

**Tom Palakudiyil, Head of South Asia Region for WaterAid** (Statement on 28<sup>th</sup> August) in connection with the release of the Human Rights Watch report [\*Cleaning Human Waste: "Manual Scavenging," Caste, and Discrimination in India\*](#)

“Despite manual scavenging being outlawed in India since 1993, hundreds of thousands of people belonging to the lowest rung of the Dalit caste continue to scrape an existence in this demeaning way, relegating them to a life of exclusion and exploitation.”

“The conversion of dry latrines to flush toilets is a key step towards the eradication of manual scavenging in India. However, manual scavengers also need support in seeking alternative livelihoods. Government efforts to provide manual scavengers with loans to set up new businesses have often failed to reach the slum communities, where few of the illiterate manual scavengers know help is available. Even if manual scavengers receive loans, success is not always guaranteed. A collaborative effort is therefore required, with the government and local organisations working together to provide manual scavengers with the advice and support they need to make the first steps to liberation. Similarly, as manual scavenging is a caste issue as well as a sanitation issue, sanitation programmes as well as programmes of other relevant ministries must be converged.”

“WaterAid works closely with local partners across India to improve access to sanitation and help end manual scavenging by supporting people to free themselves from the binds of this social oppression.”