as follows:

Health

- Convergence was initiated with National Health Mission (NHM) for free health check-up camps for sanitation workers and enrolling them under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana.
- Convergent action with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission for the generation of ABHA identity cards. Ayushman cards were made available for both rural and urban beneficiaries.



Health camp for sanitation workers in Kokrajhar, Assam



Distribution of certificates to master trainers at SIPRD-Assam by the Joint Director, SIPRD

Rural and urban livelihood

Convergence with Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM) and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY NULM) supported the registration of sanitation workers in PMSBY and e-Shram Cards.

Aspiration for entrepreneurship

As a result of the district-level training in Kokrajhar and Nagaon, two sanitation workers sought support to acquire cesspool vehicles for private desludging operations. The UNICEF WASH team assisted by guiding them through the preparation of required documents and linking them with the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) State cell and the NAMASTE scheme to initiate the loan process for vehicle procurement.

Institutionalizing training programmes within SIPRD and other relevant institutions will ensure continuous and structured capacity-building. Since local self-governance, i.e., the Panchayats, serve as the service providers at the village level, enhancing their capacities regarding the safety and dignity of sanitation workers will ensure sustained sanitation services at the grass roots.



Training of sanitation workers in Goalpara, Assam

2C.5

Jharkhand: Uniting for promoting sanitation workers' rights and dignity



UNICEF has steadfastly advocated for protecting the rights and dignity of sanitation workers in Jharkhand, recognizing their social and economic vulnerabilities. This initiative focuses on enhancing awareness and building the capacity of stakeholders to support sanitation workers in accessing critical social protection benefits, including health care, insurance, pensions and allowances.



Training of sanitation workers in Bundu, Jharkhand

To tackle grassroots challenges and raise awareness among sanitation workers, UNICEF Jharkhand developed a pool of 136 resource persons in three batches. These resource persons, who serve as master trainers for rural areas, institutions and urban areas, sensitized 667 sanitation workers in 2023. They provided orientation on SBM-G, SBMU, JJM, success stories of sanitation workers across the country, government schemes, proper use of PPE kits and more. In August–September 2024, UNICEF Jharkhand conducted refresher training for all master trainers in three batches, increasing the number of trained sanitation workers to 732 in 2024. Currently, a total of 1,399 sanitation workers have been trained in Jharkhand.

To integrate the safety and dignity of sanitation workers, UNICEF collaborated with various departments such as the Urban Development & Housing Department (UDHD), Drinking Water &

Sanitation Department (DWSD), School Education Department in Jharkhand, and CSO partners. UNICEF initiated a process to develop master trainers for training sanitation workers. The main goal is to increase awareness and build the capacities of stakeholders to help sanitation workers access social protection benefits like healthcare, insurance, pensions and allowances. Training sessions emphasize connecting sanitation workers with existing welfare schemes like subsidized food, scholarships, mid-day meals and assistance for pregnant women, which are generally better implemented and resourced by State and central governments.



Health check-up for sanitation workers in Nagar Parishad, Chirkunda, Jharkhand


Intensive campaigns and mobilization efforts have been conducted at institutional, ULB and GP levels, involving community-based organizations like SHGs and Slum Dwellers Associations. These initiatives aim to ensure that sanitation workers can effectively benefit from social security measures and welfare schemes.

Training goals


- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the sanitation value chain, including its challenges and opportunities, and highlight the involvement of sanitation workers at each stage.
- Identify various public health risks associated with waste streams, transmission groups and exposure routes, and map out control points.
- Develop a monitoring mechanism to verify technical performance, along with standard operating procedures and management protocols.
- Sensitize sanitation workers on the proper use of PPE kits and enhance their understanding of government schemes and how to benefit from them.

Sanitation workers support initiative in Jharkhand

Health check-up highlights

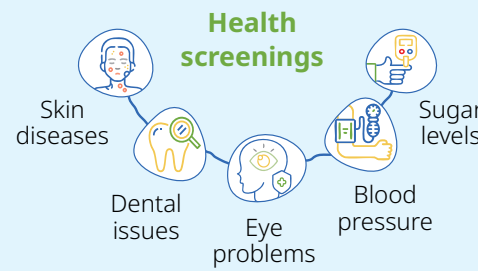



3 June 2023 &
Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024



Total beneficiaries:
3,000+ sanitation workers


Health screenings






Free medicines provided

Personal protective equipment (PPE)





2 October 2024



Recipients:
30 sanitation workers


Kit contents





Raincoats distributed
(13 July 2023)

Key initiative objectives



Ensure worker safety

Protect worker dignity

Provide regular health support

Link workers to government health schemes

Odisha: SIRD&PR pilots their WASH cell



Women-led sanitation workforce

Odisha's unique approach included engaging women-led SHGs for waste collection and segregation, as well as promoting hygiene practices. These SHG members, recognized as sanitation workers, became central to maintaining cleanliness and managing solid and liquid waste in rural areas. Despite this progress, rural sanitation workers, like the urban-focused GARIMA Scheme, lacked structured safety measures. Addressing this gap became a priority.



