



**Oral Statement: 45th session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe
drinking water and sanitation**

16 September 2020

Mr. Heller,

We thank you for your follow-up report on India, by which you offer your assistance to strengthen the enjoyment of the rights to water and sanitation in the country.

We agree with your recommendation that the Clean India Mission should comprise contextual information on particular groups that may have different needs, including the Dalits, whose experience with discrimination and stigma are intrinsically linked to water and sanitation activities.

Your recommendation 12, on manual scavenging, points out to the challenge of overcoming the rate of 99.6 % of incidence in rural areas and of 38% in urban areas. We encourage India to further strengthen monitoring and surveillance systems and to harmonize local and national statistics on manual scavenging. Such data should be gender sensitive, since 92% of those engaged in this practice are women.

Manual Scavengers have been named as 'frontline' warriors in the 'war' against COVID-19, giving them a false status of importance but in reality they are taking on the most dangerous tasks of cleaning medical and virus-affected waste - without being provided with any safety equipment.

We encourage India to engage in open spirit with this follow-up report.

Thank you.

NGO without ECOSOC consultative status in support of the statement