



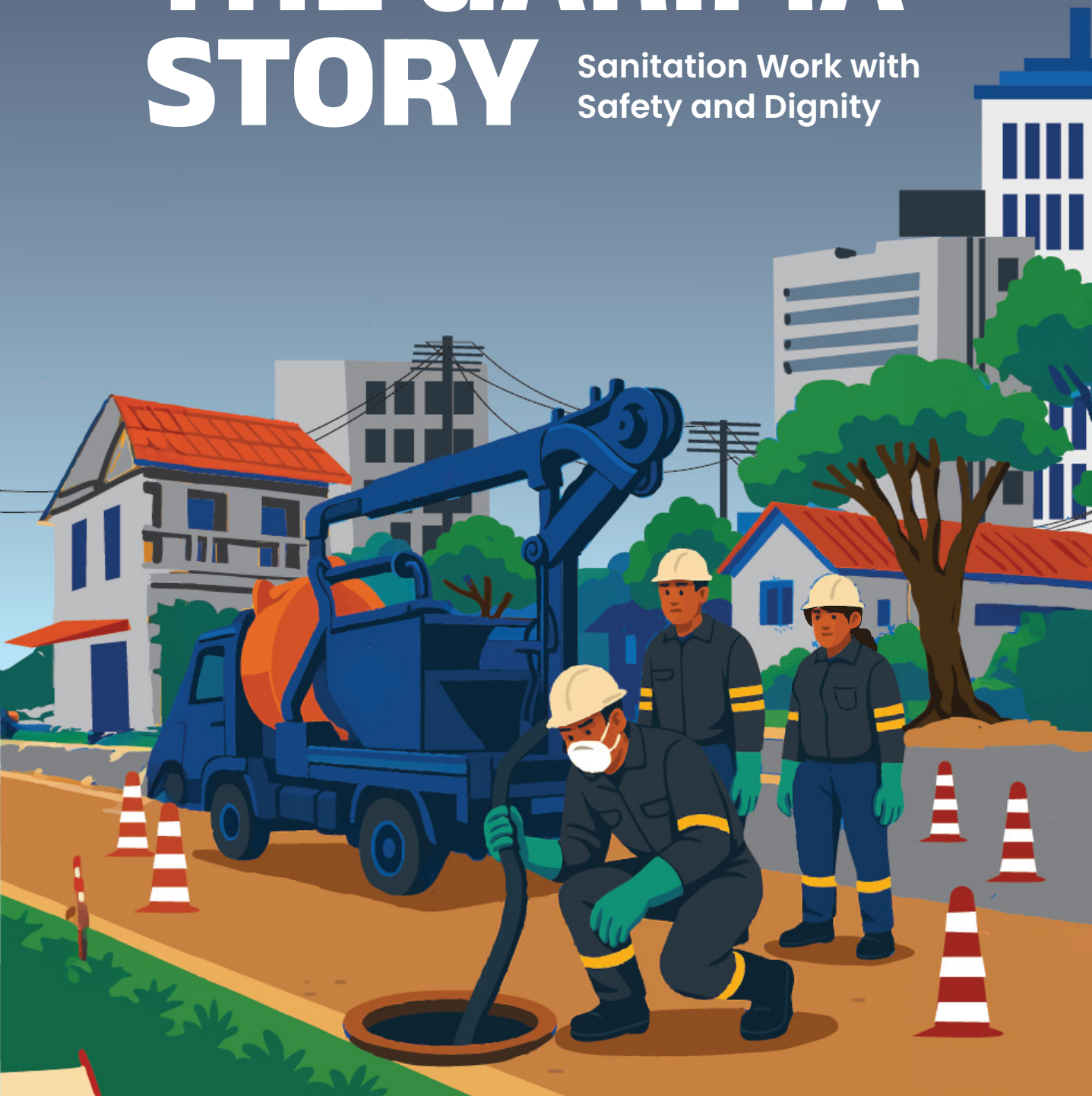
**garima**  
FOR SAFETY & DIGNITY OF  
CORE SANITATION WORKERS



**Urban  
Management  
Centre**  
*Making cities work for everyone*

# THE GARIMA STORY

Sanitation Work with  
Safety and Dignity



## **THE GARIMA STORY: Sanitation Work with Safety and Dignity**

Published by: Housing & Urban Development Department,  
Govt. of Odisha and the Urban Management Centre

### **First Edition**

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July 2025

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# **THE GARIMA STORY**

Sanitation Work with  
Safety and Dignity

Published by

**Housing & Urban Development Department,  
Government of Odisha**

Institutional Support Partner

**Urban Management Centre**



**Shri Mohan Charan Majhi**  
Chief Minister, Odisha



## MESSAGE

Jai Jagannath !

A truly Viksit Bharat is one where no citizen is left behind, especially those who toil away to keep our cities clean, safe, and functional. Odisha's 'Garima' initiative reflects our firm belief that development must be inclusive, equitable, and centered on human dignity.

With Garima, we have taken a pioneering step to institutionalize safety, welfare, and recognition for sanitation workers across the state. This programme demonstrates our commitment to transforming urban governance, not just through infrastructure, but through care for the hands that maintain our cities.

As we move toward building aspirational, resilient cities under the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, Odisha remains proud to lead by example. I congratulate all partners, frontline officials, and sanitation workers whose commitment and courage have made Garima a symbol of transformative change.

(MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI)



**Dr. Krushna Chandra  
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BHUBANESWAR

Date 25-07-2025

## MESSAGE

Garima is Odisha's direct response to the national call for dignity and safety in sanitation work. It aligns with the goals of flagship missions such as the **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** – Urban and **NAMASTE**, and seeks to bring systemic reforms that ensure no life is risked in the delivery of essential urban services.

Through this initiative, we have built institutional mechanisms like Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs), promoted the use of mechanised cleaning technologies, and created pathways for worker welfare and inclusion. These steps reinforce the state's commitment to delivering sustainable, dignified urban sanitation services.

As we continue implementing SBM 2.0 and operationalising **NAMASTE**, Garima stands as an example of how national vision can be realized through state-led innovation and compassion. I commend the teams that have contributed to this journey.

  
25/07/2025

**(Dr. Krishna Chandra Mahapatra)**







**Smt. Usha Padhee, IAS**  
Principal Secretary,  
Housing & Urban Development  
Department,  
Government of Odisha

**G**arima has enabled us to bring tangible, city-level reforms in how sanitation work is managed, delivered, and perceived. Across Urban Local Bodies in Odisha, we have institutionalised Sewer Entry Professionals with rigorous training pedagogy, set up Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) in local governments, established Standard Operating Procedures for hazardous entry, and integrated worker welfare measures into municipal operations. I extend a heartfelt welcome to all readers of this book, taking you on a journey through this transformative Garima Story. It is a compelling testament to social empowerment and human dignity.

Sanitation workers keep our cities alive and healthy, yet their essential work is too often ignored and stigmatized. It's time to honour their dignity, protect their lives, and stand up for the justice they've long been denied. A safety scheme isn't charity—it's overdue respect. Garima aligns with the mandates of SBM 2.0 and NAMASTE while addressing the deep-rooted challenges faced by sanitation workers on the ground. As a state, we will continue to prioritise human-centric service delivery models that create lasting institutional change.

