

Integrating Women's SHGs in Urban Sanitation Service Delivery

A Resource Guide for Decision
Makers and Sanitation Leaders

Manvita Baradi and Meghna Malhotra





First Edition: © Urban Management Centre, September 2024

ISBN: 978-93-341-8768-7

This publication is the outcome of extensive research, implementation, and development undertaken by the Urban Management Centre (UMC). It has been published, produced, and distributed by UMC, a legally registered entity under Section 25 of the Indian Companies Act, 1956.

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Title: Integrating Women's SHGs in Urban Sanitation Service Delivery

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Acknowledgment to Government Leadership:

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G. Mathivathanan, IAS; Kalyan Kumar Rath, Former AS, HUDD, Govt. of Odisha; Mallikarjuna Nayak, IAS, Former DMA, Andhra Pradesh; Pamela Satpathy, Former Commissioner, GWMC; Sri Prasanna Venkatesh. V., IAS, Former Commissioner, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation; Praveen Prakash, IAS, Former Principal Secretary to CM, Govt. of AP; Rahul Kapoor, JS DAY-NULM, MoHUA; Sangramjit Nayak, IAS (Retd.), Former DMA, HUDD, Govt. of Odisha; Sanjay Kumar, IAS former JS DAY-NULM, MoHUA; Santanu Rath, Director OUA; Sarada Prasad Panda, OAS (Retd.), Former AD, SUDA, Govt. of Odisha; and Dr. M. Satyanarayana, IAS, Former DMA, Govt. of Telangana.

Special Thanks to Our Partners from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF):

Madhu Krishna, Former Deputy Director, BMGF India Office; Roshan Raj Shrestha, Deputy Director, South & Southeast Asia Region; and Sakshi Gudwani, WSH Lead, BMGF India.

Research and Implementation Support (2018-2024): Abhinash Bairiganjan, Abhishek Brahma, Anurag Anthony, Arham Sayeed Quadri, Ashish Kumar Naik, Chimmiri Sai Rashmi, Chinmay Menon, D.V. Ramana, Dhairya Chopra, Gulshan, Jeeban Jyoti Mohanty, Kedar Annam, Lopamudra Das, Manishankar Madishetty, Narendra Swain, Neha Modi, Pankaj Barik, Pitambar Polei, Pranati Das, Rashmita Patel, Ravikant Joshi, Sandeep Biswal, Shipra Patel, Spandana Naikoti, Suchismita Priyadarshin, Vaidehi Gohil, Varun Nair and Xerxes Rao.

Written, illustrated and designed by
CITY COLLAB

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Foreword

Since the inception of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2014, there has been focused attention and investment in sanitation and waste-management. In the last ten years, over 60 lakh (6 million) household toilets and more than 6 lakh community toilets have been built across urban India¹, accompanied by vital infrastructure like treatment plants and recycling facilities. The key challenge is to ensure consistent delivery of quality services, maintain facilities, and foster behavioral change within local communities — with sanitation workers playing a pivotal role on the front lines.

Despite focused efforts, sanitation service delivery in India remains dominated by informal, frontline workers, most of whom belong to marginalized castes and underrepresented genders. A majority of these frontline sanitation workers are women working as waste pickers, cleaners, and waste collectors. Lack of collectivization among sanitation workers limits their access to skilled employment and improved working conditions.

Organizing sanitation workers—particularly women and other vulnerable groups—into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and building their capacities represents a bold and promising step toward advancing sustainable sanitation. This approach not only enhances livelihoods and empowers women but also creates a pool of skilled operators to maintain sanitation facilities and services. The ‘SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence Guidelines’ lay out actionable policy measures aimed at formalizing urban sanitation delivery. Many states such as Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, among others, have adopted this convergence policy.

The Urban Management Center (UMC) has played a crucial role in shaping national-level convergence efforts and ensuring their effective adoption and implementation at the state level. This resource guide emerges from UMC’s extensive work with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and with state governments in Odisha and Telangana on policy-making, capacity building, and grassroots engagement with Self-Help Groups (SHGs). It offers a clear roadmap supported by resources and best practices to aid state governments, urban local bodies, and sanitation leaders across India in initiating and operationalizing convergence guidelines.

We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all team members involved in this transformative initiative. UMC has embedded teams at all four levels of government—national, state, local, and community—which enables policy development, innovation, and on-the-ground implementation.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the former Principal Secretary of Odisha, Mr. G. Mathivathanan, IAS, whose vision and support facilitated the implementation of convergence across Odisha. We also recognize the pivotal role played by Joint Secretaries of DAY-NULM, MoHUA - Mr. Sanjay Kumar, IAS and Mr. Rahul Kapoor, whose involvement was instrumental in driving the convergence innovation between the missions. Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the City Collab team and Ms. Vani Herlekar for spearheading the development of this resource guide and ensuring its successful publication.

Manvita Baradi
Founder & Director, UMC

Meghna Malhotra
Deputy Director, UMC

1. Sarkar S., Bharat G. (2021), *Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in water and sanitation sectors in India*

Situating the Challenge

There has been significant investment in urban sanitation infrastructure over the last decade. However, skilled operations and maintenance of these services continues to be a looming issue.

Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission has been transformative in addressing sanitation, as well as solid waste management. The mission has significantly engaged more than 4,715 urban local bodies through its urban-focused initiatives².

More than 60 lakh household toilets and 6 lakh community toilets have been constructed in urban India, over the last decade³. The mission declared open defecation free (ODF) cities across India in 2019. Significant progress was made in waste management, with the installation of waste processing plants and promotion of waste segregation, composting, and bio-methanation. Waste processing in India has gone up by over 4 times from 17% in 2014 to 75% in 2023⁴.

Despite this remarkable progress in sanitation infrastructure, critical questions remain about the management and sustainability of these services. Ensuring that this infrastructure is properly maintained and effectively utilized is essential for the long-term success of the mission. It is imperative to develop robust systems and a skilled workforce for the ongoing management of sanitation facilities and to foster community engagement in the use and upkeep of these services. Addressing these challenges will be key to maintaining the gains achieved and securing lasting improvements in urban sanitation.

The absence of formalization, adequate skills training, and social security for the sanitation workforce represents a significant and urgent challenge.

The Swachh Bharat Mission has successfully integrated over 90,000 sanitation workers into the waste management value chain, with women constituting half of this workforce. While the mission has fostered livelihood opportunities within the urban informal sector, mere inclusion in the value chain does not ensure worker welfare. In a context where sanitation work is often stigmatized and predominantly performed by marginalized groups, particularly women, the lack of formalization leads to unsafe working conditions, low wages, and scant social protection.

Sanitation workers frequently face understaffing and insufficient training, as they are often employed through private contractors who do not provide the necessary skills for effective management of sanitation infrastructure. This disconnect between the mission's goals and its on-the-ground implementation highlights a significant gap.

These challenges not only create a precarious situation for sanitation workers but also jeopardize the long-term sustainability of the mission. Addressing these issues is crucial for developing solutions that genuinely improve the lives and working conditions of sanitation workers in India, ensuring the mission's continued success and impact.

2. PIB Delhi, MoHUA (2022), Year End Review 2022: Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

3. Sarkar S., Bharat G. (2021), Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in water and sanitation sectors in India

4. PIB Delhi, MoHUA (2023), Swachhotsav 2023 - 1000 Cities are targeted to become 3-Star Garbage Free by October 2024

5. UMC (2023). Empowering SHGs as Service Providers in Sanitation

Lack of collectivization among sanitation workers limits their access to skilled employment and improved working conditions, however forming SHGs address these challenges.

The Self-Help Group (SHG) movement has a rich history particularly in rural India, evolving into a powerful tool for providing access to credit, improving livelihoods, and building resilient communities.

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), launched in 2013 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), aimed to scale these grassroots institutions to alleviate poverty and reduce the vulnerability of urban poor households by facilitating access to gainful employment. DAY-NULM has effectively organized urban poor individuals into federations of self-help groups through a three-tiered structure: SHGs at the grassroots level, Area Level Federations (ALFs) at the slum or ward level, and City-Level Federations (CLFs) at the city level. This structure has created opportunities for skill development and access to affordable credit.

90% Sanitation workers work informally, without a formal contract and social security⁵

80% Waste pickers in urban India are women⁶

50% Sanitation workers in urban India are women⁷

Women informal workers constitute the majority of participants in this mission. As of 2023, nearly 12 million SHGs in India, with 88% comprising entirely of women, reflect the mission's success in providing a robust platform for various social and financial security networks. DAY-NULM has been instrumental in offering self-employment and skilled-wage opportunities, empowering women from lower economic groups and fostering greater social cohesion, financial stability, and livelihood security. Sanitation workers have an option of continuing the work or opt out for alternative livelihoods. But if they choose to continue, they will be provided with safety and security to the work.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Creating sustainable livelihood opportunities beyond traditional roles such as packing goods or making sundry items — often characterized by low pay and instability — continues to be a significant hurdle.

Organizing sanitation workers—particularly women and other vulnerable groups—into SHGs under the framework of DAY-NULM represents a bold and promising step toward advancing sustainable sanitation. This approach not only enhances livelihoods and empowers women but also strengthens community structures, fostering greater resilience and agency.

“Formal sanitation workers who are on permanent wages receive three times higher wages than informal workers who are poorly paid and vulnerable to extortion”⁸

6. *TNUSSP (2021). Invisible And Discriminated: The Plight Of Women Sanitation Workers Making Bharat Swachh*

7. *ILO (2021). Challenges and Policies to Address the Persisting Problems of Sanitation Workers in South Asia*

8. *World Bank, ILO, WaterAid, and WHO. 2019. “Health, Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers: An Initial Assessment.” World Bank, Washington, DC.*

Collaborative Action for Scalable Impact: Convergence of SBM and DAY-NULM

A key milestone in Indian policymaking was accomplished through the integration of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with urban sanitation delivery, with the development of the 'SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence Guidelines'. The convergence between the Swachh Bharat Mission and SHGs marked a powerful shift towards the empowerment of the urban women from low-income households, through extended livelihood opportunities. Secondly, it has proven to be an influential force in formalizing vulnerable sanitation workers through formation of SHGs. A win-win situation for both, the guidelines are a step forward in ensuring dignified livelihood for economically vulnerable women in urban areas.

The convergence opens up doors of alternative livelihoods for vulnerable groups, such as women, to engage in skilled and technologically enhanced

sanitation work. SHGs have time and again proven that with education and training, they outperform privately engaged contractors. They have championed efforts to ensure behavioral change in communities towards sanitation, and gone beyond their contractual responsibilities.