Participants presenting on cleaning of drains in Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi, Odisha

UNICEF Odisha helped establish a WASH cell in the State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), Odisha, in 2021, to enhance the capacities of the elected representatives and officials of the Panchayat and rural development on water, sanitation and hygiene. The Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, has nationally adapted this model of WASH cell in 2024, and a circular has been issued to replicate the model of the WASH cell in all States across the country.

A collaborative push for change

UNICEF partnered with SIRD&PR to institutionalize sanitation worker welfare. The WASH cell at SIRD&PR, supported by UNICEF, integrated safety and dignity into training programmes for PRI members. This initiative aligned with SDGs 6, 8 and 11 by linking sanitation work to poverty reduction, decent work and sustainable communities. As a result, a directive was issued by SIRD&PR, Odisha, to all their extension centres to integrate it in their regular curriculum, 'safety and dignity of sanitation workers,' contextualizing the toolkit developed by UNICEF. This initiative has not only ensured the promotion of professionalizing sanitation services but also enhanced the capacities of the elected representatives for effective service delivery to meet SDG 6.2.



Master trainers learning through games about the various PPE kits to be used for protection from hazards at SIRD&PR Keonjhar Extension Centre, Odisha



An advisory issued by Director, SIRD&P, Odisha to integrate sessions on safety and dignity of sanitation workers in district-level training curriculum at SIRD&PR, Odisha

Capacity-building: Training for change

A series of training programmes were rolled out to equip sanitation workers with skills, safety practices and access to social protection schemes by the WASH cell, SIRD&PR. Health check-ups and bank linkages were facilitated to ensure holistic support. To take stock of the progress and for mid-course corrections, a refresher training was also organized for the trained 143 master trainers, including 33 health supervisors, who were further trained to improve implementation.

Core training cascade

5 key resource persons (KRPs) trained by UNICEF in Ahmedabad

154 master trainers developed in 30 districts of Odisha

4,122 sanitation workers in rural areas of Angul, Jajpur, Khordha and Nayagarh

Empowering workers on the ground

Gram Panchayats took proactive steps to sustain the initiative. They initiated allocating funds for PPE kits and health insurance, organized community events to celebrate sanitation workers and supported skill development and entrepreneurship programmes.

The collaboration between SIRD&PR and UNICEF resulted in training nearly 6,000 PRI members and sanitation workers, enhancing their skills, safety and dignity. Odisha's story demonstrates that empowering sanitation workers strengthens sanitation systems and contributes to broader health, equity and sustainability goals. With continued focus on capacity-building and inclusion, Odisha is paving the way for safer, more dignified livelihoods for sanitation workers and a cleaner future for its communities.



ToT programme conducted for 154 trainers at SIRD&PR, Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Refresher training of trainers for sanitation workers in Keonjhar, Odisha

Chhattisgarh: Prioritizing sanitation workers' health and safety



Advance efforts to professionalize sanitation work and strengthen the safety and dignity of Swachhagrahis

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of Chhattisgarh, carried out a critical intervention to professionalize sanitation work in the State. As part of these efforts, a two-day residential training of trainers (ToT) was organized on 9–10 May 2024 in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, focusing on the safety, dignity and welfare of sanitation workers engaged under SBM-G.



MD, SBM-G, Chhattisgarh, addressing the participants during master trainers training in Raipur, Chhattisgarh

In Chhattisgarh, sanitation workers – known as Swachhagrahis – are predominantly members of women's SHGs. The training aimed to sensitize over 100,000 Swachhagrahis on key issues, including occupational safety, PPE use, and access to government welfare schemes. To achieve this, master trainers were equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to conduct further capacity-building sessions at the district and block levels.

A total of 55 participants from all 33 districts attended the training, representing district coordinators, district consultants and block coordinators. The

sessions covered social, economic and health-related challenges faced by sanitation workers, culminating in the development of action plans to enhance their working conditions. The training was inaugurated by Ms. Chandan Sanjay Tripathi, then Mission Director, SBM-G, Chhattisgarh, who emphasized the critical need to train all Swachhagrahis under SBM-G and ensure their access to government health check-ups, welfare benefits and social protection schemes.

During a field visit, Ms. Tripathi had interacted with a sanitation worker engaged in waste segregation who reported persistent skin irritation despite maintaining personal hygiene. This interaction underscored the urgent need for improved health and safety measures, reinforcing the significance of UNICEF's ongoing advocacy. Recognizing the importance of this initiative, she acknowledged UNICEF's timely support in championing the rights, dignity and well-being of sanitation workers, especially women.

As a direct outcome of UNICEF's advocacy and intervention, SBM-G, Chhattisgarh, issued two key directives to institutionalize and strengthen the health and social protection of sanitation workers.