A heartfelt thank you to our partners, the Urban Management Centre and the Gates Foundation, for their invaluable support in the program design and implementation. This publication is a valuable documentation of that journey that offers a window into GARIMA, showcasing our experiences and successful approaches in uplifting the dignity of sanitation workers and bringing positive changes to their lives through socio-economic benefits. I hope fellow policymakers and WASH practitioners can draw insights from our experiences and apply our strategies in their regions.





**Ms. Sakshi Gudwani**  
Lead, Water, Sanitation and  
Hygiene (WSH),  
Gates Foundation

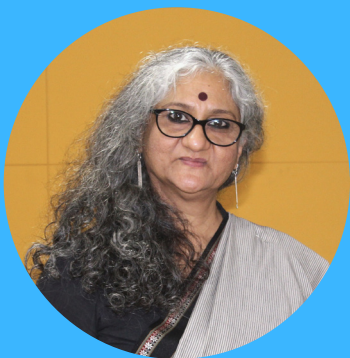
**G**arima exemplifies the power of state-led initiative which is deeply rooted in the principles of dignity, safety, and social justice. The Gates Foundation is honored to have supported this ambitious initiative led by the Government of Odisha, which sets a precedent for improving the lives of sanitation workers through innovation in strategy and program design, system strengthening, and field-level transformation.

From the early design stages to on-ground implementation, Garima has demonstrated what's possible when public institutions, technical partners, and communities work in synergy. It has bridged gaps that have long existed between service delivery and human dignity by providing structured support on occupational safety and access to social protection.

This publication captures not only the achievements of the Government of Odisha in implementing Garima but also the values and vision that have driven it. We hope it serves as a valuable resource for others working to create safer, more inclusive urban environments across India, and the Global South.







**Ms. Manvita Baradi &  
Ms. Meghna Malhotra**  
Urban Management  
Centre

**G**arima has been a deeply collaborative and transformative journey—one that demanded both systems thinking and grassroots sensitivity. At the Urban Management Centre, it has been our privilege to walk alongside the Government of Odisha in designing and operationalising a framework that reimagines sanitation work as dignified, professional, and rights-affirming.

Our engagement has spanned policy support, institutional strengthening, field-based capacity building, and impact documentation. But at its heart, Garima is about people—the sanitation workers who have embraced the programme with courage and optimism, the municipal officials who have championed change within government systems, and the wider ecosystem of partners who have enabled its evolution. We also recognise the urgency of this work. In the 21st century—where humans are planning missions to Mars and revolutionising technology—we must not accept preventable fatalities in sanitation work. If we can send a man to the moon, we must also be able to design systems, tools, and governance frameworks that guarantee the safety and dignity of every sanitation worker. Anything less would be unacceptable.

We are especially grateful to Mr. G. Mathivathanan, IAS, former Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, whose vision, drive, and unwavering zeal made Garima a reality. We also express our heartfelt appreciation to Ms. Usha Padhee, IAS, Principal Secretary, H&UDD, for continuing and deepening the implementation of Garima with commitment and foresight.

This publication distills the core principles, practices, and pathways that have shaped Garima. It offers a blueprint for replication and stands as a celebration of what is possible when governance is guided by compassion, conviction, and courage. At UMC, we remain committed to our vision of making cities work for everyone. Here's to a future where zero fatalities in sanitation work is not just a goal—but a guaranteed reality.





ଗରିମା ପ୍ରକୋଷ୍ଠ  
ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଜ୍ଞାନ-୧, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର



GARIMA HALL  
WATCO DIVISION-1, BHUBANESWAR





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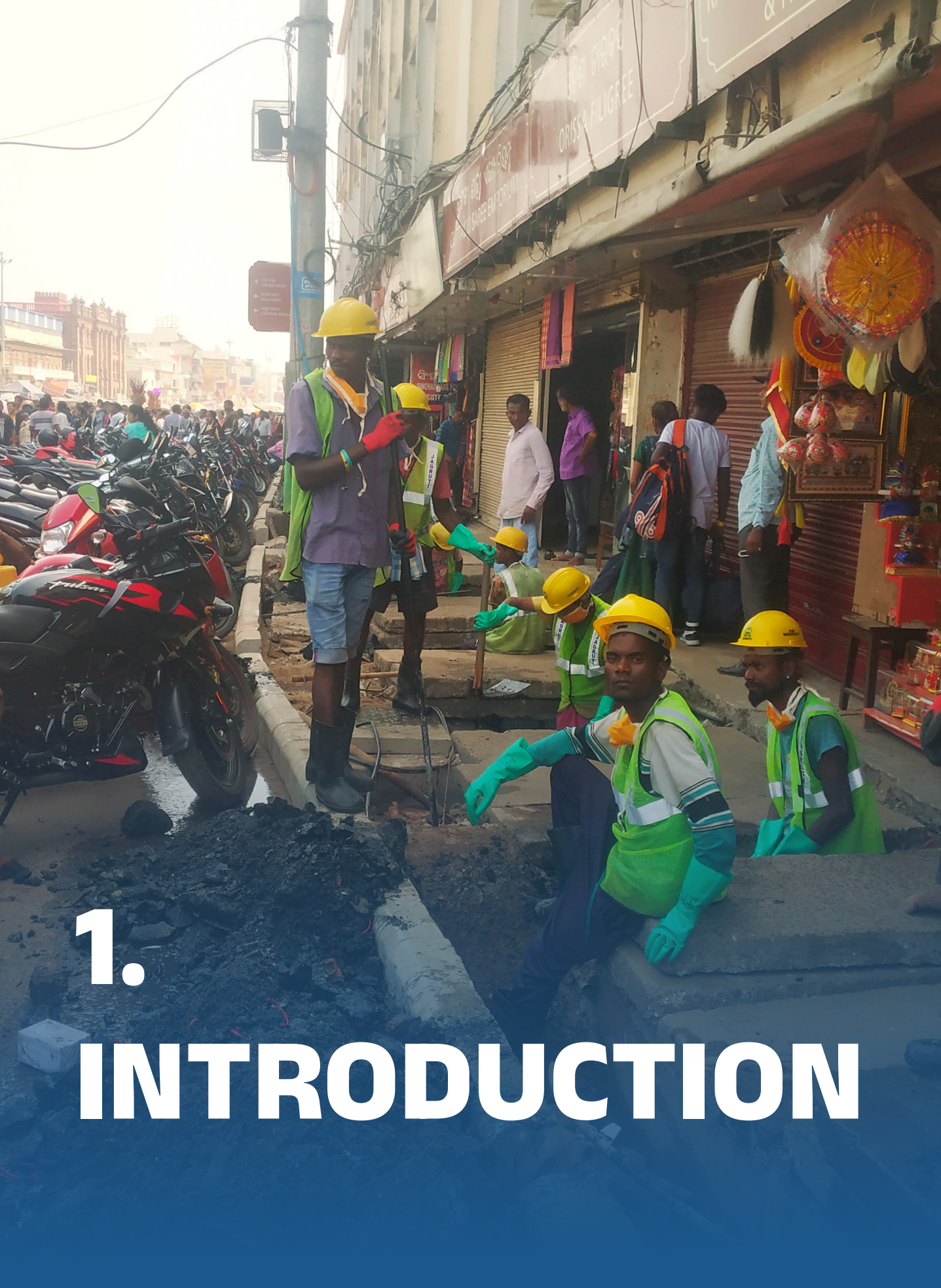
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1.