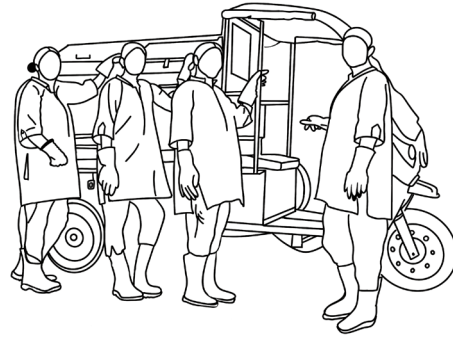
The guidelines provide actionable targets for state governments and Urban Local Bodies, while assisting them through dedicated program units. For instance, under NULM, cities were recommended to ensure that 10% of their Self-Help Groups (SHGs) include sanitation workers and other vulnerable communities. Similarly, under SBM, cities receive additional points in the annual Swachh Survekshan (Cleanliness Survey) for involving SHGs in the operation and maintenance of public and community toilets.



Why We Need Convergence?

1

Advance livelihood opportunities for women who are in the informal sector



2

Formalize the engagement of sanitation workers within sanitation service delivery



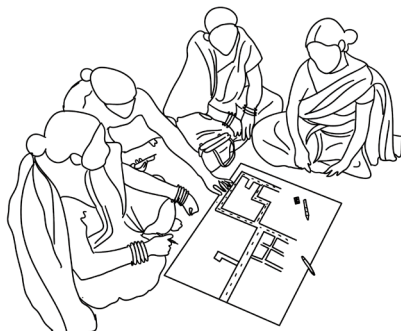
3

Strengthen financial capabilities of sanitation workers, and build their capacity to climb the social and economic ladder



4

Ensure quality and sustainability of sanitation services through community-driven infrastructure management



From Policy to Action: Why this Guide?

The collaboration between SBM and NULM has a ripple effect on building robust sanitation delivery through a collectivized system of SHGs. The model has been adopted by ULBs across states such as Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, among others. Incorporating SHGs in sanitation based-livelihoods has been a significant success. However, limitations to scaling the program has been the most pressing challenge.

The guidelines have been operational from 2018, but they have not been adopted widely. Most of the states have only initiated the convergence on a pilot basis. critical challenge in places where SHGs participation is limited because they are not engaged in formal contracts with ULBs. The task is to scale the program and operationalise the convergence guidelines nation-wide.

The way forward demands a collaborative action within action leaders, that include ULBs, state governments, policy makers and civil society, among other changemakers, to scale the program. This guide is specifically designed to catalyze this change, and function as a valuable resource guide that empowers action leaders, to enable the program and help it reach its full potential.

The guide builds on the national convergence guidelines, to outline a series of actionable steps that can empower catalytic leaders, such as state governments, ULBs, policy groups and experts. It identifies the responsible authorities, and provides inspiring case studies from state government program implementations. It also offers guiding steps to overcome challenges and implement lasting change, complete with links to additional resources.



Who is this Guide for?

STATE GOVERNMENT & URBAN LOCAL BODIES

Play a pivotal role in operationalizing and advocating for the SBM-NULM convergence guideline. The guide serves as a vital resource for policymakers, outlining the key steps and processes for effective implementation. It offers case studies, challenges from past convergence initiatives, and relevant resources, to assist policymakers in enhancing their program execution, leading to sustainable and impactful outcomes.

THINK TANKS, ADVOCACY GROUPS, CSR PARTNERS, FUNDERS AND OTHER CHANGEMAKERS

Changemakers focused towards issues of women-empowerment, livelihood and urban sanitation delivery are instrumental towards advocacy efforts, fostering collaboration and providing evidence-based policy recommendations. The guide empowers them to delve into case studies and best practices, enabling them to develop comprehensive policy recommendations and impactful advocacy strategies.

TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS

Experts are key to the implementation of guidelines through their engagement with the programme, area expertise and targeted recommendations. The guide is an invaluable and thorough resource for technical consultants to ensure that their efforts are meticulously planned, comprehensive, and successful in empowering women sanitation workers in India.

Taking Action

This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to implementing the 'SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence Guidelines' effectively, based on five years of engagement of UMC into various scales of implementation. The first step is establishing

governance structures and empowering Urban Local Bodies to lead efforts. The focus then shifts to engaging and supporting vulnerable communities through the formation and training of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Ensuring the health, safety, and financial security of

1. INITIATE

Creating intent at the state level, and institutionalizing systems and processes to guide local governments and community partners to onboard SHGs as sanitation service providers.



2. ENGAGE

Identifying and creating new SHGs, engaging them as service providers, and empowering them with the right skills and training to efficiently deliver their roles.



SHGs is prioritized, followed by tracking progress, sharing best practices, and scaling successful models to other cities. Each section offers actionable steps to drive impactful and sustainable change in urban sanitation.

3. ENABLE

Create a nurturing environment and ecosystem to empower SHGs as vibrant and successful sanitation entrepreneurs.



4. SCALE

Expanding the reach and impact of integration efforts across the entire state to ensure sustainability and deliver widespread benefits to vulnerable communities.





1. INITIATE

Creating intent at the state level, and institutionalizing systems and processes to guide local governments and community partners to onboard SHGs as sanitation service providers.

Action Leader: State Government

Key Collaborators: Community Groups, Technical Consultants, Sanitation and Livelihood Focused NGOs, Sanitation Service Providers

1.1 Institutionalize Governance Structures for Convergence

- ✱ Form Sanitation Convergence Working Groups
- ✱ Establish a Technical Support Unit

1.2 Adapt Convergence Guidelines to Local Context

1.3 Empower Urban Local Bodies to Lead Change on Ground

- ✱ Issue Advisories
- ✱ Enhance Urban Local Body Engagement with SHGs through Comprehensive Training
- ✱ Improve Procurement Processes within ULBs

1.1

Institutionalize Governance Structures for Convergence

The national convergence guidelines for SBM and DAY-NULM released in 2018 represent a pivotal shift towards integrating efforts to empower Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and improve sanitation practices across the country. To operationalize these guidelines effectively, state governments must demonstrate robust commitment and capacity at the state level.

At the forefront of this transformative agenda are the State Urban Development Departments, housing both the SBM State Mission Directorate and the NULM State Mission Management Unit. These departments serve as pivotal entities responsible for initiating and overseeing convergence efforts. To facilitate the implementation of these guidelines, it is imperative for state governments to establish structured governance mechanisms for decision-making and technical support.

★ Form Sanitation Convergence Working Groups

A cornerstone of the national guidelines is the formation of state-level convergence working groups comprising representatives from SBM, DAY-NULM, and other relevant departments (List 1). The convergence promotes dignified livelihoods in sanitation by ensuring that 10% of the SHGs formed include individuals from marginalized communities. Hence, the working groups must also involve departments like Social Justice Ministries and other welfare agencies. The working group, chaired by the Commissioner and Director of the Directorate of Municipal Administration, holds monthly



LIST 1

Recommended Composition of State-Level Convergence Working Group

- Municipal Administration
- Commissioner and Director, DMA
- Mission Director, DAY-NULM
- Mission Director, SBM-U
- Secretary, State Skill Development Mission
- Managing Director, Resource Organization
- Concerned State Mission Managers, DAY-NULM
- Concerned Nodal Officers, SBM
- Technical Support Group/Unit



We believe that we should move them away from making sundry things like paper plates amongst others, and enable them to be service-providers for a decent living.”

G. Mathi Vathanan, IAS, Former Principal Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department, Govt. of Odisha



CASE 1

Government of Odisha's Engagement with UMC as a Technical Support Partner to Implement State-Level Convergence

- ★ The Government of Odisha engaged Urban Management Centre (UMC) to function as the technical support unit (TSU) to implement convergence in the State.
- ★ The TSU's primary function was to integrate directly with Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), providing hands-on, operational support and on-site assistance to municipal officials.
- ★ The TSU supported on-ground implementation by building trust with local communities and facilitating formation and training of SHGs.

In January 2018, the Odisha government launched its Fecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) initiative, emphasizing the development of Fecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs), decentralized sanitation solutions, and solid waste management across all urban areas. To ensure the effective operation and maintenance of these infrastructure investments, the state partnered with the Urban Management Centre (UMC) to establish a TSU to implement the SBM and DAY-NULM convergence guidelines.

1. Engaging as the State's representative at the ULB level

The TSU served as the state's representative at the ULB level to drive effective policy implementation. It supported dissemination of advisories, and provided on-site assistance to ULBs. Over a sustained 3-year engagement, UMC in its capacity as the TSU collaborated with ULBs in Bhubaneswar, Dhenkanal, and Berhampur to launch pilot initiatives. Later the efforts were replicated in Paradeep, Khordha, and Jatni.

2. Integrating within the ULB for effective and inclusive ground level implementation

As the technical support unit in Odisha, UMC built an understanding of the state's sanitation ecosystem through interactions with sanitation workers, manual scavengers, waste pickers, and transgender communities. These direct engagements built trust and allowed UMC to independently support these groups, organizing them into SHGs and providing training. UMC also worked with municipal officials to demonstrate the benefits of integrated approaches and address concerns about additional workload.

3. Supporting capacity building and systems development

UMC's expanded role included detailed operational support, crucial for customizing and optimizing systems to meet local needs.

meetings to maintain accountability, and expedite the convergence process. Each member plays a critical part in the success of the initiative, taking on specific duties such as developing joint work plans, securing financial resources for convergence activities, and overseeing the implementation activities.

Establish a Technical Support Unit

A Technical Support Unit is crucial for executing this comprehensive vision of multi-tier systemic initiatives. It acts as a linchpin in translating policy into actionable initiatives on the ground. This unit must undertake essential tasks such as mapping sanitation ecosystems, identifying gaps, and assessing the potential of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). It assumes a pivotal role in providing crucial hand-holding and capacity-building support to ULBs and SHGs. Additionally, the Technical Support Unit also fosters dialogue and facilitates cross-sectoral interventions involving NGOs and civil societies at the grassroots level.

It is advisable for state governments to enlist technical consultants to lead these units, thereby facilitating streamlined policy implementation at both the state and city levels. The State Government of Odisha has made significant strides in implementing and scaling the SBM and DAY-NULM convergence, supported by UMC as their technical partner (Case 1).

1.2

Adapt Convergence Guidelines to Local Context

Adapting guidelines to local contexts is essential because each state encounters distinct socio-economic conditions, institutional frameworks, and sanitation challenges that require customized strategies. One of the initial actions of the Working Groups is to establish a state-level convergence strategy and embed the national guidelines into their local contexts and policy frameworks. For instance, Maharashtra's State Level Strategy delineates specific policy initiatives, such as incorporating SHGs from peri-urban or rural areas into frameworks designed for urban settings.