Welfare directives for sanitation workers




Health protection

- Monthly health camps at village level
- Women's annual gynaecological care
- PPE kits for waste segregation



Social security

- Mandatory labour registration
- Linkages to various social protection schemes


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क्र.13/3/एनडीएनडी/स्वच्छावली-11/2024 नया रायपुर, अटल नगर विकास/13/5/24

प्रति,

- 1/ **स्वच्छता सहायक, प्रकल्प समिति, जिला स्वच्छ भारत मिशन (ग्रामीण) जिला - समस्त।**
- 2/ **मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी सह सहायक सचिव, प्रकल्प समिति, जिला स्वच्छ भारत मिशन (ग्रामीण) जिला - समस्त।**
- 3/ **परियोजना निदेशक सह सहायक सचिव, जिला ग्रामीण विकास प्रशासन योजना जिला - समस्त।**

विषय :- जिले में ठोस एवं तरल अपशिष्ट प्रकल्प में संलग्न स्वच्छागारियों को स्वास्थ्य जांच एवं लेबर रजिस्ट्रेशन करने संबंध में।

उपरोक्त विषयवस्तुगत लेख है कि स्वच्छ भारत मिशन (ग्रामीण) अंतर्गत ठोस एवं तरल अपशिष्ट के प्रकल्प हेतु स्वच्छागारी महिला स्वच्छागार समूहों को कचरा प्रकल्प, एनडीएनडी एवं पुनःचक्रण के कारो जमा संग्रहण कचरा प्रकल्प की परियोजनाओं हेतु संलग्न किया गया है। उक्त कार्यों को करने में स्वच्छागारियों को स्वास्थ्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए उचित वित्त आयोग से सेफ्टी किट/Equipments दिया जाता है। प्रायः जिलों में बिना सुरक्षा सामग्री जैसे- glove/mask/ shoes व Equipments के अपशिष्ट का एकत्रीकरण किया जाना पाया गया है। यह विधि ठीक नहीं है।

- 2/ विहित है कि कचरा प्रकल्प के कार्यों में विभिन्न प्रकार का अपशिष्ट एकत्रीकरण स्वच्छागारियों को द्वारा किया जाता है। कचरा प्रकल्प के कार्यों में संलग्न होने की संभावना रहती है।
- 3/ उक्त सुरक्षा सामग्री/उपकरण प्रदान करते हुए नियमित स्वास्थ्य जांच नजदीकी PHCC/CHC में करवाना जमा अपेक्षा आवश्यक है। इस संदर्भ में जिले में स्वास्थ्य विभाग से सन्वय स्थापित कर उक्त व्यवस्था को बनाये जाने का कट कर। स्वच्छागारियों की स्वास्थ्य जांच हेतु विशेष स्वास्थ्य केंद्र का आयोजन किये जाने की व्यवस्था माह की 15 या 16 तारीख तक करवाना जमा सुनिश्चित करें तथा उनका स्वास्थ्य कर्ता भी संशोधित किया जावे।
- 4/ जिला स्तर पर होने वाले मेला स्वास्थ्य केंद्र में भी इच्छुकी स्वास्थ्य एवं स्त्री रोग विशेषज्ञ से वर्ष में कम से कम एक बार आवश्यक रूप से जांच करवाई जावे।

Visibly Clean Village..... Chhattisgarh!

SBM-G Chhattisgarh directives on regular health check-up of sanitation workers dated 13 May 2024

These directives mark a significant step towards ensuring a safer and more dignified work environment for sanitation workers and integrating them into broader social protection mechanisms. Moving forward, UNICEF and the Government of Chhattisgarh continue to work collaboratively to scale up this initiative, ensuring that Swachhagrahis receive the recognition, protection and support they deserve.

Pocket book for sanitation workers

As part of the toolkit, UNICEF India developed a bilingual handbook for sanitation workers. This handbook is mostly pictorial. In collaboration with SBM-G Chhattisgarh and a local partner, UNICEF Chhattisgarh customized this handbook in their local context and developed a pocket book for sanitation workers in the local language, i.e. Hindi. This was a significant step towards enhancing awareness, safety and dignity within the sector, and it served as a comprehensive guide, equipping sanitation workers with essential information on occupational safety, hygiene practices and access to social protection schemes. Designed for easy use, the pocketbook underscores the State's commitment to empowering workers through knowledge, ensuring their well-being and strengthening their role in achieving sustainable sanitation outcomes. This initiative exemplifies effective collaboration between government and development partners to promote inclusive growth and social equity.

सफाई संग्रहण के अधिकार



भारत में हाथ से मेला उठाने की प्रथा एक देहनीय अपराध है

स्वास्थ्य, स्वच्छता एवं पोषण



जन-कल्याणकारी कार्यक्रम और योजना



हमारे सफाई संग्रहण और उनका सुरक्षा कवच (व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा उपकरण या पी.पी.ई.)



