

File No. R-28/1/2021-PRPP(RU-3)
NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
PRP&P Division, RU-3

29th July 2021

Subject: Minutes of the 'Meeting on Issues and Challenges of Manual Scavenging and Hazardous Cleaning' held on 05th July 2021 at MAB via Cisco Webex

The meeting was chaired by the Hon'ble Chairperson, NHRC, Justice Shri Arun Mishra and co-chaired by Hon'ble Member Justice Shri P.C. Pant. The participants included officials from Central Ministries, Academician, NGOs, Municipal Commissioners from the following States and concerned Stakeholders:-

- Kolkata
- Greater Hyderabad
- Greater Mumbai
- Chennai

The list of participants is enclosed as **Annexure I**.

At the outset of the meeting Sh. R.K. Khandelwal, Additional Secretary welcomed the participants and emphasized that the objective of the meeting is to prevent deaths of manual scavengers caused due to poisonous gas emanated from the manhole, septic tanks.

2. **Shri Bimbadhar Pradhan, Secretary General, NHRC mentioned a list of priority indicators, which are as follows and need to be worked in collaboration with various stakeholders:**

- Resurvey the existence of dry latrines, re-enumeration of manual scavengers, activating vigilance committee, monitoring registration of offence, auditing of death along with participation of all stakeholders including manual scavengers.
- Rehabilitation campaign on Human Rights Day. Consideration on providing agriculture pattas, home patta and so on. Formulating Plan of action at local level.

3. **Hon'ble Chairperson Justice Shri Arun Mishra** stressed the need for adopting Hybrid approach to deal with the existing constraints and formulating a policy for ensuring basic sanitary rights for all. He emphasized on the following:

- i. Following safeguards be made mandatory to be provided by local authorities/contractors to the sanitary workers before they are asked to enter septic tanks:--
“Safety Gear, Hats, Harnesses, Safety Jacket, Gloves, Mask, Oxygen cylinders”.
- ii. Increasing production of Bandicoot and to reduce its costs. States have to arrange for procurement.
- iii. Fixing of responsibility at local authority level for violating the norms which result in death of manual scavengers.

4. A presentation was made during the Technical Session I by Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Additional Secretary, MOHUA, Managing Director of NSKFDC, Academician and NGOs. They identified the constraints and suggested initiative as follows:-

A. TECHNICAL SESSION I: SCOPE OF CONVERGING ONGOING SCHEMES WITH MECHANISED CLEANING PROCESS

(1) Manual Scavenging and Removal of Human excreta:

Constraints: vulnerability of manual scavengers, lack of requisite coordination at local level.

Initiatives: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, National Survey, Swacch Udyami Yojana under these initiatives MoSJ&E has been receiving reports from the States about non-existence of insanitary latrines.

Recommendations: NHRC's intervention is needed to correct data discrepancies in the death cases and to implement at least one or all schemes in one district to establish it as a role model. NGOs help in providing alternate livelihood may be sought. Sensitization of SHOs through training and guidance may be done so that manual scavengers are not harassed when they

approach the police stations for lodging complaints.

(2) **Hazardous Cleaning:**

Initiative: RSA/SRU in 2019, Safai mitra suraksha challenge in 2020, **Directory** on cleaning equipment, designed uniform for sanitary workers.

Upcoming Initiatives: **Annual awards** under Safai Suraksha Challenge and first such award is likely to be distributed in 15th August 2021. Provision of Uniform for sanitary workers, **SBA.2.0** focus on mechanised cleaning process with a budget of Rs. 1000 Crore

- For mechanized cleaning a suitable legislation is drafted and is under consideration with Cabinet Secretariat.
- MoHU&A claims that issue of manual scavenging would be completely eradicated from our country in the next five years.

Constraints: Inadequate existing drainage system, ill trained staff, mechanized cleaning not made mandatory under the law, poor or nil conviction rate under PEMSAR Act, lack of co-ordination of all schemes at **National level framework**, absence of sludge management system in urban centres.

Recommendations: **Certificate program** for operating the machine, **National level helpline no.** at par with fire services, rehabilitation in **alternative profession**, **modernize the sewer system**, **check on data discrepancies** regarding death.

5. **Hon'ble Chairperson's observation regarding Swachh Udyam Yojna:** Local Authorities should take the **responsibility of** providing sanitary equipment to sanitary workers and to bear **expenses**.

6. All the Municipal Commissioners shared their best practices and identified the constraint during Technical Session-II.

B) Technical Session II: Identification of Constraints and Replicating Best Practices at Local Level

Hyderabad model: Only mechanised cleaning since 2015, equipment include sewer croc, robotic camera, mini jetting vehicle and also providing training and soft loans without interest

to safai Karmacharis

Upcoming Initiatives: Enumerating all septic tanks, technology to identify when lid are removed, detect poisonous gas, fixing GPS on septic tanks, Tariff and customer care no.