RESOURCE 1



**SBM and DAY-NULM
Convergence: State Level
Strategy for Maharashtra
(in partnership with CEPT
University)**

**Status Report of DAY-
NULM in Maharashtra:
Strategy for convergence
of SBM-(U) and DAY-
NULM in cities of
Maharashtra**

1.3

Empower Urban Local Bodies to Lead Change on Ground

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are at the center of driving the change on ground. State governments must create an environment of enthusiasm and collective vision to drive this change. State governments must inspire local bodies to champion these initiatives by including them in the collective vision. This supports the development of an understanding of how these convergence efforts will improve the operations and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure, and empower women to secure sustainable livelihoods and lead a dignified life. State governments must also make clear any financial allocations and incentives towards supporting cities.

🌟 Issue Advisories

State-level advisories play a crucial role in clearly communicating the state government's agenda and ambitions, thereby catalyzing action among city governments. ULBs often hesitate to engage SHGs due to concerns over their registration, legalities, operational readiness, and resistance from sidelined contractors. It's also important to recognize that SHGs need initial support and training to evolve into mature enterprises. Since SHGs cannot compete with private contractors on equal footing, state-level advisories and special provisions are essential to encourage local governments to incorporate SHGs into service delivery. These advisories provide the nudge and support needed for ULBs to begin the inclusion and capacity strengthening process. The advisories should outline specific targets for SHG formation and involvement in service contracts. They should also include procedures



RESOURCE 2



Details of Different Advisories Issued by States of Odisha and Telangana on Formation of SHGs

for data collection, establishment of area-level federations, updates on state and national portals, and the allocation of grassroots Community Organizers (COs), City Mission Managers (CMMs), and Resource Organizations (ROs) where available.

🌟 Enhance ULB Engagement with SHGs through Comprehensive Training

By developing a comprehensive training package for city-level functionaries from both SBM and DAY-NULM departments, on the principles and strategies of the convergence agenda, State Governments can help the ULBs improve their engagement with SHGs and shift ULB officials' perception of sanitation workers from mere laborers to valued contractors, ensuring they receive trust and support from the outset of their involvement.

Continuous training at the ULB level, utilizing customized modules and tools, can significantly enhance officials' ability to interact respectfully with sanitation workers and other marginalized groups. This can be achieved through the following training components:

- Orientation: Brief and orienting SBM-U and DAY-NULM functionaries about the convergence program and its principles.



- Sensitization: Educating ULB officials on treating sanitation workers, including transgender groups, with dignity and addressing any discriminatory attitudes.
- Role Transition: Encouraging officials to view sanitation workers as contractors and partners, providing necessary support during their initial engagement.
- Communication Skills: Equipping officials with communication techniques and professionalism in their interactions with sanitation workers.

The Odisha government led training initiatives with sessions for CMMs and COs from several local bodies. Regular follow-up sessions further reinforced these principles, fostering a supportive environment and transforming the dynamics between ULB officials and sanitation workers.

Improve Procurement Processes within ULBs

State governments can improve procurement procedures by issuing the template for Expression of Interest (EOI) and model contracts. EOI makes it easier for SHGs to access information related to the procurement process. Having clear model contracts provides the legal framework necessary to guarantee minimum wages and safe working conditions for SHGs (List 2). Alongside model contracts, providing official documentation and guidelines for ULBs ensures that these revised processes align with existing legal and administrative standards.



LIST 2

Key Best Practices for Model Contracts

- Ensure Bilingual Contracts.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of SHG Women.
- Include mutual termination clauses for both SHG women and ULB.
- Guarantee timely payments, PPE Kits, health checkups and lounge and washroom facilities
- Define assessment parameters for quality checks to avoid disagreements.
- Ensure timely renewal of contracts



RESOURCE 3



Model Contracts to Support the Functioning of the SHGs



2. ENGAGE

Identifying and creating new SHGs, engaging them as service providers, and empowering them with the right skills and training to efficiently deliver their roles

Action Leader: Urban Local Governments

Key Collaborators: Community Groups, Technical Consultants, Sanitation and Livelihood Focused NGOs, Sanitation Service Providers

2.1 Identify Sanitation Workers and Vulnerable Communities and Collectivize them into SHGs

- ✱ Understand Geographic Locations and Cultural Patterns
- ✱ Build Trust with the Community
- ✱ Form and Register Vulnerable Groups as SHGs

2.2 Empower SHGs through Financial Access and Enterprise Development Training

- ✱ Create Awareness to Access Entrepreneurial Opportunities
- ✱ Link SHGs with Credit

2.3 Recruit SHGs in Service Delivery

- ✱ Develop SHG - Supportive Contractual Processes
- ✱ Create Viable Business Models

2.4 Provide Ongoing Training and Support to SHGs

- ✱ Training on Operating and Maintaining Sanitation Infrastructure
- ✱ Enterprise Management Training
- ✱ Leadership Development

2.1

Identify Sanitation Workers and Vulnerable Communities and Collectivize them into SHGs

Sanitation work is predominantly carried out by low-income workers, often women from marginalized castes, who endure poor wages and working conditions as informal laborers. Organizing these individuals into SHGs is the first pivotal step toward formally integrating them into the sanitation delivery system. The DAY-NULM guidelines also advocate for the inclusion of other vulnerable groups, such as transgender individuals, within the SHG framework. This requires ULBs to have a thorough understanding of these communities, their locations and challenges. ULBs can undertake the formation of SHGs through their own community organizers or by partnering with grassroots NGOs that are familiar with the local context. (Case 2).

Understand Geographic Locations and Cultural Patterns

Marginalized communities are often rooted in specific localities, and have differing social and cultural norms. For instance, waste pickers typically live near dump sites or railway lines to facilitate access to materials. Recognizing these patterns allows for targeted efforts where they are most needed. Respecting the unique daily routines and seasonal patterns of different worker groups from marginalized communities, and scheduling engagements at appropriate times, can maximize participation and foster respect and collaboration from the onset.

Build Trust with the Community

Marginalized communities often feel neglected, disillusioned, and reluctant to engage¹ owing to past experiences of deception by various agencies. Trust-building is a gradual process that requires consistent presence and genuine involvement in the community.

Engaging community leaders is crucial for fostering trust and cooperation. Initiating meaningful dialogues and cultivating strong relationships with these leaders creates pathways for community integration and active participation. Furthermore, demonstrating long-term commitment and aligning actions with promises strengthens community ties and lays a foundation for sustained collaboration and impactful development initiatives.



“We, the transgender community, are now being recognized as part of the society, and being offered jobs and opportunities to start micro-enterprises. I am grateful to those who believed in us and provided us with dignified livelihood opportunities.”

Shalini, a 34-year-old transgender person working as a caretaker of a community toilet in Warangal, Telangana.

1. Chowdhury R. (2021). *Self-Representation of Marginalized Groups: A New Way of Thinking*

Form and Register Vulnerable Groups as SHGs

Once members are identified and orientation sessions conducted in communities, facilitate the formation of SHGs. This involves uniting groups of people from vulnerable occupations into SHGs. With the amendment of SMID guidelines in 2016, DAY-NULM advocated to include men from vulnerable groups to form SHGs. Further, SHGs of vulnerable groups can be formed with only 5 members instead of 10. The members are then guided in electing leaders who embody their aspirations, ensuring each SHG is equipped to navigate its own path towards prosperity and community impact.

Concurrently, documentation and registration processes are streamlined by issuing identity cards, securing necessary attestations, and ensuring each member has proof of identity, residence, and a passport-sized photograph. Additionally, at least 70% of the members must provide proof of belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. The ULB should assist in obtaining these documents where necessary.

The final steps include establishing bank accounts to empower SHGs to access and manage benefits effectively, and registering SHGs through national portals of DAY-NULM at City Livelihoods Centers (CLCs). It is also important to register SHGs from

vulnerable groups as the activity they are involved in. For instance, while registering an SHG of waste pickers, their activity should be selected as SWM.



“Self Help Groups play a very crucial role in empowering, not just the vulnerable communities, but also the institutions which engage them. GWMC (Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation) has made a conscious choice of engaging the self-help groups, especially the weaker groups among them, like the transgenders and the differently abled. We believe change must begin from home. And we have handed over the operation of Corporation cafeteria to a differently abled crew.”

Smt. Pamela Satpathy (IAS), Former Commissioner, GWMC

City	Total SHGs	Sanitation Workers	Waste Pickers	Transgenders	Others
Dhenkanal	10	7	2	1	
Bhubaneswar	18	4	13	1	
Khordha	1		1		
Jatni	2		1	1	
Paradeep and Berhampur	15		8	1	6

Table: Formation of SHGs of Vulnerable occupation (February 2018 to July 2021)



CASE 2

Including the Transgender Community in Sanitation Management in Telangana

- ★ The DAY-NULM convergence offers a pathway to engage marginalized groups such as transgenders in dignified sanitation work and offer them alternative livelihood options.
- ★ Working with the transgender community requires understanding of their unique social and cultural norms.
- ★ Organizing the transgender community in Warangal into a SHG through persistent and continued engagement marks a pivotal step towards social inclusion.

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation onboarded UMC as a technical support for the implementation of SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence in 2018. UMC, in collaboration with MEPMA, initiated the steps to provide transgender community with meaningful employment as an alternate to sex work.

Persistent challenges emerged in the initial stages of establishing the transgender SHG in Telangana. After engaging with the community for three months, members temporarily disengaged due to cultural obligations, causing several months of delay. Once the project resumed, it took an additional 9 to 10 months of dedicated effort to build trust and convince the community to establish the SHG. The eventual formation of the SHG under DAY-NULM marked a pivotal moment, demonstrating the importance of sustained effort and cultural sensitivity in community mobilization.

The SHG's initial revolving fund of INR 10,000 enabled them to start saving and broaden their aspirations beyond sanitation work. Despite ongoing challenges with societal acceptance, the high demand for sanitation services offered (Resource 4).

RESOURCE 4



Video about Empowering the Transgender Community in Warangal

2.2

Empower SHGs through Financial Access and Enterprise Development Training

Sanitation workers, waste pickers, and transgender individuals are among the most marginalized, facing significant economic barriers and lacking access to financial services and knowledge of entrepreneurial opportunities and enterprise development². Collectivizing them into an SHG opens up entrepreneurship opportunities that they wouldn't have been able to access as individuals.

✱ Create Awareness to Access Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The Self-employment Programme (SEP) guidelines under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) support the creation of micro-enterprises by providing affordable financial resources. All ULBs are mandated to arrange to conduct Entrepreneurship Development Program for 3-7 days for the SHGs engaged in

individual or group enterprises. The program typically covers basics of entrepreneurship development such as management of an enterprise, basic accounting, financial management, marketing, legal procedures, costing, and revenue etc.