# INTRODUCTION



## 1.1. The Context

The plight of sanitation workers in India, is rooted in centuries of social ostracization and stigmatization, highlights the persistent challenges embedded in their circumstances. While they face risks and hazards regularly in their work environment, often with little to no protective equipment, resulting in frequent accidents causing injuries or even loss of life. **Although sanitation workers contribute to the local economy, public health and safety, and environmental sustainability, they bear stigma on multiple fronts due to the nature of their work, low wages, low social status, deplorable living conditions, and lack of societal support.**

Despite Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, which notes the abolishment of “untouchability” and declares its practice in any form as “forbidden,” manual scavenging remains a reality for many. To eradicate this issue, the Government of India (GOI) introduced acts such as the Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993. But still, sanitation work continues to be unsafe and hazardous. Recognizing this ongoing issue, the GOI enacted the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR Act, 2013), to ban the engagement of sanitation workers as manual scavengers across the country and take concerted actions for their and their family’s rehabilitation. The Act outlines guidelines for conducting surveys to identify manual scavengers and initiate rehabilitation. It also provisions for each identified manual scavenger to be given one-time cash assistance, identification card, livelihood skill training, loan subsidy for alternate livelihood, residential plot/ house/financial assistance to construct a house, scholarship for their children as per the relevant central or state scheme, and legal and programmatic assistance. The Act has established an institutional framework detailing the roles and responsibilities of various implementing authorities and the penalties applicable in case they are found employing workers in scavenging activities.

Due to the taboo and stigma around sanitation work, accurate data collection becomes challenging, leaving the actual number of sanitation workers in India unknown. According to the 2011 Census data on “Socio-Economic Caste,” approximately 18,80,657 workers were engaged in sanitation work, and the survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) in 2018 identified 63,246 manual scavengers across 17 states and 172 districts of India. No further surveys have been conducted to update or provide a current count of sanitation workers in the country.

**In 2018, a report revealed that approximately five million sanitation workers operate across India, out of which about two million are engaged in urban India. Despite their significant numbers, the workforce remains largely “invisible.” Notably, nearly two million sanitation workers are engaged in “high risk” work (Dalberg, May 2021)\*. Sanitation work that is crucial for achieving SDG 6, i.e., Clean Water and Sanitation for All, poses significant hazards like toxic gas exposure and contact with faecal matter, exacerbated by the informal nature of the profession. This undermines SDG 3, i.e., Health and Wellbeing, and SDG 8, i.e., Decent Work and Economic Growth. The foundational element for implementing any welfare measure for sanitation Workers is to bring visibility to the workforce, entailing the identification and enumeration of individuals engaged in various job roles.(UMC, 2023)\*\***

The Government of Odisha (GoO), while pioneering several sanitation improvements, recognized the imminent need to ensure the safety and dignity of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs). Thus, in tember 2020, the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) launched the Garima scheme with the technical support of Urban Management Centre (UMC) and support from the Gates Foundation (GF).

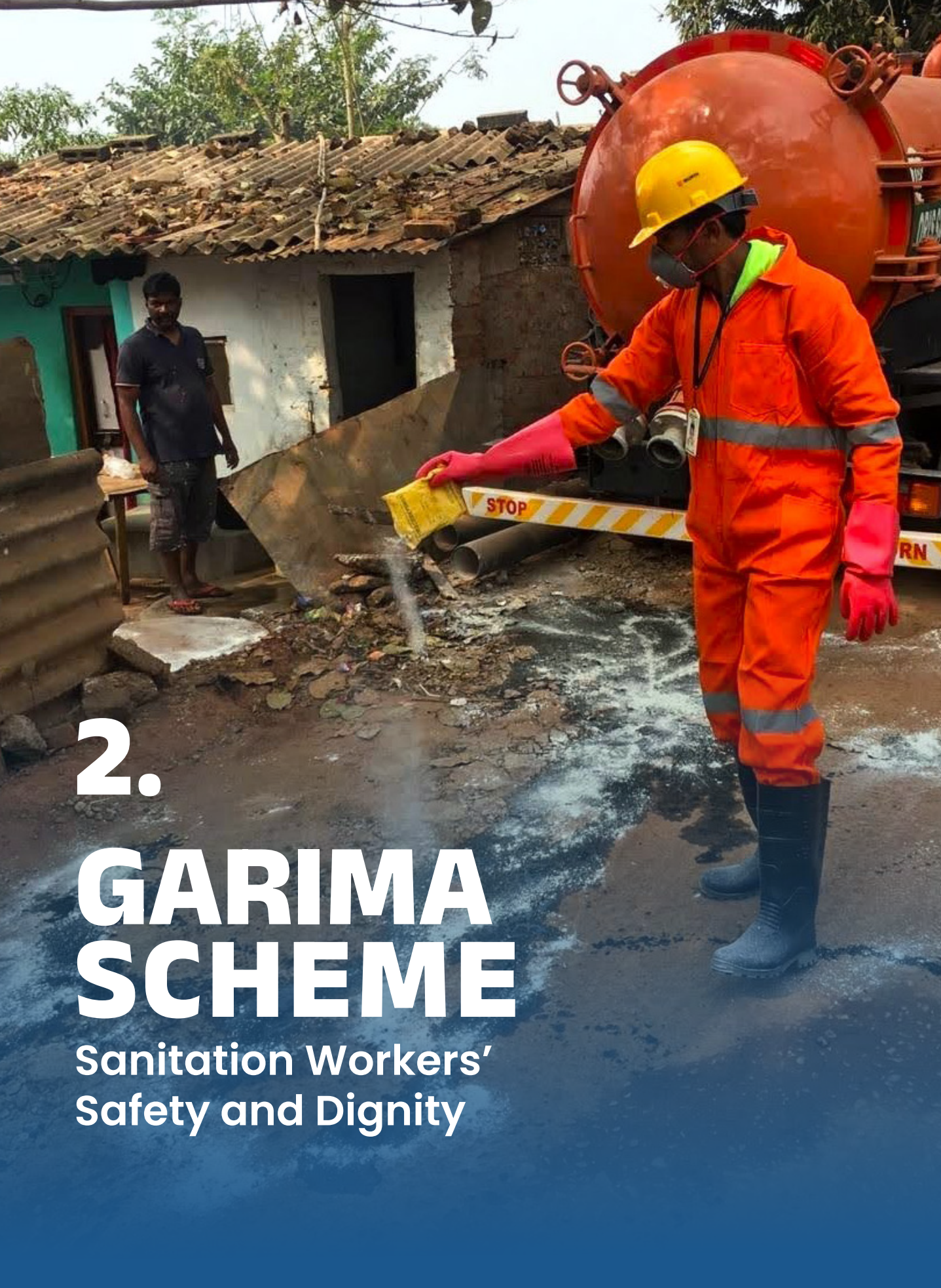
### The issues surrounding Sanitation Workers are fivefold:

1. Invisibility of workers in the sanitation service ecosystem
2. Occupational hazards, due to inadequate design of technology, PPE, and safety devices for providing occupational safety
3. Weak enforcement systems, further amplified due to the high informality of work
4. Lack of financial safety net, wages, insurance cover, risk, and hardship allowances
5. Lack of social safety nets

\* Sanitation worker safety and livelihoods in India: A blueprint for action, Dalberg, 2017

\*\* Turning Tides: A journey Towards Safety and Dignity for Sanitation Workers in Urban India, UMC 2023





2.