Pocket book for sanitation workers in local language developed in Chhattisgarh

Kerala: Enhanced capacities of resource persons at KILA



In collaboration with UNICEF, the Government of Kerala has made significant strides in enhancing waste management systems, particularly focusing on the safety and dignity of sanitation workers. This initiative gained urgency following a catastrophic fire at the Brahmapuram landfill in March 2023, which highlighted the need for improved safety measures and capacity-building initiatives across sanitation services.

Key highlights of the partnership

- **Government-led training programmes:** The training sessions were conducted under government supervision to ensure alignment with State objectives.
- **Experienced master trainers:** The master trainers were selected based on their substantial experience in government sanitation sectors, ensuring high-quality training delivery.
- **Localized training materials:** Training modules were translated into Malayalam to enhance participants' accessibility.
- **Block level trainings:** These trainings were monitored by district and block authorities to guarantee effective implementation.



Training of master trainers at KILA, Thrissur, Kerala

- **Standard reporting mechanisms:** Resource persons provided feedback and reports to maintain the quality of training sessions.
- **Integration into government programme:** Proposals were made to incorporate these trainings into regular government schedules, ensuring sustainability.

Implementation process

- **Initial consultations:** Joint planning sessions between UNICEF and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) established a robust framework for the training programmes
- **Resource person orientation:** Twelve resource persons with extensive experience, including former health inspectors and sanitation officers, were trained to lead the programmes.
- **Pre-training preparations:** Key preparations included identifying focal points, translating modules and coordinating with district administrations for smooth execution.
- **Master trainer selection:** Master trainers from KILA, Suchitwa Mission and NGOs were chosen for their sanitation and waste management expertise.
- **Module translation:** Training materials were translated into Malayalam to ensure comprehensive understanding at the grass roots level.

Training programmes

State-level trainings

Three batches of ToT sessions were held in October 2023, involving 168 participants from all 14 districts of Kerala. These four-day sessions included field visits to Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) for practical exposure.

District level trainings

Following the State-level ToT, district trainings engaged 603 participants across 14 blocks, with additional sessions in Palakkad. These one-day trainings condensed ToT content into five technical sessions covering essential topics such as sanitation worker conditions, soft skills, safety practices, PPE usage and health and hygiene.

Field visits

Participants observed sanitation practices in LSGIs, interacted with sanitation workers and discussed with local officials to gain insights into community sanitation dynamics.

Feedback and evaluation

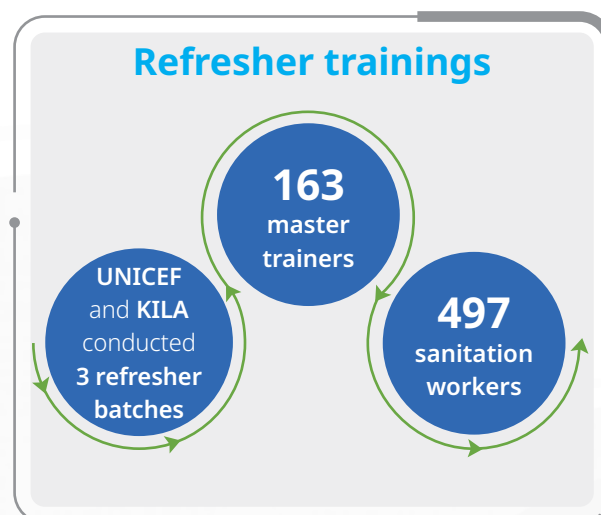
Pre- and post-training assessments were conducted to measure effectiveness. Thematic case studies and feedback from sanitation workers provided valuable insights for continuous improvement.

Key achievements

| Period | Number of batches | Male | Female | Total |
|---------------|-------------------|------|--------|-------|
| November 2023 | 14 | 167 | 443 | 610 |
| January 2024 | 2 | 31 | 101 | 132 |
| July 2024 | 7 | 110 | 255 | 365 |
| Total | 23 | 308 | 799 | 1107 |

Refresher trainings

In 2024, UNICEF and KILA conducted three refresher batches for master trainers, training 163 master trainers (114 male, 49 female), which included both returning and new trainers. These master trainers subsequently trained an additional 497 sanitation workers (141 male, 356 female) across two phases in 2024.



Field-level insights

- **Enhanced safety and dignity:** The safety and dignity of sanitation workers have become a priority on the agenda within Gram Panchayats
- **Access to welfare schemes:** Sanitation workers registered for government welfare schemes, including health insurance
- **Advocacy for resources:** Master trainers advocated for the consistent provision of safety kits and cleaning materials
- **Community recognition:** Sanitation workers received recognition during major community events like Independence Day and Republic Day
- **Operational improvements:** Significant progress was observed in the O&M of sanitation facilities

KILA plans to integrate these training programmes into the SBM's Annual Implementation Plan, alongside KILA's training calendar. Documentation of training impacts will identify field level challenges and develop recommendations to enhance the safety and dignity of sanitation workers. These insights will be submitted to the State government for further action.