The Government of India's Urban Livelihoods e-Learning and Resource Network (U LEARN) platform offers 14 modules, to build capacities of SHGs as well as all functionaries of the DAY-NULM on various aspects of SHG operations and financial management. It also serves as a knowledge portal for NGOs and research organizations. It also includes a comprehensive four-part financial literacy module to improve understanding of financial management and entitlements.

RESOURCE 5



U-LEARN Platform with Modules on SHG Development

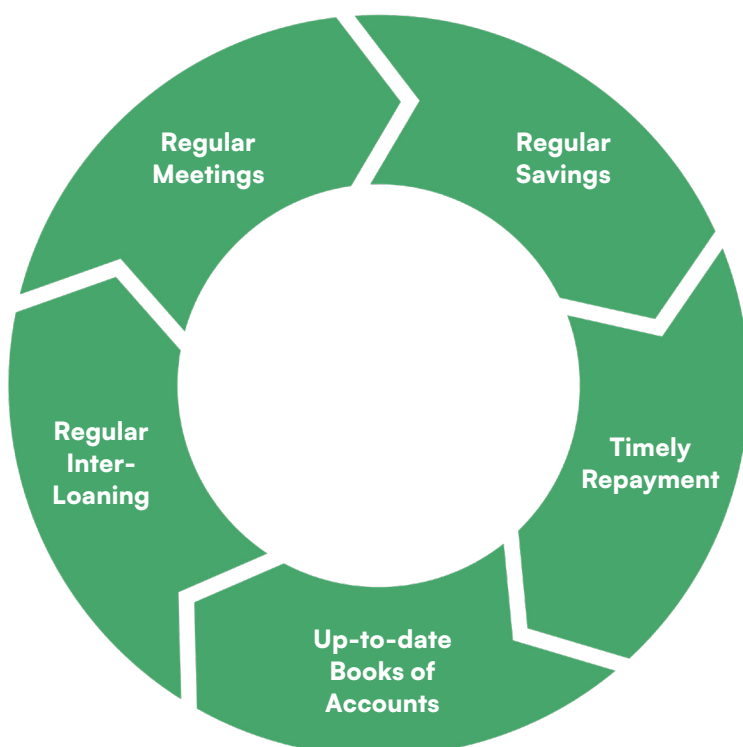
2. Urban Management Centre (2019), Financial Literacy Module, The Critical Role of Community Based Organizations in Urban Sanitation and Waste Management

🌟 Link SHGs with Credit

Within the sanitation sector, capital intensive enterprises that SHGs start on their own require more credit support rather than service provision with the ULB. Sanitation enterprises such as phenyl production units, sanitation mart, and sanitary napkin manufacturers require credit support. ULBs play an important role in linking such SHGs with credit. The ULB may facilitate loan applications and documentation, and coordinate with banks to expedite loan processes. Additionally, they may provide financial literacy and capacity-building programs, ensure timely interest subvention,

and appoint Micro Enterprise Community Consultants (MECCs) to act as liaisons between SHGs, the State Mission, and banks. These measures enhance financial access, ensure proper utilization of funds, and build trust within the communities.

Further, SHGs can be supported in leveraging benefits under existing schemes. For example, the National Safai Karamcharis Finance Development Corporation (NSKFDC) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment provides subsidized finance options particularly for sanitation workers.



According to DAY-NULM, every SHG Must Follow the Panchasutra to be Eligible for Credit³

Following the Panchsutra or the five cardinal principles for 15 weeks (3 to 4 months) is an integral condition for any SHG to be eligible for availing their first credit linkage.

3. *n.d. (2019), Social Mobilization and Institution Development (Revised Operational Guidelines) - DAY-NULM*

2.3

Recruit SHGs in Service Delivery

SHGs must be strengthened and viewed as a competitive alternative to private service operators, offering quality services. While cities stand to benefit in the long run through improved sanitation infrastructure

and social upliftment, the initial process is lengthy and requires commitment from ULBs. ULBs often hesitate due to concerns over SHG registration, legalities, operational readiness, and resistance from sidelined contractors.

With active support from the State Technical Unit, ULBs can address these concerns by devising systems to integrate SHGs into existing procedures, assessing their capacity to execute tasks, and evaluating their technical skills and expertise (List 4).



LIST 3

Challenges faced in engaging SHGs as service delivery providers

Challenges at ULB Level

- Contracts do not clearly define the roles and responsibilities of SHGs and ULBs
- ULB officials feel that SHGs lack the technical expertise to manage operations and may not be able to handle payment delays
- There is no established training mechanism to enhance entrepreneurial skills or improve the managerial abilities of SHGs
- The facility handling process is not streamlined

Challenges at SHG Level

- Initial irregularities and severe delays in payments create financial strain that SHGs cannot absorb
- SHGs require managerial capacity-building support, including guidance on legal documentation, invoice generation, and report maintenance
- SHGs are often provided contracts on a pilot basis, limiting profitability
- There is a need for facilities to be allocated closer to the SHG members' places of residence
- Contracts are not designed to be SHG-friendly



LIST 4

Procurement Process to Engage and Finalize SHGs for Service Provision with ULB

- Expression of Interest will be notified by the ULB.
- SHGs will apply with their valid documents as mentioned in the notice by ULB within the date.
- The ULB official in charge will shortlist SHGs as per the mentioned criteria.
- Shortlisted SHGs will submit valid original documents for verification.
- Resolution (Regular meeting)
- Passbook (Saving, loan and repayment process)
- Similar activity experience
- Selected list of shortlisted SHGs will be prepared.
- A selection committee will be formed as per the instruction of the Executive Officer and Chairperson of ULB.
- A date will be fixed for the evaluation and selection of shortlisted SHGs.
- Finalize SHGs to be engaged as service providers.

A City-level Committee, chaired by the Executive Officer, Chief Officer or Municipal Commissioner of the ULB, can be established to facilitate ongoing dialogue and information exchange between the NULM and SBM departments through regular meetings. This committee can identify facilities and services that can be managed by SHGs, define job roles and geographical areas for SHG involvement, and shortlist SHGs based on their willingness and existing capacities to engage in sanitation and solid waste management enterprises (List 5).



LIST 5

Sanitation Occupations where SHGs have been Successfully Engaged

- Managing Community Toilets
- Door-to-door Waste Collection
- Managing Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs)
- Managing Composting Centers (MCCs).
- FSTP Operation & Maintenance Technician
- Desludging Operator
- Septic Tank Technician
- Safai Karmachari
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Helper
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Technician

Apprehensions about SHGs' ability to manage costs during payment delays and their limited knowledge of administrative tasks, such as invoice preparation and delivery mechanisms, can be managed by partnering with local NGOs and livelihood support organizations. These partners can provide necessary handholding to SHGs, enabling them to navigate procurement and operational processes effectively.

With the right training, education, and supportive processes, SHGs can not only meet but exceed the standards expected of private operators or contractors. ULBs will be able to achieve successful recruitment of SHGs in service delivery if they prioritise these two key interventions: develop SHG-friendly contractual processes and invest in continuous capacity building for SHGs.

Pilot cities in Odisha exemplify the success of SHGs as service providers. The journey of Shaktimaa Hingula SHG highlights the potential of structured guidance, technical assistance and transition of SHGs into service providers and leaders (Case 3). Such successful practices not only empower SHGs but also enhance the city's reputation nationwide, highlighting the benefits of community ownership and accountability in service delivery.

Develop SHG - Supportive Contractual Processes

A 2020 study by UMC revealed that SHGs' involvement in sanitation service delivery remains limited. When SHGs are engaged, they are typically appointed directly by ULBs rather than through open bidding processes or tendering for contracts. Most cities' open bids require bidders to demonstrate a minimum turnover, a criterion SHGs often struggle to meet. Direct awards provide a workaround but are not a systemic solution. ULBs must adopt clauses allowing SHGs to qualify for bidding by fulfilling alternative criteria. For larger, more complex

contracts like managing and operating fecal sludge treatment plants, ULBs could consider engaging Area Level Federations of SHGs. Inclusive open bids enable SHGs to compete with traditional private sector organizations based on merit, scaling appropriately for each sector.

Implementing pilot projects is essential to identify and address city-specific systemic challenges, such as adjustments in contractual procedures, administrative delays, resistance from traditional contractors, and internal resistance within ULB departments. Once processes are refined and precedents are set, operations become more streamlined, demonstrating the viability and benefits of engaging SHGs in service delivery.

Create Viable Business Models

Another critical consideration for ULBs is ensuring SHGs receive substantial contract amounts that are operationally efficient and profitable. This contrasts with smaller exploratory contracts that may not yield sustainable returns, potentially making them less attractive for SHGs to engage with in the long run, thus increasing the likelihood of failure.

A key step in this direction is to develop contextualized business models for engaging SHGs across the sanitation value chain: Collection, Conveyance, and Treatment. These models should include a clear scale and scope, value, modalities (licensing, leasing, service contracts, etc.), and the training required based on the complexity of the job. The business models should also determine whether contracts can be awarded to individuals, SHGs, or Area Level Federations (ALFs).

The Centre for Water and Sanitation, CEPT University, has prepared business models for the State of Maharashtra under the convergence strategy to help Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the state identify suitable business models for sanitation work opportunities.



CASE 3

Shaktimaa Hingula: A Women-led Micro Enterprise Successfully Operating Composting and Recycling Facilities in Dhenkanal

- Backing from the municipality was crucial to secure Shaktimaa Hingula's first loan and linking them to sustainable livelihood options.
- Previously engaged in small enterprises like leaf plate making, the Self-Help Group (SHG) was entrusted with the management of the Material Collection Centre (MCC) and Material Recovery Facility (MRF).
- Efforts of the SHG have yielded tangible results, improving their lives, and empowering them to become leaders in waste management.

In 2018, Dhenkanal Municipality played a key role in forming the Shaktimaa Hingula Self-Help Group with ten women from Kathagada Parbatia Nua Sahi. The ULB and municipal officials guided these women in opening a bank account and initiating a savings plan of INR 100 per month. This support structure enabled them to secure their first loan of INR 1.5 lakh in June 2020 for small businesses such as tailoring and leaf plate making. There were initial setbacks in sustaining these livelihoods leading to some members taking up wage labor.

In January 2021, Dhenkanal Municipality assigned the SHG the management of the MCC and MRF. The role focused on recycling biodegradable waste into "Mo Khata" compost, and managing other recyclable materials. The SHG members were provided technical support and training to help them perform their new roles effectively.

Within two months, their hard work was recognized by the Municipalities with a certificate, a cash prize for being the best SHG in the category of operation and maintenance. Their efforts have yielded tangible results, with sales of Mo Khata generating almost INR 3,000 and other MRF products bringing in over INR 5,000. The structure and support provided by Dhenkanal Municipality, combined with UMC's technical assistance, have significantly improved the lives of the SHG members, empowering them to become leaders in waste management.