Chennai Metro Water: Bandicoot robot tested but not moving horizontally. Number of Bandicoot will increase along with other equipment used in Hyderabad.

Kolkata: 240 machines costing Rs. 3872 lakhs used in mechanized cleaning process and no man entry allowed under any circumstances. Health benefits are also provided to sanitary workers.

Greater Mumbai Municipal Commissioner: Various mechanized equipment used to clean all the sewer lines before monsoon, received complain 24X7 and provide service on chargeable basis, campaign to spread awareness and grill instalment in all manholes.

Innovative Technological solutions: Trying out **vacuum sewer technology** for proper sanitation in narrow lanes and slums.

Common Major Constraints: Narrow lanes in extremely dense population, encroachment, stealing of manholes cover, difficulties in cleaning sewer lines under railway track/nallas,

C) Technical Session III: Scope of Innovative Technological Solution for Eradicating Death due to Manual Cleaning

- **Sensitize the manual scavenger** to use the **safety gears**
- Authorities need to **revisit the definition of manual scavengers** defined under PMSER Act,
- **DICCI** ready to develop **different models** according to **local condition**.
- Key features of bandicoot and sewer croc were described.
- **Current technology adoption scheme** need to be more **innovation friendly**.
- Government may introduce schemes and grant funds for the innovative ideas for sanitation related services.
- Tax exemption for such technology may be considered by the government.

7. After due deliberation, following implementable points have emanated for implementation by the concerned Stakeholders:

- Conduct survey to determine non-existence of dry latrines, re-enumeration of manual scavengers, activating vigilance committee, monitoring registration of offence, auditing of death along with participation of all stakeholders including manual scavengers.
- Fixing of responsibility joint and several at local authorities and/or contractors, if any, for violating the norms which result into death of manual scavengers.

[Action: M/o Social Justice & Empowerment]

- Rehabilitation campaign on Human Rights Day. Consider for providing agriculture pattas, home patta and so on. Formulate a plan of action at local level.
- Implement at least one or all schemes in one district to establish it as a role model.
- Following safeguards be made mandatory to be provided to the sanitary workers:-
“Safety Gear, Hats, Harnesses, Safety Jacket, Gloves, Mask, Oxygen cylinders”.

[Action: Local Bodies through State Governments]

- Producing bandicoot at large scale to bring down its cost.

[Action: Genrobotics Innovation/ Local Bodies through State Governments]

- Formulating a policy to provide basic sanitary service for all.
- Intervene positively for checking data discrepancies regarding the existence of manual scavengers.
- Correction in data discrepancies as Shri Bezwada Wilson Claims that last five year death is 498 not 376 as claimed by MoSJ&E for which the record is available the Commission may take up the matter with concerned stakeholders for correcting those data.

[Action: NHRC]

- Certificate program for operating the machine, National level helpline no. at par with fire service, rehabilitating in alternative profession, modernize the sewer system.

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- Prevailing schemes may provide for street cleaning by modern equipments such as Roads Sweepers, Cleaning Carts etc.
- There is also need that sweeping machine be designed and developed for simplified road cleaning with modified technology suitable to Indian environment.

[Action: M/o Urban & Housing Affairs]

- Tax exemption for technology like Bandicoot can provide big relief. Bandicoot representative claims that Government is imposing 18% tax on Bandicoot. Waiver/exemption may be considered.

[Action: M/o Finance]

- Proper training and guidance need to be given to SHO regarding laws of manual scavengers.

[Action: M/o Home Affairs]

List of Participants

NHRC Officials

Hon'ble Chairperson, NHRC, Justice Shri Arun Mishra

Hon'ble Member, NHRC, Justice Shri P C Pant

Secretary General, Sh. Bimbadhar Pradhan

Additional Secretary (A&R), Sh. RK Khandelwal

Senior Research Officer, Sh. Sudesh Kumar

Junior Research Consultant, Ms. Lakshmi Kumari

SPEAKERS

1. Shri. R Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
2. Shri Kamran Rizvi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
3. Shri Binod Kumar, IAS, Municipal Commissioner, Kolkata
4. Shri, Santosh, IAS, Additional Commissioner, Greater Hyderabad
5. Shri Sanjeev Kumar, IAS, Additional Municipal Commissioner, Greater Mumbai
6. Shri M Dana Kishore, IAS, MD, HMWSSB
7. Shri C. Vijayraj Kumar, IAS, MD, CMWSSB
8. Smt. Yogita Swaroop, MD of NSKFDC
9. Shri Bejwada Wislon, Founder of National safai Karamchari Andolan.
10. Shri Ravi Kumar Narra, President, DICCI
11. Prof. Avatthi Ramaiah, TISS, Mumbai
12. Shri. Vimal Govind MK, CEO & Architect of Genrobotics Innovations Pvt. Ltd.
13. Shri Germiya Ongolu, CTO, SANITOR Pvt. LTd.
14. Shri Vijay Bahl, Director, Super Weld Eco Solution