# GARIMA SCHEME

Sanitation Workers'  
Safety and Dignity





SHG women members from Odisha proudly serve as FSTP operators

## 2.1. Historical context: Odisha's Sanitation Journey

Goal 6 of the SDGs demands universal access to clean water and sanitation. Within this, Target 6.2 aims at achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and ending open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. Within this context, the Government of Odisha has proactively taken measures to improve the living and working conditions of sanitation workers and their families. **In 2011, Odisha became the first state in India to notify an urban sanitation policy and strategy, to strengthen the vision of transforming urban areas into sanitized, safe, and healthy settlements through community-driven processes managed by the ULBs.**

This policy underwent a revision in 2017, which evolved into the Odisha Urban Sanitation Policy (OUSP), broadening its focus beyond Solid Waste Management (SWM) and networked sewer systems. The revised policy addressed both solid and liquid waste management, with a particular emphasis on managing Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM). **The OUSP 2017 envisioned Odisha as open-defecation and open-discharge free, ensuring the safe handling, treatment, and disposal of solid**

**waste, sewage, septage, and liquid waste. This prioritization of the sanitation sector was reflected at the national level, with the initiation supported by the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).** Over the past few years, the Government of Odisha has increasingly focused on City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) and gender transformative outcomes, prompting a revision of the Odisha Sanitation Policy to not only reflect the inclusive approaches adopted in the sanitation interventions but also incorporate an inclusive lens into its policy framework.

**Launched in September 2020, the Garima scheme is being implemented across all 115 ULBs in the state.** A dedicated corpus fund of ₹50 crore was allocated to support the implementation and sustainability of the scheme. The current government continues to uphold and expand the Garima Scheme, reinforcing its long-term commitment to the safety, dignity, and well-being of sanitation workers. This continuity of vision has ensured that the scheme's impact is sustained and embedded within institutional frameworks.

## 2.2. Conceptualizing Garima: Odisha's Vision for Dignity and Safety

Recognizing the pressing need to uplift the working conditions of sanitation workers and address longstanding injustices, **the Government of Odisha launched a transformative scheme focused on identifying Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) and ensuring them safe working conditions, dignity, and access to entitlements.**

To achieve this vision, the government collaborated for technical assistance with UMC, an organization deeply engaged in governance and policy. This collaboration resulted in the inception of the Garima Scheme, where “Garima” translates to “dignity” in Odia and Hindi. The Scheme’s goal is to achieve “zero fatality of sanitation workers and the creation of an accident-free work environment” in urban Odisha, while fostering an inclusive atmosphere that prioritizes the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.

**The Garima Scheme is built on a three-pronged approach of providing occupational, financial, and social safety to sanitation workers.** To develop the contours of the scheme, the H&UDD formed an advisory committee headed by the then Principal Secretary H&UDD, which included national activist Mr. Bezwada Wilson, convener of the Safai Karamchari Andolan (SKA); Mr. Ashif Shaikh from Jan Sahas, a community, and survivor-centric nonprofit organization; sector experts from UMC, Ms. Manvita Baradi, Founder-Director, UMC and Ms. Meghna Malhotra, Program Lead and Deputy Director, UMC, and representatives of ULBs and the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO). After several rounds of discussions, the components of the Garima Scheme were finalized.

Launched in September 2020, the scheme is being implemented across all 115 ULBs in the state.

**The scheme comprises three broad components:**

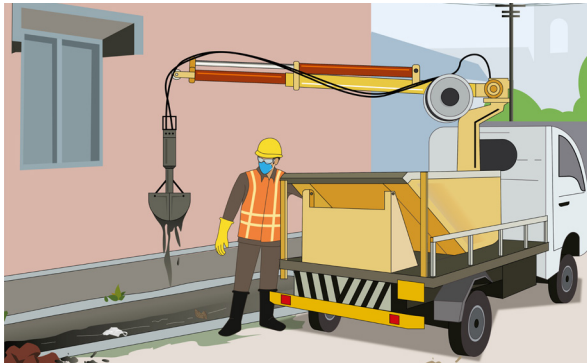
- 1. Technical modalities that address ensuring safe service delivery;** setting up Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSU); and provisioning for PPEs and safety devices.
- 2. Service benefits that ensure assured minimum wages;** risk and hardship allowance; health and life insurance; reduced working hours; health and safety; issuance of caste certificates; and post-service and retirement benefits.
- 3. Social security benefits that assure pucca houses;** mobility support; mobile phones; education of children; empowerment of women family members; and livelihood opportunities.

**The first step envisaged under the Garima Scheme was to create a database of sanitation workers** through an extensive enumeration covering both formal and informal sanitation workers.

**The scheme recognizes sanitation workers engaged under five roles:**

- I. Desludging of onsite sanitation systems**
- II. Maintenance of sewerage network**
- III. Cleaning of drains**
- IV. Operation and maintenance of sewage treatment plants (STPs) and faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs)**
- V. Cleaning, operation, and maintenance of public and community toilets**

These are together called Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) under the Garima Scheme.



Cleaning of Drains



Maintenance of sewerage network



Operation and maintenance of STPs and FSTPs



Desludging of onsite sanitation systems



Cleaning, operation and maintenance of public and community toilets



## 2.3. Establishing the Institutional Framework: Formation of Committee at Three Levels

**The Garima Scheme is implemented and reviewed through the Implementation and Review committees at State, District, and City levels.** A total of 30 District-Level Coordination Committees (DLCCs) and 115 ULB Committees have been mandated under the scheme. The technical support teams provide assistance and follow up to ensure that the committee members meet regularly to steer the progress of the scheme implementation and fulfill their responsibilities.

The State Implementation and Review Committee (SIRC) has been constituted at the state level for periodic review, monitoring of implementation of the provisions of the scheme, and coordination with all relevant departments and bodies for the smooth implementation and furtherance of the scheme.

The SIRC is chaired by the Secretary H&UDD, GoO and includes members from Labor and Employees State Insurance Department; Odisha Water Supply and Sewerage Board; Finance Department, ST&SC Development & Minorities and Backward Class Welfare Department; Health and Family Welfare Department; and national and state-level NGOs.

The DLCC has been constituted to implement provisions of the Garima Scheme at the district level and is chaired by the District Collector.

The ULB Committee has been constituted at the ULB level under the chairpersonship of the Commissioner/ Executive Officer of the ULB.

## 2.4. Catalysing Change: UMC's Role in Design and Delivery

**The Urban Management Centre (UMC) brought critical experience and sectoral expertise that shaped the design and roll-out of the Garima Scheme in Odisha.** Prior to its engagement in Garima, UMC had already demonstrated leadership in strengthening urban sanitation governance, particularly in implementing the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act (PEMSR), 2013. Recognizing the responsibility of urban local bodies (ULBs) under the Act, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation engaged UMC to develop a localized action plan to ensure legal compliance and improve sanitation practices. This early intervention among the first by a local government in the country involved detailed field assessments, mapping of sanitation work, and the creation of a structured roadmap to transition from reactive, welfare-based approaches to preventive, system-oriented reforms.

The insights gained from this work formed the foundation for UMC's continued engagement with state and local governments across India. Drawing on this experience, UMC collaborated with the Housing & Urban Development Department

(H&UDD), Government of Odisha, to conceptualize and operationalize the Garima Scheme, marking a significant shift towards institutionalizing dignity, safety, and entitlements for sanitation workers in the state.