RESOURCE 6



Business Model for the State of Maharashtra

2.4

Provide Ongoing Training and Support to SHGs

Regular training is essential for SHGs engaged in sanitation work to maintain competence, safety, and enhance their employability and career prospects. Adopting the Central Government's training and certification frameworks ensures standardized practices across cities, enhancing worker safety, sector efficiency, and empowering SHGs in contributing effectively to urban sanitation initiatives.

Capacities of SHGs need to be built through a multi-layered approach. In addition to initial training upon on-boarding, there should also be 'on the job' training for them to get better at their roles. The capacity building pedagogy needs to be structured in a way that there is gradual transfer of knowledge and skills through a cascade approach. The State Government can develop context-specific, structured training programs for SHGs to enhance technical and managerial skills. Trainings should focus on:

- Managing sanitation infrastructure effectively
- Running and sustaining sanitation enterprises
- Communication and leadership

Training on Operating and Maintaining Sanitation Infrastructure

The aim is to equip SHG members with practical solutions for managing day-to-day tasks and troubleshooting issues, including when and how to seek assistance from ULBs. Furthermore, this training will ensure accountability and efficient O&M and also empower SHG members, transforming O&M roles into dignified livelihoods. Training requires understanding waste types and cycles at MRFs, MCCs, and community toilets. It should clarify ULBs' roles and responsibilities, and guide SHGs, ALFs, and CLFs in effective facility management, emphasize when to seek ULB support, teach record-keeping, and enforce safety protocols to ensure safe, efficient operations. This comprehensive training not only enhances facility management but also promotes sustainability, ensuring sanitation facilities contribute effectively to community health and environmental preservation. Based on these requirements, UMC prepared training modules for Operations and Maintenance of Material Recovery Facility and Community toilets.

RESOURCE 7



Training Modules for Material Operations and Maintenance of Material Recovery Facility and Community toilets

✿ Enterprise Management Training

Along with hands-on technical skills for facility operation, they also need comprehensive training in documentation and formal procedures to effectively partner with ULBs as service providers. Key training modules for SHGS may include clarifying the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the sanitation sector, assessing the enterprise's profitability, understanding and interpreting contracts and its clauses, mastering book-keeping and record maintenance.



RESOURCE 8



Handouts for Swachha Karmis, Swaccha Sarathi, Wealth Centre In-Charge, and others



RESOURCE 9



Standardized Training
Modules for SHGs



Leadership Development

The transition of SHGs from managing waste as mere “workers” to the overall “profit partners” in management of wealth centres needs to be gradual with the change in their own understanding of roles, skills, and agency as well as enhanced understanding of the enablers like ULB officials and having SHG friendly policies. Leadership training can focus on building agency, communication skills and improving liaison and negotiation skills with the ULB officials.

Implementing the convergence in pilot cities in Odisha and Telangana brought out learnings which helped in refining the training modules as well as the training pedagogy that was crucial in supporting scaling up capacity building at the state level.





3. ENABLE

Create a nurturing environment and ecosystem to empower SHGs as vibrant and successful sanitation entrepreneurs.

Action Leader: State Government

Key Collaborators: Community Groups, Technical Consultants, Livelihood Focused NGOs, Private Contractors Sanitation Service Providers

3.1 Prioritise Health, Safety and Well-being of SHG Members

- ☀ Provide Appropriate Equipment and Safety Gear
- ☀ Prioritise Adequate Facilities at the Workplace
- ☀ Facilitate Regular Health Checkups and Accidental Insurance

3.2 Ensure Financial Security and Welfare for SHGs

- ☀ Ensure Fair and Timely Wages and Performance-based Incentives
- ☀ Link SHGs to Government Welfare Schemes

3.3 Institute Platforms for Fair Grievance Redressal

- ☀ A City Level Forum: Shehri Sahbhagita Manch
- ☀ Form Sanitation Sub Committee at the Area Level

3.1

Prioritise Health, Safety and Well-being of SHG Members

Integrating SHGs into sanitation work demands more than basic contracts. It requires embedding social support and safety measures considering Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) to promote equitable working conditions, and promoting sustainable development.

☀ Provide Appropriate Equipment and Safety Gear

Sanitation workers and waste pickers face health risks and hazardous conditions due to inadequate equipment and safety measures. Occupational health hazards include fatigue, morbidity effects, malnutrition, anemia, tuberculosis^{1,2}. To address this, it is imperative to equip SHG members with proper tools, uniforms, and safety kits. SHG members in Odisha encountered usability issues with standard PPE kits. UMC, in collaboration with the members and state

government, designed and prepared specific PPE kits in accordance with gender, region, and work specific PPE kits (Case 4). Establishing a system, like a schedule for the maintenance and timely replacement of these essential items is crucial. The schedule was prepared and the Odisha government has issued a national/ Odisha advisory.



“We sweep the road, dispose of the garbage, but we don’t have basic facilities like masks due to which we suffer from diseases. It causes a lot of discomfort and anguish and despite that we keep working.”

Renu Dei, Safai Karamchari

☀ Prioritize Adequate Facilities at the Workplace

Ensuring the provision of worker amenities and infrastructure is vital for the health, productivity, and dignity of sanitation workers. Essential amenities such as adequate resting facilities, sanitation infrastructure, and clean drinking water are basic necessities (List 6) (Case 5).

RESOURCE 10



Advisory for Supply of Uniforms



1. Singh R. (2023). *High Time to Address Occupational Hazards of Waste Pickers*
2. Gowda, B., Gurusiddappa, L. H., & Kalikeri, S. (2023). *Study on Occupational Health Hazards of Municipal Solid Waste Workers - A Review*



CASE 4

Redesigning Work Gear for Better Comfort, and Gender and Culture Appropriateness

- ☀ The Odisha government addressed usability issues faced by female SHG members by redesigning uniforms and PPE kits.
- ☀ Women were involved in the design process, ensuring the gear met their specific needs.
- ☀ Tailored PPE and uniforms enhanced comfort, safety, and productivity for female sanitation workers.

Standard PPE, designed for larger, bulkier bodies in the construction industry, proved unsuitable for the predominantly female sanitation workforce in Odisha. SHG members experienced discomfort with ill-fitting gear, particularly long sleeves and gumboots that cut into their calves.

In response, the Odisha government and UMC redesigned the work gear by involving women from the SHGs considering the ergonometics. Their feedback led to modifications such as shortening sleeves, adding a pocket on the right side of the uniform, and replacing standard gumboots with cut boots. The tailored PPE and uniforms, ordered to fit the average build of women in Odisha, improved comfort, usability, and safety. Additionally, a handbook was developed to guide the proper use of PPE, further supporting worker safety and efficiency.



CASE 5

Garima Grihas: Prioritizing the Well-being of Odisha's Sanitation Workers

- ☀ Garima Grihas are dedicated resting facilities for women sanitation workers
- ☀ The State TSU enabled the design, operation, and maintenance of Garima Grihas, ensuring the needs of sanitation workers across Odisha are met.
- ☀ Standardized design of the Garima Grihas ensures the replication of functional, worker-centric facilities across multiple cities.

Sanitation workers, responsible for essential tasks such as drain cleaning, public toilet maintenance, and sewer line operations, often work in hazardous environments, facing exposure to dangerous waste and harsh weather conditions. Among these workers, women particularly struggle with the lack of access to basic facilities such as washrooms, dedicated spaces for cleaning and storing personal protective equipment (PPE), and decent resting areas.

To address these challenges, the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO), in collaboration with the State Technical Support Unit (TSU), supported the construction of Garima Grihas across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Odisha. These facilities are designed to serve as dedicated rest areas for sanitation workers, equipped with essential amenities like seating areas, PPE wash zones, changing rooms with lockers, and toilet and bathing units. The design of the Garima Grihas prioritizes both functionality and sensitivity to the needs of sanitation workers, ensuring optimal space utilization.

To date, 34 Garima Grihas have been built in five cities—Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Rourkela, and Berhampur. The standardized design provides workers with semi-open spaces for washing and drying their PPE, changing rooms with secure lockers, and designated rest areas for breaks between shifts.

The Garima Grihas exemplify the positive impact ULBs and technical partners can have in creating safe, supportive environments for sanitation workers, significantly improving their working conditions and well-being.



LIST 6

Key Actions on Establishing and Maintaining Critical Infrastructure across Waste Management Sites

- Ensure dependable water supply systems at all waste management centers.
- Construct or enhance gender-segregated toilet complexes to cater to male, female, and transgender workers.
- Install safe and clean drinking water facilities at every site.
- Develop and implement a rigorous maintenance plan to uphold hygiene standards and supply essential cleaning materials.

☀ Facilitate Regular Health Checkups and Accidental Insurance

Sanitation workers and waste pickers handle sanitary waste, domestic hazardous waste, and household biomedical waste. Further, they are exposed to hazardous fumes at disposal sites. Sometimes, they get cut by sharp objects, ragged metal edges and broken glass or face severe injuries and in some cases death while working in field³. Having advisories from the state government issuing regular health camps helps in early detection or in preventing severe health issues. The Odisha government issued an advisory stating that there should be a health camp for all workers involved in sanitation every three months. Implementing group personal accidental insurance with a cover of Rs. 2 lakh group accidental insurance offers financial protection against injuries on duty, further enhancing their safety and security. (Case 6)



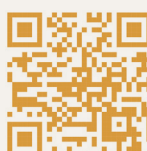
RESOURCE 11



[Advisory for Prioritising Adequate Facilities](#)



RESOURCE 12



[Advisory for Accident Insurance](#)

3. Singh R. (2023). *High Time to Address Occupational Hazards of Waste Pickers*



CASE 6

From Opportunity to Security: Lily Pradhan's Success Story

- Lily Pradhan, formerly a waste picker, joined a SHG and was employed as a Battery Operated Vehicle (BOV) driver, securing her a stable monthly income.
- Group personal accident insurance of INR 2 lakh provided essential protection, enhancing financial security for unforeseen health issues and accidents faced by SHG members working in high-risk roles.
- Employment and insurance benefits enabled Lily to save, secure a life insurance policy for her son, and improve her financial stability, prioritizing long-term well being of her family.

Lily Pradhan, a lifelong waste picker, endured harsh conditions, traveling long distances, working in unhygienic environments, and carrying heavy loads for meager earnings of INR 100-150 per day. She had frequent health issues like anemia and skin diseases which strained her, often leading to income loss due to hospitalization. Her daily struggle was compounded by the need to care for her son Rudra, who has partial visual and learning disabilities.