This collaboration between UNICEF and KILA has established a precedent for effective capacity-building and advocacy within the sanitation sector. This initiative significantly advances waste management practices by ensuring sustainable improvements in worker welfare and public health outcomes across Kerala.

2C.9

Gujarat: Empowering rural sanitation workers for change - focusing on gender



For decades, rural sanitation workers in Gujarat have been the unsung heroes of public health, working tirelessly to keep villages clean. Yet, many of them face hazardous conditions on a daily basis. A systemic change was needed, and it arrived with a determined effort under Phase II of SBM-G.

Recognizing the crucial role of rural sanitation workers in achieving 'Sampoorna Swachhata', UNICEF, in collaboration with partner organizations, launched an initiative to enhance their safety and dignity aspects aimed at professionalization of the sector.

To bridge knowledge and capacity gaps and ensure safe working conditions, 339 master trainers were trained to impart technical skills to rural sanitation workers. These master trainers conducted workshops across six districts, reaching 1,135 rural sanitation workers (53.21 per cent female participation).

This significant participation of women underscores the growing recognition of female sanitation workers as essential contributors to rural sanitation and hygiene. By equipping them with knowledge, skills and protective gear, the initiative enhances workplace safety and gender inclusivity in the sanitation workforce.

The training focused on proper use of PPE kits, emergency response measures and safe sanitation practices. A dedicated toolkit, including a safety and dignity module, a handbook in Gujarati, posters, GIFs and a short film was developed to support long-term learning. The trained sanitation workers were

equipped with gloves, masks and boots, reducing their exposure to health risks. They also gained awareness about their rights and entitlements, empowering them to advocate for better working conditions.

Efforts in Gujarat have been ramped up to enhance the safety and dignity of rural sanitation workers. A brief training module on 'Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers' has been integrated into the SIRD training programme for SBM-G officials and functionaries.

With greater community inclusion, Gujarat has set a precedent for prioritizing the safety and dignity of sanitation workers through a gender lens.



Sanitation workers engaged in group activities during a training in Gujarat



School students participating in Swachhata hi Seva in Karimnagar, Telangana

2D. Partnering with academic institutions for impact

UNICEF-TISS partnership to develop WASH professionals through PG diploma course



UNICEF's country programme has a strong WASH component. UNICEF works closely with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, supporting the two most crucial national flagship programmes: Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission. The investments and the interventions made in these two programmes need to be supported to ensure that the WASH gains are sustained. One of the critical needs is the creation of adequate WASH professionals at the State and district levels to provide handholding and technical support to the Government for the sustainability of these programmes. UNICEF works with partners to help deliver the requirements supporting the programme.

TISS, a postgraduate school of social work of national stature, established in 1936, has been working to meet the emerging need for trained human service professionals, offering programmes in Social Work, Social Sciences, Health Systems Studies and Management and Labour Studies, among others. In the WASH sector, TISS has been engaging in a variety of ways through capacity-building programmes and extension activities in collaboration with central or State government agencies as well as international agencies. Although TISS has been carrying out research and capacity-building activities in the domain of WASH in the past, the initiation of a full-time academic programme entirely focused on the theme of WASH was relatively new.

UNICEF began working with TISS in this endeavour in 2013. In March 2013, TISS launched a PGD programme on WASH, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Government of Maharashtra.

This academic programme was designed and delivered to train HR required for addressing the important and challenging tasks of achieving the objectives of universalization of WASH services in India, which affects the social, economic and health conditions of millions of people, especially the young children.

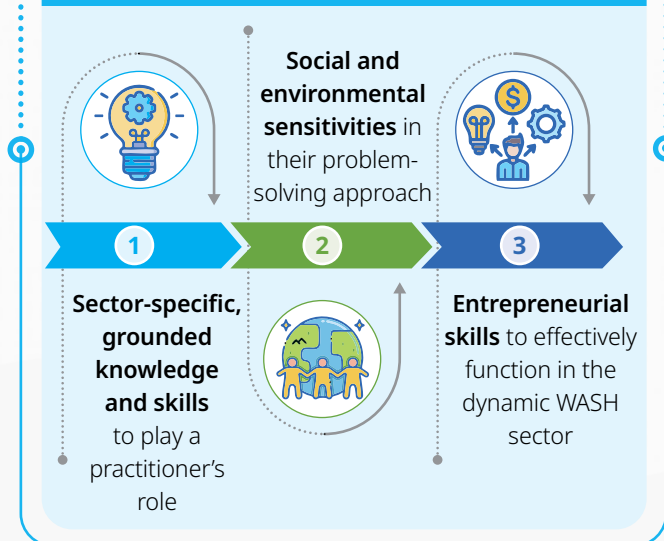
While the PGD WASH programme was delivered successfully at the rural off-campus of TISS, located at Tuljapur town of Maharashtra, the COVID-19 pandemic affected this intensive field-based programme to a certain extent. Furthermore, given the strategic changes in the government water supply programme (Jal Jeevan Mission) and the sanitation programme (SBM-G Phase II), and the new focus on climate change, and UNICEF focus on gender and equity, it was necessary to have a close look at the course content. UNICEF and TISS reviewed the PGD WASH programme in consideration of the changing WASH sector. The review and discussions necessitated a redesign of the PGD WASH programme, both in the syllabus and pedagogy in the background.