As the Technical Support Unit (TSU) to H&UDD, UMC played a central role in designing the Garima Scheme and continues to support its implementation and monitoring across all 115 ULBs in Odisha. UMC's contribution has been instrumental in enabling the formal recognition of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) across five high-risk job categories, making Odisha the first state in India to establish a comprehensive framework for sanitation worker welfare.

UMC has facilitated large-scale worker enumeration, skilling, and development of operational systems—including model contracts, standard operating procedures (SOPs), grievance redress mechanisms, and digital infrastructure to streamline service delivery. It has also played a key role in promoting inter-departmental convergence to ensure long-term financial sustainability and access to social protection, livelihood, and skilling opportunities for sanitation worker households.



## 2.5. Empowering Change: Financing Components of the Garima Scheme

The Government of Odisha has established a dedicated corpus fund of ₹50 crore to ensure the effective implementation of the Garima Scheme, which focuses on improving the safety, dignity, and overall well-being of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs). This fund supports critical components of the scheme, enabling targeted interventions that address the needs of CSWs.

In addition to this dedicated fund, the state has adopted a convergence-based approach to pool resources from existing government programs and ensure efficient and coordinated delivery of services. For instance, funds from the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) have been utilized for capability-building initiatives. Health camps are organized in partnership with the Department of Health to provide regular health check-ups. Housing support is facilitated through coordination with the Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM) under the Pradhan Mantri Awas

Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U). Educational benefits for children of CSWs are being linked to existing scholarship schemes through collaboration with the Education Department. For livelihood promotion and improved access to credit, efforts are being aligned with schemes like the Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY) and other relevant livelihood programs.

**What the Garima Scheme clearly points out is the need for an intentional and institutionalized convergence approach across different state-level departments.** Only through such coordinated and proactive efforts can the reach and access of CSWs to various entitlements and welfare schemes be ensured. This strategy—of combining a dedicated fund with structured departmental convergence—not only ensures the financial sustainability of the Garima Scheme but also reinforces its ability to deliver comprehensive, long-term support to sanitation workers and their families across Odisha.



Facilitating Financial Inclusion: Garima workers receive assistance with Aadhar and bank account opening





3.

# ENSURING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

Empowering the Workforce  
with Protection



## 3.1. Recognizing the Invisible

**The Government of Odisha recognizes that one of the key challenges in improving the safety, dignity, and welfare of sanitation workers lies in the absence of formal recognition for a significant segment of this workforce.** While Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and parastatal agencies maintain data on regular and contractual sanitation employees engaged directly by the ULBs, many sanitation workers continue to remain outside official records.

These include individuals engaged by private contractors, subcontractors, or those working independently in establishments such as hotels, hospitals, offices, and other institutions, often on daily-wage arrangements. Formal recognition and visibilisation of these workers is critical to effectively

link them to essential safety measures and welfare entitlements such as personal protective equipment, healthcare, insurance, financial assistance, and rehabilitation support.

**Acknowledging the need to bridge this critical gap, the Government of Odisha, under the Garima Scheme, prioritized the establishment of a centralized and comprehensive and a dynamic database of sanitation workers.** This initiative aimed to enable effective policy formulation, ensure targeted service delivery, and institutionalize social protection and welfare entitlements. The creation of this database also contributes to the broader objective of formalizing employment arrangements and promoting inclusion, equity, and dignity for all sanitation workers.

### 3.1.1. Journey of Digital Enumeration Under the Garima Scheme

**While most states in India continue to deny the existence of manual scavengers, the Garima Scheme in Odisha took a bold step towards enumerating and making visible these historically marginalized workers.** Having faced centuries of oppression, many sanitation workers lack trust in state systems and are often hesitant to participate in official processes.

To address this, the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) launched a state-wide digital enumeration exercise under the Garima Scheme, guided by the core principle of **“No Worker Left Behind.”** The enumeration process was designed to be inclusive, participatory, and ongoing—not a one-time activity but a continuous effort.

**Pilots were conducted in six cities to better understand the nuances of the enumeration**

**process.** These pilots demonstrated that the active engagement of leaders and volunteers from within the sanitation workers’ communities was critical to building trust. Community meetings held in slums helped create safe spaces for dialogue, which encouraged workers to step forward and enrol, ultimately enabling the identification of previously informal and unrecognized workers.

Importantly, the process was grounded in informed consent, ensuring that every sanitation worker’s participation was voluntary and respectful of their rights and dignity. Through this approach, the Garima Scheme not only identified workers but also empowered them—laying the foundation for greater inclusion, recognition, and access to entitlements.



Survey of a sanitation worker in his settlement

## Design of the Garima Enumeration Questionnaire

The enumeration process began with the development of a detailed questionnaire that was designed through extensive consultations with ULBs, sector experts, and welfare boards.

### The tool was structured to collect data on:

- worker demographics
- their sanitation job roles
- employment modality (permanent, contractual, NMR (non-muster roll), daily wage, or seasonal workers)
- family information.
- access to government welfare schemes

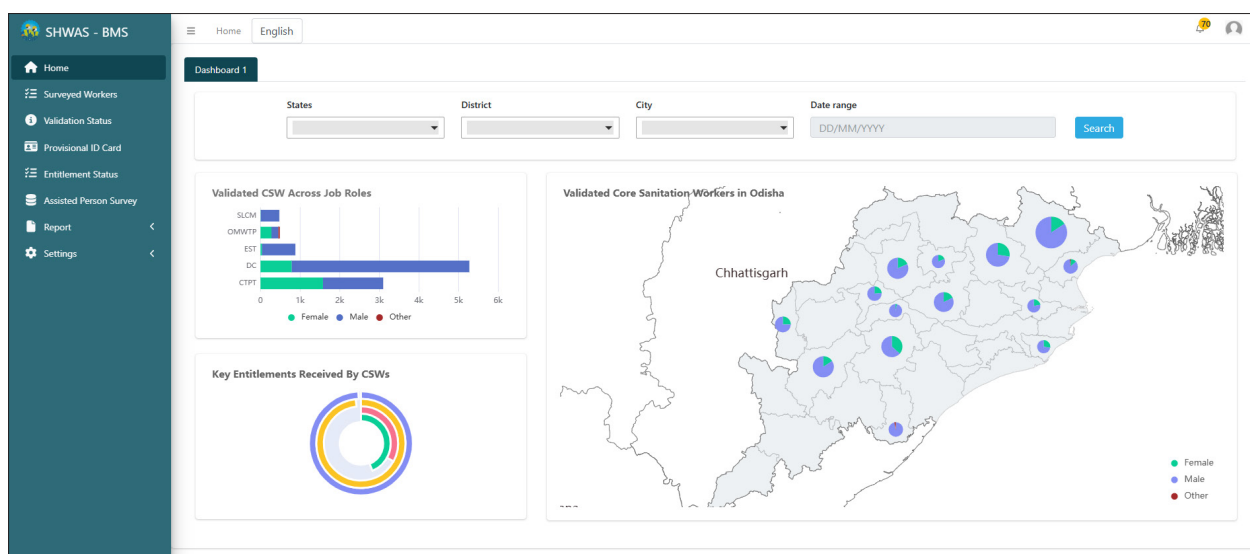
The questionnaire was kept simple, respectful, and sensitive to ensure that workers could respond without hesitation or distress. The tool was field-tested in six cities- Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Berhampur, Sambalpur, and Rourkela—and was refined based on learnings to improve clarity and usability.