The Dhenkanal Municipality's initiative under the SBM and DAY-NULM convergence, and supported by UMC, gave Lily an opportunity to join a newly formed SHG. The SHG members, including Lily, were invited to become service providers for solid waste management. The municipal officials introduced Lily and her peers to Battery Operated Vehicles (BOVs) for door-to-door waste collection, providing necessary training and issuing driving licenses. Starting in March 2021, Lily worked as a BOV driver, earning a monthly salary of INR 6,000, with the benefit of fixed working hours that allowed her to spend more time with her son. Additionally, the municipality provided group personal accident insurance of INR 2 lakh, adding a layer of financial security.

This role improved Lily's livelihood and also allowed her to save for her son's treatment and care. She took out a life insurance policy, developed a savings habit, and expanded her interactions beyond her community. The enhanced insurance coverage and secure employment empowered Lily to overcome daily challenges and significantly improve her quality of life.

“

“We have worked in sanitation for years. After finishing work, we would change into a set of clothes we brought from home. We relied on community toilets or found private places to change. When we were handed over the Garima Griha, we were amazed that the Garima team had been allotted a wonderful room for our dignity. Now, we start our workday by putting our essentials in our lockers, and at the end of the day, we come to the Garima Griha to wash our uniforms, take a bath, and relax before returning to our homes. Garima Griha has truly given us the dignity we never received. We are thankful to the Garima team who have taken care of our needs.”

Mr. Hemanta Kumar Nayak Sanitation Staff, WATCO

3.2

Ensure Financial Security and Welfare for SHGs

In addition to training and safety measures, financial security and welfare benefits create a supportive environment among SHGs. It also fosters growth and resilience, enabling social and economic mobility, as the members move out of their debt cycle.

☀ Ensure Fair and Timely Wages and Performance-based Incentives

Many sanitation workers and waste pickers earn money on a day-to-day basis. They do not have major savings and cannot afford delay in payments, emphasizing the need for fair and timely wages. In Odisha, state government advisories ensure that SHG members working in the sanitation value chain in various ULBs are compensated fairly based on guidelines for minimum wages and on time, maintaining consistency throughout the state (List 7).

RESOURCE 13



Advisory for Monthly Incentives and Performance Based Incentives for Swachh Karmis



CASE 7

Garima Scheme: Pioneering Dignity and Occupational Safety for Core Sanitation Workers

- ☀ The Garima Scheme aims to achieve zero fatalities and enhance the safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Odisha through a comprehensive safety and social security approach.
- ☀ The scheme collaborates with departments at central, state and municipal level to improve health, safety, and wages for sanitation workers.
- ☀ It has established a database of over 15,000 informal sanitation workers and categorized five types as skilled, improving access to benefits and training.

Sanitation workers have faced unsafe and undignified conditions despite the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act (PEMSRA) 2013, with over 400 deaths reported between 2018 and 2023⁴ from septic tank and sewer cleaning. In response, the Government of Odisha, with technical support from UMC and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, launched the Garima Scheme in September 2020.

The scheme established a robust institutional framework with review committees at multiple levels to oversee its implementation across 115 ULBs in Odisha. By collaborating with departments such as Labour and ESI and Health, Garima aims to improve social security, health, and wages for sanitation workers. Named “Garima,” meaning “dignity” in Odia and Hindi, the scheme seeks to achieve zero fatalities and an accident-free work environment through a comprehensive approach addressing occupational, financial, and social safety.

Through the GARIMA scheme, Odisha has become one of the first states to identify 5 categories of core sanitation workers as skilled and highly skilled workers: sewer line cleaners, septic tank emptiers, operators of community and public toilets, drain cleaners, and operators at STPs and FSTPs. The state has been able to create a dynamic database of 15,000+ informal sanitation workers who can now avail the entitled benefits. More than 200 sanitation workers have been trained and certified as sewage entry professionals in Odisha⁵ (Resource 15).

4. PTI (2023), *Over 400 manual scavengers died in last five years: Centre*

5. Malhotra M., Baradi M. (2022), *Explained: How GARIMA Scheme Is Empowering Sanitation Workers In Odisha*



LIST 7

The Checklist facilitates ULBs and Notified Area Councils (NACs) to Ensure Consistent and Timely Payment of Monthly Incentives

- Specify the effective start date for the payments, and the date when payments are to be processed for release. Monthly incentives must be credited to engaged SHG members' (Swachh Karmis) bank accounts by the decided date of each month to ensure they receive their compensation promptly.
- Utilize revenue generated from the sale of compost, recyclable dry waste, user fee collected from Solid Waste Management services, and other permissible sources including Finance Commission Grants for payments.
- Maintain adequate funds in the dedicated bank account from which monthly payments are to be released. Additionally, monitor the fund levels in the dedicated bank account regularly, to avoid any shortfall that could delay incentive payments.
- Follow Standard Operating Procedures for accurate incentive calculation and distribution.
- Introduce additional incentives based on quarterly performance evaluations, aligning with predefined criteria.



RESOURCE 14



**The Garima Story:
Sanitation Work with
Safety and Dignity**

The Odisha state government advisory clearly outlined the necessary steps to be followed by ULB officials during the payment process. Additionally, a detailed incentive structure was also put in place to acknowledge the good work and efforts of SHG members.

☀ Link SHGs to Government Welfare Schemes

Schemes like Employees' State Insurance (ESI) and those administered under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) cover the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India. Marginalized communities working in the sanitation sector are often informal workers and not eligible for ESI or schemes



CASE 8

Subidha Sakhi: A ‘Facilitator’ Providing Benefits and Entitlements of Government Welfare Schemes

- ☀ The Subidha Sakhi program addresses gaps in welfare scheme delivery by engaging local SHG members to assist beneficiaries directly.
- ☀ The program creates employment opportunities for Mission Shakti group members, empowering them financially and socially as Subidha Sakhis.
- ☀ Subidha Sakhis educate and guide the urban poor in accessing government schemes, using tools like the ‘Haqdarshak’ app to streamline processes.

India’s vast social security and welfare schemes often remain inaccessible to many eligible beneficiaries due to fragmented systems, complex eligibility criteria, and limited last-mile reach, particularly for vulnerable groups. To address these challenges, the Subidha Sakhi program was launched by UMC and the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation. This initiative focuses on improving entitlement delivery while creating employment opportunities for Mission Shakti group members, who are engaged as Subidha Sakhis. These volunteers play a crucial role in educating the urban poor about government welfare schemes, screening them for eligibility, and facilitating access to entitlements directly within their communities.

Subidha Sakhis, selected from local SHGs, assist beneficiaries in applying for relevant entitlements, collecting necessary documents, and ensuring the delivery of benefits. Using the ‘Haqdarshak’ app, they maintain a database of eligible beneficiaries and track the application process.

With technical support from UMC, around 150 Subidha Sakhis have been trained, screening over 6,000 beneficiaries. This role not only provides Subidha Sakhis with an additional source of income, with potential earnings of around Rs. 700 per beneficiary, but also offers them flexible working hours and a sense of identity within their communities.

A comprehensive guidebook and promotional materials have been developed to support Subidha Sakhis in their roles, ensuring they can effectively communicate and fulfill their responsibilities. This initiative enhances both social and financial empowerment for the Subidha Sakhis, contributing to the overall improvement of community welfare and engagement.

under EPFO. Recognizing the overall challenges faced by sanitation workers, waste pickers and the marginalized community, the Odisha government offers various welfare programs to address their social and financial needs. These included food security, mobile and two-wheeler allowances, insurance (accidental and life), microfinance linkages, housing and education support, and schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, and the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana. The Odisha government recognized the need to ensure the safety and dignity of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs), leading to the launch of the Garima Scheme. The scheme's goal is to achieve "zero fatalities of sanitation workers and the creation of an accident-free work environment" in urban Odisha (Case 7).

Despite this effort, many of the initiatives remain out of reach for sanitation workers. This is due to complex bureaucracy, lack of support for tedious application processes, limited outreach initiatives by the ULB to ensure last mile connectivity, insufficient understanding of the process to access these entitlements, and inadequate documentation to avail of the benefits from these schemes. UMC, in partnership with the Bhubaneswar and Puri Municipal Corporation, introduced the Subidha Sakhi program, an initiative to ensure that the benefits of various government welfare

schemes and entitlements reach eligible beneficiaries, while creating opportunities for the Subidha Sakhis to become entrepreneurs (Case 8).

RESOURCE 16



SOP for Health Check-Up of Core Sanitation Workers (CSW) and Health Card for Sanitation Workers under the Garima Scheme in Odisha

3.3

Institute Platforms for a Collective Voice

A long history of empowered women SHGs has been a key factor in the success of decentralization efforts mandated under the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment in rural and urban areas. However the SHGs in urban areas are not found to be as empowered as those in rural areas. SHG women mobility is higher. This section underscores the need to strengthen participatory urban governance, focusing on the empowerment and inclusion of urban poor communities in these processes.

RESOURCE 15



Comprehensive Guidebook, a Short Film and Promotional Materials Developed to Support Subidha Sakhis in their Roles



CASE 9

Empowering Local Sanitation Management through Participatory Approach: Sanitation Sub-committees at the Area Level Federation

- ☀ Sanitation sub-committees help connect the community with the ULB, focusing on identifying and resolving sanitation issues.
- ☀ A single window system was introduced to help prioritize and monitor sanitation issues.
- ☀ Continuous support from DAY-NULM's TSU enabled effective sanitation management and strong ties with ULB departments.

In Bhubaneswar, the proactive involvement of the Odisha government, led to the formation of sanitation sub-committees within five Area Level Federations (ALFs). These sub-committees, composed of 2 to 6 members depending on the size of the ALF, act as crucial links between the community and the ULB. Their primary role is to identify, report, and resolve sanitation issues by leveraging local insights and engagement.

The State Government's TSU and the DAY-NULM functionaries, played a pivotal role in forming these sub-committees. They conducted orientation training for sub-committee members, clarifying their roles and objectives.

However, initial challenges arose as members struggled to prioritize and address diverse sanitation issues across different SHGs within each ALF. To address these challenges, a single window system was introduced. This participatory approach included social mapping to identify sanitation issues, ranking them for prioritization, and monitoring sanitation services. This system facilitated systematic identification, reporting, and follow-up on issues with the ULB, with records maintained to track resolutions.

The DAY-NULM functionaries and TSU provided ongoing training, handholding support, and facilitated the development of linkages with various ULB departments. This ensured that sub-committees were well-equipped to handle sanitation management tasks effectively.

A City Level Forum: Shehri Sahbhagita Manch

Federations of SHGs have a strong voice within their communities, however, larger decisions regarding services and infrastructure are made by ULBs and other concerned government departments. In order to achieve real change in the lives of the urban poor communities, a robust and 'formal' grievance redressal process is essential.