Revised strategy

The syllabus revision was completed in 2023 by TISS in consultation with UNICEF, and the revision attempts to address the present needs by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the syllabus and pedagogy. Interdisciplinarity is attempted by designing courses in a 'problem-centric' and 'integrative' manner with an appropriate mix of classroom and field-based courses. It also integrated substantial research methods and practical project-based knowledge

through suitable field exposure to the students and project work. Thus, the newly designed syllabus aims to facilitate the development of WASH professionals.

Objectives for the development of WASH professionals through the newly designed syllabus



Previously hosted at TISS's Tuljapur campus, starting in 2024, with an effort to strengthen the programme, it is now relocated to the Mumbai campus. It is hosted by the School of Habitat Studies, led by the Professor Chair on Water, an initiative supported by the Government. This diploma programme offers a rigorous, interdisciplinary education in WASH, blending academic and practical insights. This collaborative

effort between UNICEF and TISS aims to produce well-equipped graduates capable of addressing the multifaceted challenges in sanitation. Graduates will emerge as skilled professionals equipped to address sector challenges with innovation and resilience. By enhancing educational frameworks and expanding training opportunities, this initiative contributes significantly to building a skilled workforce in the WASH sector.

Curriculum revamp for contemporary challenges

The revamped curriculum now includes critical topics such as climate change, environmental sustainability, gender equity and social justice. This enhancement ensures that WASH professionals are equipped to tackle contemporary issues effectively. Spanning one year, the curriculum offers foundational and sector-specific courses. Interdisciplinary modules provide a multidimensional perspective on WASH issues, covering eco-social aspects, climate change, and governance frameworks (NJJM, SBM and SDG 6). Practical geographical information system (GIS) and research methods courses further equip students with essential skills for WASH problem-solving on the ground. The relaunched PGD WASH programme 2024-25 and 2025-26, aiming at 40 students, commenced in August 2024 with 12 students from diverse backgrounds enrolled for the current session and features contributions from in-house faculty and guest lecturers from esteemed institutions, providing insights into the latest national and international interventions in the WASH sector.

In response to growing needs, TISS and UNICEF are exploring the development of short online modules on WASH to further expand access to training resources.



Call for admission for PG diploma in WASH (a joint programme by TISS and UNICEF)



TISS PGD WASH students interacting with the community at Mandala Slum in Mankhurd Mumbai, Maharashtra

Gujarat: Partnering with CEPT University for evidence generation on WASH



UNICEF Gujarat has established a strategic partnership with Centre for Environment Planning and Technology (CEPT) University aimed at addressing WASH challenges with a focus on equity, child-friendliness, sustainability and climate resilience for vulnerable populations, particularly slum communities of Surat, Rajkot and Ahmedabad. This collaboration aims to generate evidence, leveraging the expert knowledge and field-based academic research of CEPT University and UNICEF's commitment to improving WASH services for marginalized populations and promoting children's rights and well-being.

The partnership has resulted in 80 WASH knowledge products developed through in-depth research, city assessments, action plans, frameworks and area projects to ensure equitable access to essential services. The findings from these knowledge products have been shared with decision makers of relevant departments and ULBs influencing WASH planning and service delivery for the most vulnerable population.

One of the research studies under the partnership is on 'Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation Services in Vulnerable Areas: The Case of Surat'. The study led to the development of a comprehensive toolkit to assess the challenges of WASH services and the needs of slum residents, enabling targeted interventions for improving water and sanitation services in the slums of Surat, Gujarat. The research underscores the necessity for targeted interventions in Surat's slums to achieve equitable access to water and sanitation services. It advocates for replicable and sustainable solutions aligning with national and global priorities that can be adapted to similar contexts across India, thereby contributing to broader goals of sustainable urban development.

The evidence and frameworks developed through this partnership contribute to UNICEF's commitment to improving the living conditions of vulnerable populations. This initiative seeks to identify high-

risk communities and inform implementers with actionable interventions tailored to their specific needs by utilizing empirical data, grass roots insights and stakeholder consultations.

This summary encapsulates the critical findings and recommendations from the study, providing a framework for potential donor engagement in improving WASH services in Gujarat.