## Development of Digital Tool using QUNEIFORM platform

To facilitate efficient and real-time data collection, the Government, used UMC's QUNEIFORM, a platform to make mobile and web-based portals. This digital tool enabled streamlined enumeration, rigorous quality control, and centralized data monitoring.

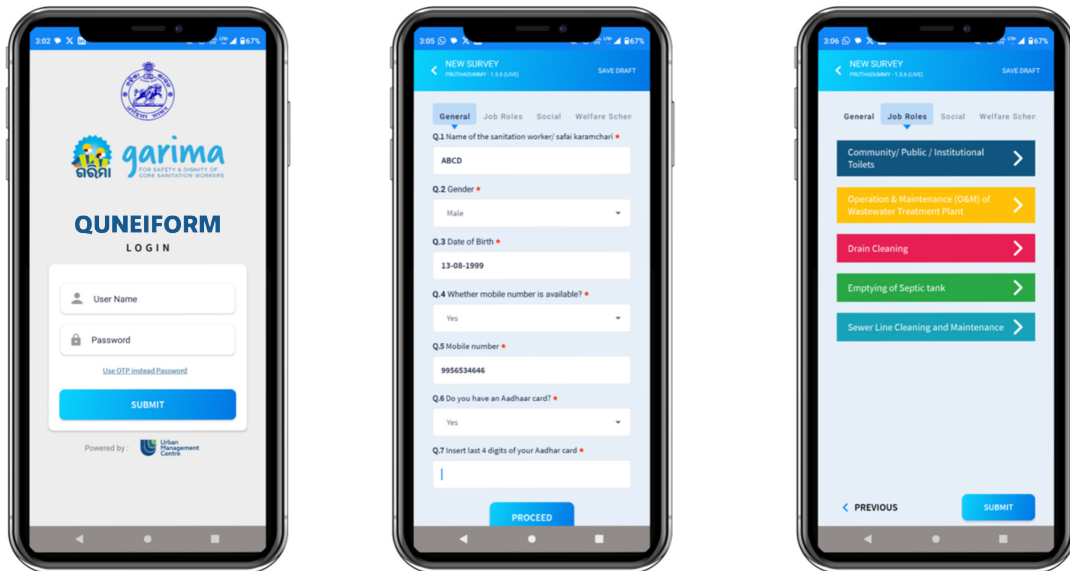
### Key considerations included:

- Options of offline data collection with automatic sync when internet connectivity is available.
- Multilingual interface for easy communication.
- Icon-based and intuitive mobile app interface designed to support users with low digital literacy.
- Compatibility with low-end smartphones.
- In-built validation and error-flagging mechanisms.
- Geo-tagging and photographic evidence for enhanced authenticity.
- Real-time dashboards for monitoring at ULB and state levels.

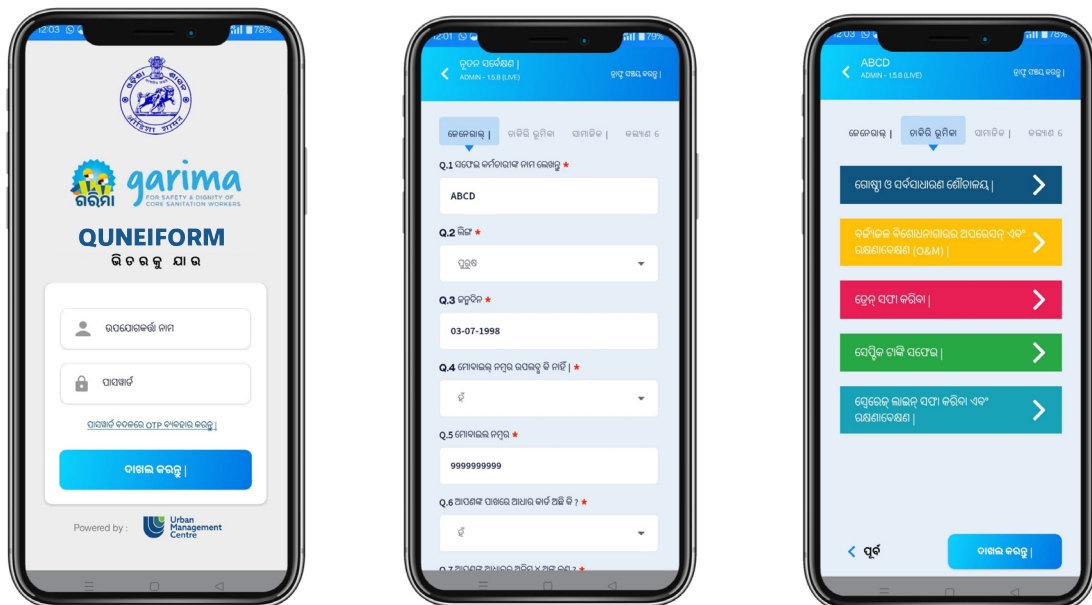


A snapshot of the Garima dashboard on Quneiform platform

Quneiform Platform: English interface on the phone



Quneiform Platform: Odia Interface on the phone



## Survey Process and Community Engagement

**The enumeration process followed a phased and community-anchored approach.** In the pilot phase, the Safai Karamchari Andolan members, with strong grassroots presence carried out fieldwork in six major cities, enhancing trust and participation. In the scale-up phase, the Housing & Urban Development Department engaged Swachh Saathis (digitally trained SHG members) and Community Organisers from ULBs as enumerators and validators. Their familiarity with the local context enabled comprehensive outreach. The digital survey tool incorporates a snowballing methodology to ensure comprehensive coverage.

**Enumeration was carried out through two complementary methods:**

1. **Workplace-based enumeration for identifying formally engaged workers with ULBs and PSSOs.**
2. **Door-to-door enumeration for identifying informal workers in slums and low-income settlements, supported by peer identification.**

## Quality Checks and Monitoring

A structured framework was adopted for quality assurance. This included dedicated roles for enumerators, coordinators, validators, and technical support teams. Training was provided on mobile application use and scheme orientation. Awareness was promoted through tailored IEC materials.

**Multiple levels of quality checks were incorporated:**

1. **Real-time monitoring and validation via the QUNEIFORM dashboard.**
2. **Telephonic verification for 10% of surveys by UMC.**
3. **Formal field and desk-based validation by ULB officials.**

