

## Summary of the ILO Resource Handbook for Ending Manual Scavenging

This resource handbook for ending manual scavenging presents and explains how to use the new 2013 Act and Rules on the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation. Their aim is the total eradication of the practice of scavenging practice in India. The authors Mr. Harsh Mander and Ms. Agrima Bhasin of the Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi, prepared a comprehensive resource guide on some of the worst surviving forms of caste discrimination and unacceptable forms of work existing today, the removal of human excreta by hand.

The Census of India in 2011 established that more than 2.6 million dry latrines exist in India which women have to clean manually. These women are also expected to carry out other ‘polluting’ tasks such as the disposal of dead animals, cleaning placentas after delivery, and performing funerary related activities. In exchange, the families of manual scavengers are allotted a place to live on the outskirts of the village, in virtual isolation. Their remuneration consists of a few “rotis” (bread) per day, used clothing and receive a token amount of money per month. This amount can range from 5 to 500 rupees depending on the number of families served.

The women find the “work” physically repulsive and suffer from occupational health consequences as well as social stigma. When they to perform one of the required services they face social and economic boycotts excluding them from public life, without any access to services of jobs. Discrimination extends to all facets of their lives. These are especially harsh in education for children of the community, severely limiting their future options in life.

This resource guide is an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of all the measures taken by India’s government to abolish manual scavenging. Legislation and policies however remain unimplemented. Large amounts of money have been disbursed but barely reached its beneficiaries.

The resource guide provides a detailed description of the origins of manual scavenging, and explains why it is a violation of human rights. It shows the abhorrent consequences of caste based discrimination and how the concepts of untouchability and impurity are excluding manual scavengers from all walks of life. It also makes clear how former manual scavengers are facing multiple obstacles when they actually try to reintegrate themselves in the society.

This Handbook is designed to offer assistance to both officials responsible for implementing the new 2103 Act, and for community members seeking to end the age-old inhuman practice. It will try to explain how the new law defines manual scavenging, its provisions for identification, survey, grievance-redress, release and rehabilitation, and prosecution of those who violate the law. Hence it will be a useful tool for government officials and other stakeholders such as trade unions in understanding the issues surrounding manual scavenging. It will also help the user in understanding the legislative changes that took place in 2013, and how public authorities can assist former manual scavengers by making use of the measures and tools put at their availability by the Government of India.

The ILO has also been active in bringing this issue to the notice of the India government. The ILO Committee of Experts in 2013 noted that ‘the Committee has been conducting a dialogue with the Government regarding the practice of manual scavenging and the fact that Dalits, and very often Dalit women, are usually engaged in this practice due to their social origin’. It also expressed dismay and concern at the ‘apparent weak enforcement of the Employment and Manual Scavengers and



Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993'. The involvement of the International Labour Organization on manual scavenging was mandated by its supervisory system, originating from the discussion that took place at the International Labour Conference in 2007. Being the Specialized Agency of the United Nations on labour, this involvement also catalyzed action by other United Nations organization in India, each one of them fighting the injustice of manual scavenging from their respective mandates. It made clear that the UN family is joining hands with the Government of India and other stakeholders to end manual scavenging in India in the shortest period possible.

Summary written on 14 June 2015.