A student researcher interacting with school children on climate-resilient schools in Gir Somnath, Gujarat



Consultation with children in progress in Nalia Mandvi, Gujarat



Demonstration of mobile septage treatment unit in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu

2E. Inspiring human interest stories

2E.1

Rising above challenges: Four stories of change in Maharashtra



The unsung heroes of Maharashtra's sanitation workforce often operate in the shadows, keeping cities clean and safe. However, a recent initiative, the "State-wide Intensive Training Programme for Sanitation Workers," supported by UNICEF in partnership with the Maharashtra Urban WASH and ES coalition, established at RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai, has recently highlighted their inspiring stories of resilience and transformation through the #SafaiMitraInspires initiative. These narratives showcase the bravery and determination of sanitation workers, reshaping their societal roles.

Poornima Sarsar: From worker to leader

Poornima Sarsar's story exemplifies the transformative impact of education. As a sanitation worker with the Akola Municipal Corporation, she pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree while managing her demanding job. Her dedication led to her selection as a master trainer in the programme, where she shared her journey of balancing work and studies. Poornima's training sessions provided essential skills and challenged stereotypes, demonstrating how perseverance can empower individuals.



Poornima Sarsar, an inspiring master trainer

Reshma Shaikh: Championing e-waste management

Reshma Shaikh from Lonavala has emerged as a leader in environmental sustainability. After participating in an e-waste management training programme, she successfully led her self-help group in a community competition. By educating residents on proper disposal methods, Reshma cultivated a culture of environmental responsibility. Currently, she oversees Lonavala's e-waste collection centre, promoting sustainable practices and inspiring others to follow suit.



Reshma Shaikh, an advocate for environmental sustainability

Savita Manohar: Entrepreneurial spirit

Savita Manohar, a widow from Dindori, exemplifies resilience and determination. At 32, she balances her responsibilities as a sanitation worker with running a small shop to secure her son's future. The training programme enhanced her understanding of hygiene and safety, which she actively shares with her colleagues. Savita dreams of seeing her son join the Indian Army, reflecting her unwavering commitment to creating opportunities for her family.



Savita Manohar, a resilient sanitation worker

Amit Chavan: From footballer to sanitation advocate

Amit Chavan's journey is one of reinvention. Following an injury that ended his football career, he joined the Satara Municipal Council as a sanitation worker. Utilizing his communication skills, he became a leader in information, education and communication (IEC)



Amit Chavan, a communication leader in sanitation campaigns

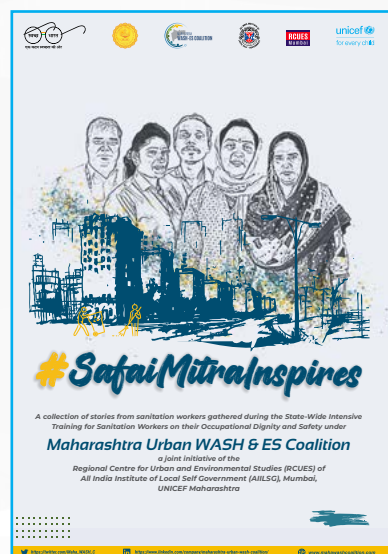
campaigns focused on hygiene and sustainability. His advocacy has significantly contributed to Satara's progress within SBM-G, motivating others through his dedication to public service.

Empowering the workforce

The impact of this training initiative extends well beyond individual achievements. By equipping sanitation workers with knowledge about occupational safety, PPE kits and legal rights has profoundly transformed lives throughout Maharashtra. Workers like Poornima, Reshma, Savita, and Amit are shining examples of how education and empowerment can redefine roles and enhance quality of life.

A brighter future

As Maharashtra's sanitation workers embrace their new skills and confidence, they are paving the way for a future where dignity and safety are paramount in their profession. Their experiences highlight the necessity of recognizing and investing in the workforce, which is vital to public health and environmental sustainability. Through their stories, #SafaiMitralnspires underscores the extraordinary potential within each individual to overcome challenges and drive transformative change. In conclusion, these narratives not only celebrate individual accomplishments but also reflect a broader movement towards dignity and respect for sanitation workers in Maharashtra. The ongoing efforts to empower this workforce are essential for fostering sustainable urban environments and enhancing public health outcomes across the State.



Book on #SafaiMitralnspires developed by UNICEF partners in Maharashtra

Tale of a master trainer in Odisha



Mr. Prasant Kumar Das is a 49-year-old master trainer with a decade of dedicated experience in rural sanitation. As an empanelled resource person for SIRD&PR, Government of Odisha, Mr. Prasant has been a beacon of change and empowerment in the State.

Commitment to safety and dignity

Selected as the master trainer for the safety and dignity of sanitation workers, Mr. Prasant participated in a transformative two-day ToT session on 23 and 24 September 2023. This event, held in collaboration with UNICEF and SIRD&PR, was pivotal in his career. Additionally, he is a key figure in the GARIMA project under ULB Odisha. He also attended a refresher training on 12 July 2024 in Keonjhar, further honing his skills and knowledge.