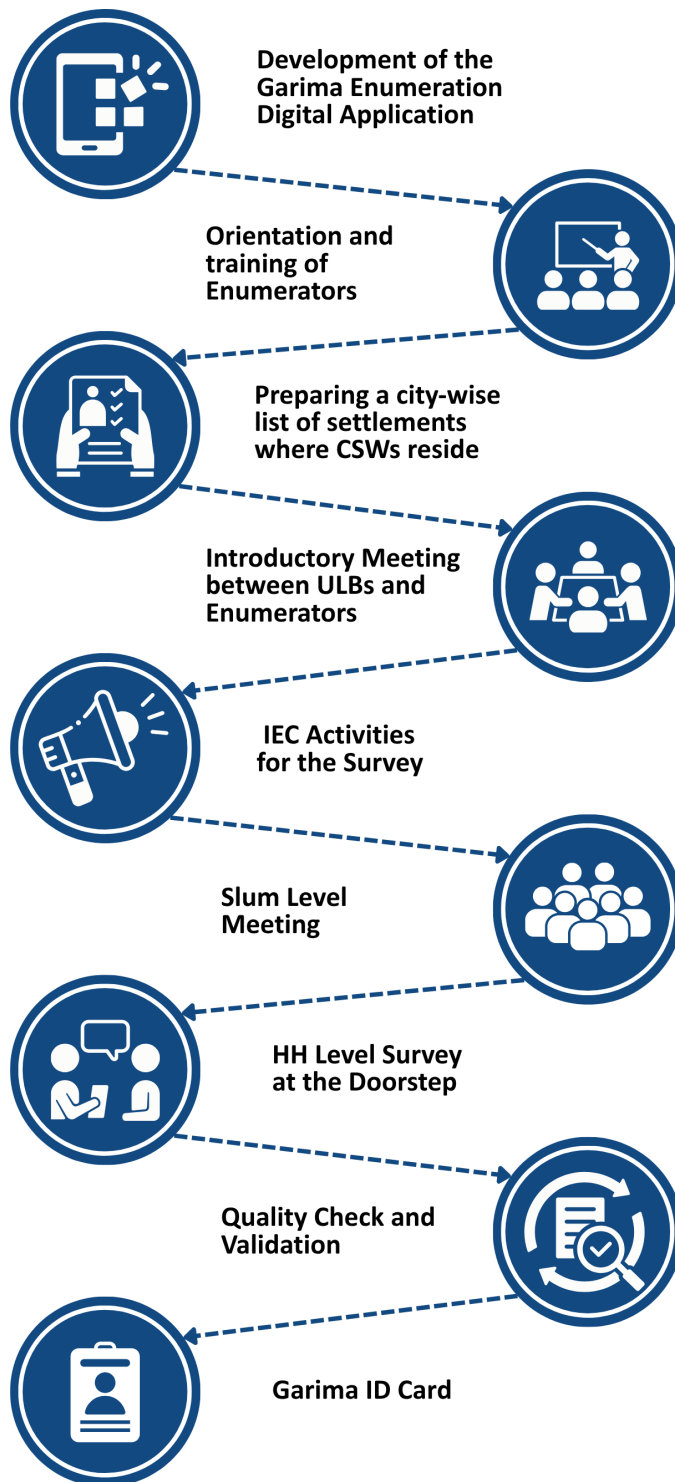
**This robust mechanism ensured accurate, credible data that would serve as the backbone for targeted welfare interventions.** As a result of this systematic and inclusive enumeration process, more than 9,000 CSWs have been documented to date under the Garima Scheme.

Through this initiative, the Government of Odisha has set a new benchmark in recognizing and integrating sanitation workers into formal governance systems. The digital enumeration process—granular in detail and expansive in reach—has been a cornerstone of this effort. Designed to be community-centered and participatory, it ensured that the voices of sanitation workers were heard and included at every step.



Survey of a sanitation worker in his settlement

## The Garima Enumeration Process





Reaching every worker: comprehensive enumeration efforts carried out at doorsteps and in camps throughout cities of Odisha









### 3.1.2. Garima ID Camps: Formalizing Identity, Enabling Access

**H&UDD provided Garima ID cards all validated CSWs to provide them formal recognition and seamless access to scheme entitlements.** To operationalize this, Garima ID Camps were organized across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

These camps also served to link workers to key entitlements. In the lead-up, extensive IEC activities ensured awareness and participation. Validated CSWs

were personally contacted and mobilized.

At the camps, services included Aadhaar update, bank account facilitation, health check-up, and recording blood group details.

Post-verification, ID cards were distributed through public ceremonies at the ULB level, reinforcing state recognition of sanitation workers and their inclusion in formal welfare systems.



*Standard  
Operating  
Procedures  
for Garima  
ID Camps*

Garima ID cards issued to all validated sanitation workers- affirming their identity and enabling access to welfare entitlements

# 3.2. Socio-Economic Insights from the Garima Enumeration

## 3.2.1. What job roles are our CSWs engaged in?

As of July 2025, a total of 9,213 Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) have been enumerated under the Garima Scheme across five distinct job roles.

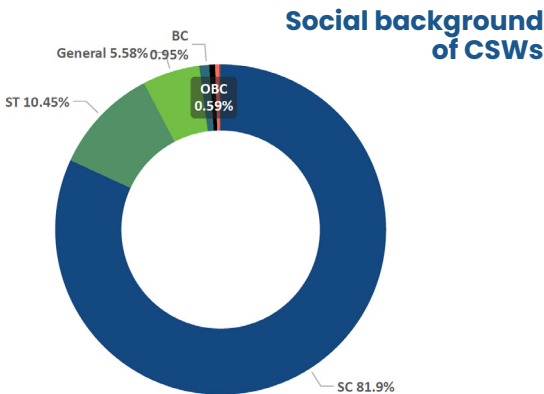
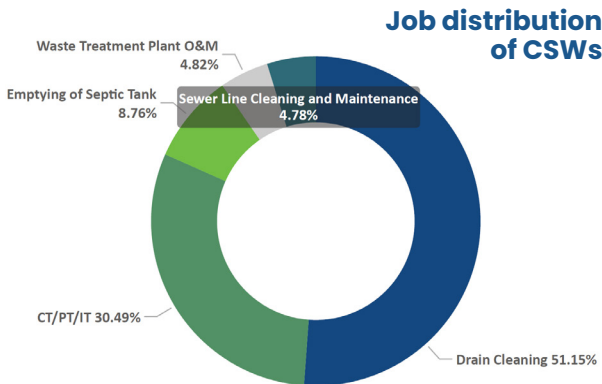
Approximately 13% of CSWs are engaged in Grade 1 roles (which include septic tank and sewer line cleaning).

The remaining 87% of CSWs are engaged in Grade 2 roles (which include drain cleaning, operation and maintenance (O&M) of community and public toilets, and operation of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) and Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)).

Of the total workforce:

- 51% are involved in drain cleaning activities
- 31% are engaged in cleaning of community, public, and institutional toilets

These figures underscore the wide range of tasks sanitation workers undertake and the importance of tailored safety protocols, PPEs and skilling initiatives across job roles.



## 3.2.2. Social Background of Core Sanitation Workers

**Over 90% of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities, while around 6% come from the general category.** This stark statistic reinforces the reality that sanitation work remains deeply rooted in caste-based occupational structures.

Workers predominantly hail from historically marginalized communities such as Ghasi, Bhoi, Gonda, Hadi, Dama, and Mehenter, where generations have been engaged in sanitation-related work. This context underscores the urgent need to address not just occupational safety, but also the broader socio-economic marginalization that sanitation workers

continue to face.

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of caste-linked manual work requires comprehensive and targeted interventions—including skill development, health insurance, education support for children, housing assistance, and financial inclusion. Ensuring access to these entitlements is critical to empowering sanitation workers and enabling long-term socio-economic mobility.

Recognizing this, the Garima Scheme has embedded these elements into its design, affirming the state's commitment to not just safety and dignity, but also equity and justice for its sanitation workforce.