The Local Self Government department at MOHUA introduced the concept of Shehri Sahbhagita Manch (SSM) under DAY-NULM, a forum to organize regular meetings with concerned municipal officials in attendance, wherein the issues of importance to the community can be raised by the representatives from the city level federations of women's SHGs. Within a year of the advisory, over 1,000 cities established Shehri Sahbhagita Manch (SSM). Guidelines have been issued to provide a deeper understanding and clarity on the processes and objectives of this platform, at the level of both the administration as well as the community organizations and field level facilitators.

Benefits of conducting Shehri Sahbhagita Manch:

- Bringing municipal officials from all departments together in one place reduces processing time and streamlines decision making.
- Community Issues are taken into consideration,
- The requirement of minutes of the meeting as per guidelines enhances accountability of ULBs.
- Timely resolution of issues builds trust within the community, encouraging responsible behavior.

Form Sanitation Sub Committee at the Area Level

Sanitation sub-committees, suggested in the SBM and DAY-NULM convergence guidelines, are a link between the ULB and the community. These sub-committees support effective representation and follow-up of issues reported by the community. In Bhubaneswar, DAY-NULM functionaries, with the support of UMC, set up sub-committees in five area level federations, enhancing the communities ability to contribute in managing and improving sanitation (Case 9).

RESOURCE 17



**Guidelines for
Implementing Shehri
Sahbhagita Manch - A
Platform to Bring ALFs and
ULB Officials Together for
Grievance Redressal**



MICRO COMPOSTING CENTER



4. SCALE

Expanding the reach and impact of integration efforts across the entire state to ensure sustainability and deliver widespread benefits to vulnerable communities.

Action Leader: State Government

Key Collaborators: Technical Consultants, Sanitation and Livelihood Focused NGOs, Sanitation Service Providers

4.1 Select Target Cities for Scaling Convergence within the State

4.2 Track Progress and Impact

- ✿ Tailor State-Specific KPIs
- ✿ Monitor the Growth of SHGs

4.3 Encourage Peer-to-Peer Learning and Exchange

- ✿ Identify and Document Best Practices
- ✿ Organize Study Tours

Scale the Convergence to Other Cities

- ✿ Establish a Robust Cadre of Community Mobilizers and Trainers
- ✿ Develop Region-specific Training Material

4.1

Select Target Cities for Scaling Convergence within the State

Understanding and assessing the situation of urban sanitation and livelihoods in various cities helps establish realistic expectations for scaling up and maximizing the opportunity of implementing the SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence. Further, identifying existing SHGs and COs, and mapping the gaps in sanitation infrastructure and maintenance in these cities strengthens the rationale for scaling the convergence across multiple states and cities. Engaging with local stakeholders, including civil society organizations, local SHGs, and municipal authorities ensures that the convergence aligns with the specific needs and challenges of each city. Collaborating with these actors can enhance community engagement and facilitate smoother implementation and scaling.

4.2

Track Progress and Impact

To ensure progress and sustainability in urban sanitation and support for marginalized workers, prioritizing rigorous monitoring and evaluation is paramount. This involves utilizing advanced digital tools and well-defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to effectively track impact. Implementing real-time monitoring platforms for infrastructure projects and performance metrics empowers officials to make informed decisions swiftly.

✿ Tailor State-Specific KPIs

Tailor state-specific KPIs to enable continuous adjustments based on local sanitation needs and goals (List 8). Setting achievable milestones grounded in current performance levels facilitates officials to pave the way for substantial infrastructure improvements. (Case 10)

✿ Monitor the Growth of SHGs

Monitor the growth of SHGs through dedicated KPIs to measure their formation, effectiveness, and financial sustainability. This systematic approach highlights their transformative impact on communities, tracks their own progress, and also enhances accountability and ensures inclusive development.

Through this commitment to data-driven governance and strategic adaptation, officials propel urban sanitation initiatives toward sustainable success, fostering resilient communities and equitable progress.





LIST 8

Key Performance Indicators to Track the Progress and Impact of the Convergence

- Number of SHG members trained in sanitation service delivery
- Skill level of SHG members before and after training
- No. of GVPs identified and eliminated
- Percentage of households covered by SHG-led waste collection services vs efficiency of waste collection
- Percentage of households covered by private agencies/ULB vs efficiency of waste collection in them
- Percentage of waste segregated at source after engagement of SHGs for IEC and BCC
- Percentage of waste processed after engagement of SHGs
- Revenue generation through user fee and sale of recyclables and compost
- No. of sanitation-related grievances resolved by SHGs
- No. of public/community toilets maintained by SHGs vs their functionality
- No. of public/community toilets vs their functionality
- Savings, income of SHG members

4.3

Encourage Peer-to-Peer Learning and Exchange

Peer-to-peer learning through study tours is a crucial step for state government officials aiming to enhance waste management strategies. These tours offer a firsthand view of successful models like Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), Micro Composting Centres (MCCs), and Fecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) in action, providing invaluable insights for adaptation to local contexts.

✿ Identify and Document Best Practices

Highlighting impact studies and success stories from host cities emphasizes the measurable outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs). This not only demonstrates the tangible improvements in sanitation and community well-being but also emphasizes the scalability and potential for broader application across diverse urban contexts.

✿ Organize Study Tours

Identifying cities with well-functioning waste management systems as hosts allows officials to observe firsthand the practical implementation of strategies such as Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), Micro Composting Centres (MCCs), and Fecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs). These visits enable participants to engage directly with local counterparts, fostering discussions on real-world challenges, innovative solutions, and political considerations encountered during implementation.



CASE 10

Monitoring Performance of SHG led Service Delivery in Odisha with Ama Sahara Application

- ★ The 'Ama Sahara' app facilitates state-specific citizen engagement and performance management in solid waste management (SWM), tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor city-specific goals and achievements.
- ★ The app enhances transparency and efficiency in SWM by enabling real-time data entry and monitoring by Swachh Sathis and Wealth Centre In-charges.
- ★ State governments can compare the key performance indicators (KPIs) of cities where self-help groups (SHGs) are involved in waste management with those where they are not. This analysis can help monitor performance and shape an evidence-based scaling strategy.

KPI monitoring is critical to measuring the success of convergence efforts in Odisha as it provides quantifiable evidence of improvements in facility performance, service delivery, and citizen satisfaction. By tracking parameters like response times, and user feedback, stakeholders can identify gaps, ensure accountability, and drive continuous improvement. The 'Ama Sahara' application, developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Government of Odisha, serves as a state specific platform for citizen engagement and performance management platform for SWM. It caters to three main stakeholders: citizens, Swachh Sathis, and Wealth Centre in-charge at MCC and MRF. For citizens, the app provides functionalities such as requesting garbage pickups, raising complaints, and paying SWM user fees. Swachh Sathis and Wealth Centre In-charges use the app to input data on daily activities, which aids urban local bodies (ULBs) and state officials in monitoring the performance of MCCs and MRFs.

During the Swachhotsav 2023, cities in Odisha like Sambalpur have successfully hosted study tours that enabled officials from other ULBs to observe waste segregation and operational workflows, leading to informed adjustments in their own municipalities. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, study tours focusing on advanced FSTP operations have empowered officials to overcome technical and administrative hurdles, facilitating effective implementation in their regions.

RESOURCE 18



Swachhotsav, a 3-week Women Led Swachhata Campaign Launched by MoHUA. Swachh Yatras were Organized in Various States

RESOURCE 19



The 'Ama Sahara' Application, Developed by Department of Housing & Urban Development, Odisha Government

4.4

Scale the Convergence to Other Cities

To successfully expand waste management strategies across cities and regions, state government officials must adopt a structured and inclusive approach that prioritizes community engagement and targeted training. This approach is pivotal in ensuring widespread adoption and sustainable impact.

✦ Establish a Robust Cadre of Community Mobilizers and Trainers

Dedicated cadre of local community mobilizers and master trainers play a pivotal role in engaging communities and delivering localized training sessions that resonate with local needs and cultural sensitivities. Further, engagement of TULIP interns provides additional on-ground support and advocacy. Their involvement enhances implementation efforts and strengthens community outreach initiatives. The central and state government should consider to continue leveraging TULIP interns for the SBM and DAY-NULM Convergence program. (Case 11)

✦ Develop Region-specific Training Material

Region-specific training materials are crucial for effective communication and training delivery. Tailoring training materials to local languages, cultural contexts, and technical requirements not only enhances accessibility and relevance but also supports trainers in effectively engaging communities and facilitating successful waste management initiatives.

TAKING ACTION / SCALE

In Odisha, the initiative in Sambalpur highlights the importance of utilizing local trainers familiar with the regional dialect and cultural practices. Master trainers from Sambalpur were able to effectively communicate and engage with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by conducting training sessions in the local dialect, leading to successful implementation of Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and Micro Composting Centres (MCCs).

Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, the deployment of Tulip interns and local trainers fluent in the southern dialects ensured the training materials were contextually relevant and understandable, enhancing the overall effectiveness of waste management initiatives.





CASE 11

Engaging Young Professionals in Sanitation Policy and Program Implementation

- ★ The Urban Learning Internship Program (TULIP) launched by MoHUA matches opportunities in ULBs with learning needs of recent graduates. It equips young professionals with problem-solving skills through experiential learning in urban settings.
- ★ In Odisha, the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) and Odisha Urban Academy have launched a program to integrate TULIP interns into urban sanitation management
- ★ The program empowers interns to support and manage SHG activities, thereby strengthening the connection between local governance and community-driven sanitation efforts.

In India, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched The Urban Learning Internship Program (TULIP) to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical experience for technical graduates. In Odisha, the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD), Odisha Urban Academy, and UMC - The Urban College have collaborated to launch a program that integrates TULIP interns into the urban sanitation strategy, recognizing the value of preparing young professionals for future challenges in sanitation management.

TULIP interns in Odisha receive specialized training in sanitation and solid waste management, including immersive learning through residential and on-the-job training. Interns are tasked with supporting SHGs and addressing operational gaps in the sanitation sector. Their roles involve overseeing the solid waste management value chain, ensuring the functionality of essential equipment like Battery Operated Vehicles (BoVs), repairing infrastructure such as drying yards and weigh bridges, and optimizing resource use through effective management of recyclables.

Beyond operational tasks, TULIP interns lead Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns to raise sanitation awareness in communities. They implement safety measures, such as installing caution signs on machinery, and facilitate the desludging of leachate tanks to mitigate environmental risks.

279 TULIP interns have been trained for sanitation and SWM across 89 ULBs. By integrating fresh perspectives and technical expertise, TULIP has helped enhance operational efficiency of sanitation initiatives in Odisha.