Master trainers initiative

Mr. Prasant has trained 107 sanitation workers from Baunsapada Gram Panchayat of Nayagarh Sadar Block, with the support of the PANTISS Foundation and UNICEF, Odisha. These workers, primarily women

from SHGs engaged by the Gram Panchayat for dry waste collection, learned essential skills, including the use of PPE kits.

His advocacy has resulted in inclusion of PPE kits in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan 2024-25. He has also supported in linking sanitation workers with various social welfare schemes, such as PMJJBY, Atal Pension Yojana, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana and Madhu Babu Pension.

Mr. Prasant supported the District Administration, Nayagarh, to help Jogipalli Gram Panchayat in Khandapada Block achieve ODF status within nine days.

"I feel proud and emotional to support these sanitation workers for their safety and dignity, engaged in rural Odisha in collaboration with Gram Panchayat and District Administration," says Mr. Prasant Kumar Das.



Training sessions led by master trainer of Odisha, Prasant Das (on extreme left)

2E.3

Lakhicharan Oraon: Transforming sanitation future of Bundu district, Jharkhand



Lakhicharan Oraon, a sanitation worker from Bundu Nagar Panchayat in Jharkhand, has gone from a daily-wage labourer to a respected driver and sanitation operator, redefining sanitation practices in his community. Once the sole earner in a family of 13, Lakhicharan struggled with inconsistent income that barely sustained his household. Today, thanks to targeted trainings, health support and dedicated community programmes, he is leading efforts to elevate sanitation standards in Bundu while securing a sustainable future for his family.



Lakhicharan Oraon happily posing at the FSTP in Bundu, Jharkhand

Through UNICEF-supported training, Lakhicharan and his colleagues gained critical skills in the safe handling of septic waste and PPE kits, as well as the importance of sanitation practices, which aligned with SBM-G. This knowledge empowered him to advocate for safety standards within his community, addressing systemic health risks in his profession. The implementation of a faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP) in Bundu – constructed with UNICEF's support – has provided a structured disposal mechanism for waste, significantly reducing environmental hazards. Since its launch, community members and workers have reported improved waste management and cleaner environments, a shift Lakhicharan proudly champions.

In addition to his work, health initiatives like the biannual check-ups organized by Bundu Nagar Panchayat, with support from UNICEF and partners, ensure the well-being of sanitation workers. The latest camp served 54 individuals, providing free medical checks and supplies, while workers are being linked with government health insurance for long-term security. Lakhicharan's commitment earned him recognition from Jharkhand's Governor, receiving an Ayushman health card and PPE kit.

Lakhicharan Oraon's journey from precarious labour to respected sanitation leader highlights the far-reaching impact of strategic training, health provisions and dignity-centred initiatives. His story underscores the role of focused investments in safety and capacity-building, providing sanitation workers worldwide with the tools for professional pride and community health transformation.



Lakhicharan Oraon receives Ayushman health card and PPE kit from the Governor of Jharkhand

2E.4

Mrs. Sara's journey to safety and dignity in Kerala



Mrs. Sara, a dedicated sanitation worker in the Kakkodi Gram Panchayat of Chelanur Block, Kozhikode District, Kerala, had served her community for 20 years. Reflecting on the progress in sanitation over generations, she expressed, "I was happy to witness the inevitable changes that occurred in sanitation over the generations."



Mrs. Sara, a sanitation worker in Kozhikode, Kerala

Her daily routine began after completing her household chores, arriving at the local health centre between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. This health centre provided essential medical care, maternal and child health services, family planning, safe water supply, basic sanitation, and disease prevention. Mrs. Sara, along with her teammates, ensured the cleanliness of the homeopathy dispensary's toilets within the health centre. She also carried out street sweeping in the surrounding areas. In the evening, she cleaned the toilets again to maintain hygiene on the hospital campus. The frequency of cleaning often depended on patient inflow, sometimes requiring additional efforts to maintain sanitary conditions.

On 29 July 2024, she attended a training session organized by UNICEF and KILA, which proved to be a transformative experience. Having worked in sanitation for two decades, she found that training to be the most insightful, focusing on both safety and dignity for sanitation workers. Before that training,

she had lacked awareness about the necessary safety measures and the various government schemes available to support sanitation workers. The session served as an eye-opener, reintroducing her to the importance of workplace safety.

During the training, she gained a deeper understanding of the significance of wearing PPE kits and the legal provisions safeguarding sanitation workers. While she had previously used PPE kits, she sometimes worked without them when they were unavailable. However, after attending the training, she made a firm commitment to always wear PPE, prioritizing her health and the well-being of her family.

Inspired by that newfound knowledge, Mrs. Sara aspired to set an example for younger sanitation workers by promoting safety measures. The training reinforced her awareness of self-care and the dignity of her profession. With confidence, she believed that such training sessions would have a ripple effect, bringing positive change to sanitation workers across the State.



Mrs. Sara cleans the toilet wearing a PPE kit at the Health and Wellness Centre in Kozhikode, Kerala



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