MEASURING GAINS

Since the 2018 launch of the Convergence guidelines, several state governments across the country have made significant strides in implementing these guidelines in their cities. For example, Ambikapur in Chhattisgarh has scaled up their SHG engagement across the SWM value chains and now has even engaged SHG members in O&M of public toilets and monitoring of desludging activities; Raipur city has engaged SHG women in monitoring the daily waste collection activities and issuing fines on offenders and ensuring that garbage vulnerable points remain free of garbage and has collectivised their street sweepers into SHGs ensuring that they receive benefits of the SHG platform; Rudrapur and Haldwani cities in Uttarakhand have engaged SHGs for collection of SWM user charges and in driving citizen awareness.

Women and marginalized SHG members, city governments, and citizens have all seen tangible impacts from the convergence. The success of this model underscores the urgent need for more states to adopt the Convergence approach.

1.0

Improved and Secure Livelihoods for Women and Marginalized Communities

The convergence of SBM and DAY-NULM has been a catalyst for transforming the livelihoods of women and marginalized communities. Nationally, almost 10,000 SHGs of sanitation workers and waste pickers have been formed under NULM.

By integrating skill development, professional growth, and direct engagement with ULBs, these initiatives have empowered individuals to secure contracts and take on leadership roles in the sanitation sector. This approach has uplifted their economic status and also strengthened their social standing, creating sustainable pathways for long-term success and inclusion.

Members from marginalized communities have overcome significant challenges through participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Waste pickers SHGs have moved up the ladder from being mere workers to receiving direct contracts from ULBs, and hence have control on their incomes, have better negotiation power for PPEs, and safety equipment. Individual sanitation workers have also emerged as service providers.

The convergence has also been instrumental in elevating livelihoods through skill development. In Odisha, women like Jhunulata Naik have made groundbreaking strides in the sanitation sector.

This transformation from basic sanitation work to a highly trained professional role set a precedent for other women and marginalized groups in the sector.



“I transitioned from being a low-paid sanitation worker to becoming a highly skilled cesspool operator. Training in operating cesspool vehicles, PPE usage, and safe practices have significantly enhanced my professional skills. With the support of the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) and the TSU team, my role as a cesspool operator was recognized with a highly skilled wage and a 15% “risk and hardship” allowance. My earnings have tripled, and I have advanced in my career by training as a sewage entry professional.”

Jhunulata Naik, Member of Swagat MSHG in Cuttack

2.0

Higher Incomes for Women Sanitation Workers

The convergence has significantly improved the financial well-being of sanitation workers. Swachh Karmis now receive regular wage payments and performance-based incentives, fostering higher efficiency among the workforce. This wage enhancement also boosts morale and motivation, driving better service delivery.



“As a waste picker, I would earn INR 2,500 only. After joining a SHG, I have a regular monthly income, which has increased from INR 6,000 to INR 13,500, along with fixed working hours. I am leading a dignified life, where my work as a BOV Driver and Swachh Saathi is recognised and I have an identity within society.”

Lily Pradhan, BOV Driver in Dhenkanal



“As a homemaker, I had no monthly income. Since I joined the Maa Tarani SHG as a Swachh Karmi, I earn INR 9,780. I can now support education for my brothers and contribute to the household expenditure.”

Sita Murmu, Swachh Karmi from Maa Tarani SHG in Dhenkanal

Along with increased incomes, women SHG members are also advancing environmental sustainability by recycling biodegradable waste into “Mo Khata” compost and managing other recyclable materials at MCCs and MRFs.

The efforts of SHGs generated INR 2.6 crores in compost sales for the ULB in 2021-22, which nearly doubled to INR 5.2 crores in 2022-23. Additionally, the sale of recyclable materials increased from INR 0.5 crores to INR 1.1 crores over the same period.

These achievements highlight the impact of circular economy practices in promoting sustainability and also contributing to the ULB’s financial growth.

3.0

Enhanced Agency, Confidence, and Pride among SHG Members

Sanitation workers have demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm for learning and skill development, which has significantly boosted their confidence and financial management abilities. They have secured better job opportunities with an average increase of at least 200% in earnings, reflecting their enhanced skills. Workers now possess a stronger grasp of formal administrative processes within ULBs and have honed their negotiation and entrepreneurial skills. They effectively communicate challenges to ULB officials and actively pursue diverse opportunities for multiple enterprises, driven by their aspirations for a higher standard of living and better educational opportunities for their children.

This transformation has elevated sanitation workers to valued community partners, working collaboratively with the government. Their pride is evident as they wear their uniforms and ID cards, forming a strong identity within their roles. Celebrated as ‘Swachh Saathi didi,’ they are recognized and respected for their essential contributions to sanitation efforts, fostering a deep sense of inclusion and empowerment.

Shalini, one of the transgender SHG members mentored by UMC, embodies this empowerment.



“Earning INR 16,000 per month, I gained recognition and respect from her family and community. Beyond the role of managing sanitation, I led efforts to eliminate open defecation in Deendayal Nagar through education and awareness. Over two years, our SHG has demonstrated dedication by securing government funds, saving money, and efficiently managing community toilet contracts. Inspired by my journey and success, 60 other transgender individuals in Warangal approached UMC and the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, eager to form their own SHGs and secure livelihoods in sanitation.”

Shalini, Transgender person working as a caretaker of a community toilet in Warangal

Their achievements showcase the transformative potential of community-driven initiatives, highlighting the profound impact of empowerment and agency on marginalized groups.

4.0

Improved Sanitation Delivery and Management of Sanitation Infrastructure at the City Level

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) ensured that there were a sufficient number of public and community toilets in each city. However, without contracts for maintenance, most of these toilets were not functional and people resorted to open defecation..

Engaging SHGs as service providers ensured that sanitation infrastructure was kept clean, water was available, and basic maintenance like functioning lights and doors was provided. Additionally, the SHG members nudged the community to use the available infrastructure. This has resulted in reduced incidence of open defecation in urban areas.

The Swachh Survekshan rankings are a reflection of the improved cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation efforts undertaken by the cities across India. Over the years, there has been a gradual increase in the Swachh Survekshan ranking of cities in Odisha.

ULB Name	2018	2019	2020	2021
Khorda (M)	420	250		197
Jatani town (M)	344	242		152
Bhubaneswar	244	288	228	142
Cuttack	399	374	227	160
Paradip (M)	21	187		160
Dhenkanal (M)	210	251		169

5.0

Enhanced Visible Cleanliness across the City

Visible cleanliness is a vital measure of a city's commitment to improving the quality of life for its citizens. A clean urban environment promotes public health and also fosters community pride, encouraging shared responsibility for upkeep of public spaces. Effective partnerships between ULBs, SHGs, and COs play a key role in achieving and maintaining these standards. SHGs have eyes closer to the ground, and can support ULBs in improved monitoring, and improved collection of user charges wherever SHGs have been engaged as tax collectors.

The ULB of Dhenkanal, in partnership with Swachh Sathis, launched a targeted initiative to eliminate Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs) and achieve cleanliness citywide. Through a detailed assessment, GVPs were identified, and a participatory approach

was implemented to engage residents in maintaining cleanliness in their neighborhoods. This initiative not only informed residents about the GVP elimination efforts but also encouraged active community involvement, fostering a sense of shared responsibility.

Swachh Sathis were pivotal in the success of this initiative, taking charge of regularly monitoring and maintaining beautification sites. Their vigilant oversight prevented re-emergence of waste and ensured long-term sustainability of improvements. As a result, visible waste accumulation significantly decreased, directly enhancing overall cleanliness of the city.

In addition to a cleaner urban environment, the strengthened community ownership resulted in:

- Reduced Waste Accumulation
- Improved Sanitation
- Empowered Communities

By empowering residents and upholding high standards of cleanliness, the initiative reinforced the importance of visible cleanliness at the city level, resulting in a healthier, more vibrant urban space.



6.0

Stronger Government-Citizen Connections around Sanitation Issues

A significant challenge in urban management is the gap in communication and information flow between the ULB and the community. This disconnect often results in inefficiencies and hinders the effective addressing of local issues.

SHG members have also acted as a bridge between the citizens and ULBs resulting in improved grievance redressal. Swachha Sathis like Pushpanjali Das play a crucial role in connecting the community with the Notified Area Council (NAC). Pushpanjali's work exemplifies this connection:



“Being a Swachha Sathi has allowed me to bridge the gap between our community and the Notified Area Council. Directly reaching out to the ULB is too difficult. I ensure citizens are segregating their waste and putting it in the assigned bins. This work brings me immense happiness and pride, knowing that I am helping keep our city clean.”

Pushpanjali Das (Ward no-11 & 15 S
wachha Sathi, Boudhgarh NAC)

Through such grassroots initiatives, there has been a significant improvement in community engagement and information flow, leading to better management of local issues and a more responsive governance system. This approach strengthens the connection between citizens and ULBs, ensuring that local concerns are addressed efficiently and effectively.



“As a citizen, I’m very impressed with the hard work of our Swachha Sathi. They make sure the Swachha Karmi has gloves and boots and the waste collection vehicles are on time. They also ensure we are sorting our waste correctly. Sometimes we tell them about issues like street sweeping and drain cleaning, and they listen carefully and work with the ULB to fix it. Their efforts have made our community much cleaner, and I’m grateful for their dedication.”

Rina Khandual, Ward no 22, Jatni Municipality

7.0

Aligning with Broader Global Goals: Advancing Sustainability and Inclusivity

The convergence of initiatives is driving significant progress toward broader global goals by integrating marginalized communities, promoting sustainability, and fostering economic empowerment. Central to this effort is the implementation of a circular economy, which maximizes resource use, minimizes waste, and aligns with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through these efforts, the convergence aligns with the global vision of the SDGs and also transforms traditional practices, uplifts marginalized communities, and drives sustainable development at the local level.

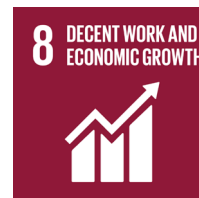
1

Promoting Environmental Sustainability



2

Supporting Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment



3

Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this resource guide highlights the transformative potential of the proposed roadmap in empowering women and fostering safe, dignified livelihoods within urban sanitation systems. By systematically integrating its key pillars, decision-makers can lay a solid foundation for sustainable and meaningful change.

This actionable framework emphasizes that women's inclusion and leadership are not supplementary objectives but essential components for building equitable and effective urban sanitation systems. With sustained commitment, ULB officials can drive a paradigm shift toward empowerment and resilience, fostering stronger communities and an improved quality of life for all truly aligning with UMC's vision of "Making Cities Work for Everyone."

1. INITIATE



2. ENGAGE



3. ENABLE



4. SCALE





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ISBN 978-93-341-8768-7



9 789334 187687