### 3.2.3. Family members of CSWs

**As reported by workers, 12% of CSWs live in households with just one other family member, while more than 60%, live in larger families with three or more members—which means more household responsibilities on them.**

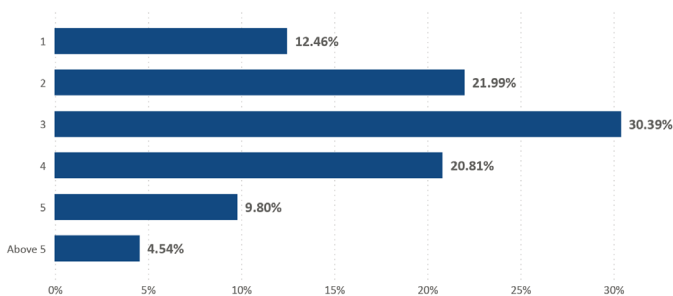
Among their dependents, nearly 10,000 children under the age of 18 were reported, and encouragingly, 83% are currently enrolled in formal education. This underscores both the opportunity and the urgency to support the next generation in breaking the cycle of caste- and occupation-linked marginalization.

Recognizing that equitable access to education is key to ending the intergenerational nature of sanitation work, the Government of Odisha, under the Garima Scheme, is actively working to ensure that Children

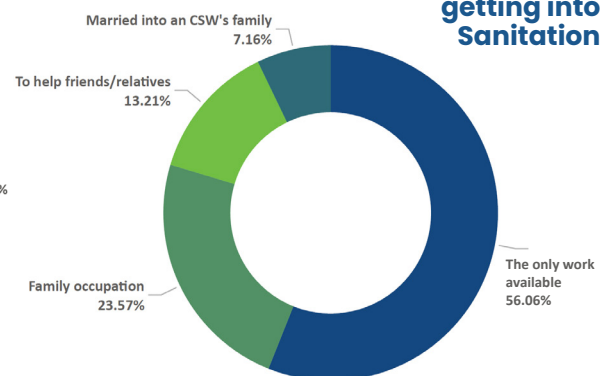
of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) are supported through targeted educational interventions. In partnership with the Urban Management Centre (UMC), the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) has undertaken a detailed analysis of existing scholarship schemes and mapped eligible children using data from the Garima digital enumeration. This data has been shared with the Department of Education to enable convergence and targeted delivery of educational benefits.

The initiative, currently under review, seeks to institutionalize a data-driven, equity-focused approach to educational support for sanitation worker families across the state—laying the foundation for long-term socio-economic mobility.

**Number of Dependents of CSWs**



**Reasons for getting into Sanitation**



### 3.2.4. What are the reasons for being involved in SW?

**56% of sanitation workers reported that sanitation is the only work available to them, while 24% said they are engaged in it as a family occupation—pointing to the intergenerational nature of the work and the limited availability of alternative livelihood options.** An additional 7% noted that they entered the profession through marriage into families already engaged in sanitation work.

These figures underscore how familial networks, community ties, and the absence of viable alternatives

often shape entry into sanitation work. While this continuity can offer familiarity and social support, it also reflects a cycle of limited economic mobility.

This highlights the **urgent need to invest in livelihood diversification**, as well as **skilling and education initiatives for sanitation workers and their families**—so that future generations have the opportunity to make informed choices and access a broader spectrum of dignified employment options.



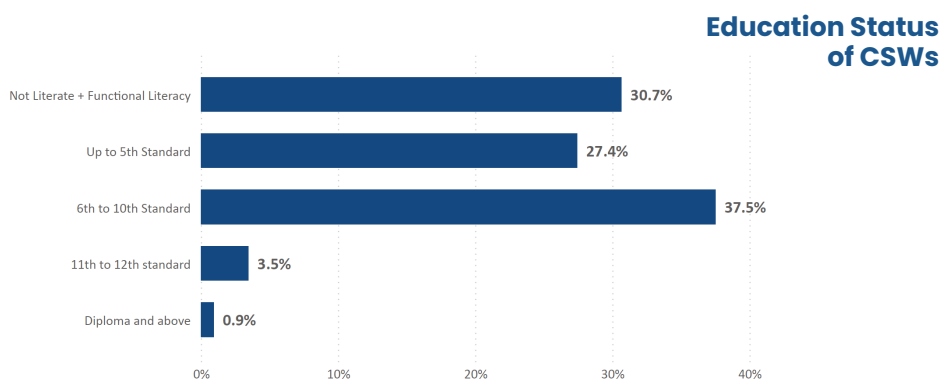
### 3.2.5. What is the educational background of our CSWs?

As reported by workers in the survey, a majority of CSWs have low levels of formal education. Nearly 60% of workers are either illiterate or have studied only up to the 5th standard—with 30% being either completely illiterate or only functionally literate, and an additional 28% having completed education only up to primary level.

Such low educational attainment presents significant barriers to transitioning into alternative or higher-

paying livelihoods, unless accompanied by targeted skilling and upskilling initiatives that are designed to be inclusive and accessible.

Recognizing this, the H&UDD adapted its training strategies under the Garima Scheme. The findings informed the development of appropriate pedagogies, placing emphasis on visual, activity-based, and oral modes of instruction to ensure better comprehension and engagement among sanitation workers.



Despite low literacy levels, sanitation worker families are investing in their children's education



### 3.2.6. Access of CSWs to social and financial security

As reported by the workers in the baseline survey, **95% of sanitation workers and their households have access to at least one bank account**, enabling formal and transparent wage payments. However, despite this financial inclusion, **90% of sanitation workers reported having never accessed any form of credit**, underscoring the need to build awareness and trust in formal financial systems.

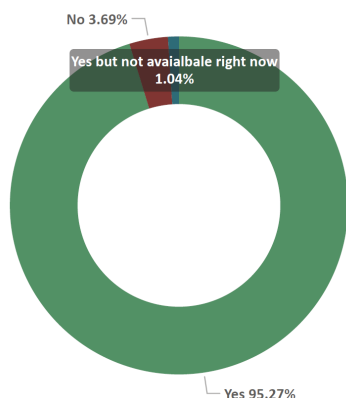
**Crucially, nearly 90% of sanitation workers lack access to any form of insurance, leaving them particularly vulnerable given the hazardous nature of their work.**

**To address this gap, the Garima Scheme introduced life insurance provisions tailored to occupational risk.** Workers in Grade I roles—such as sewer entry and septic tank cleaning—are now eligible for enhanced life insurance coverage of ₹10 lakh in the event of death, with the entire premium paid by ULBs through the Garima Corpus Fund. This ensures financial security for workers and their families without imposing any personal cost.

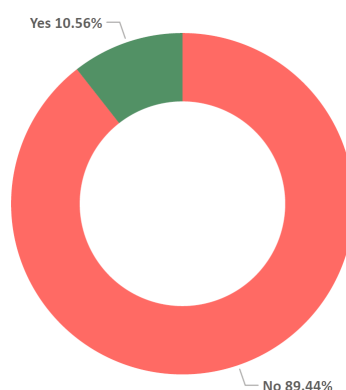
Beyond insurance, the scheme has also addressed gaps in access to food and health entitlements. Around 25% of sanitation workers were found to lack ration cards, limiting their access to state welfare programs. In response, the H&UDD in collaboration with the Civil Supplies Department (CSD), launched a coordinated effort to ensure inclusion of eligible CSWs. In Berhampur, for instance, detailed enumeration under Garima helped identify CSWs without ration cards. The Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) generated a ward-wise beneficiary list, and following an office order enabling priority issuance under the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS), BeMC and the FS&CW Department conducted door-to-door application collection and verification. Applications were uploaded to the Food Odisha portal, resulting in the successful issuance of ration cards.

All eligible CSWs were also enrolled under the state's erstwhile BSKY (and there are efforts of transitioning this to PM JAY) ensuring access to both essential food entitlements and healthcare services.

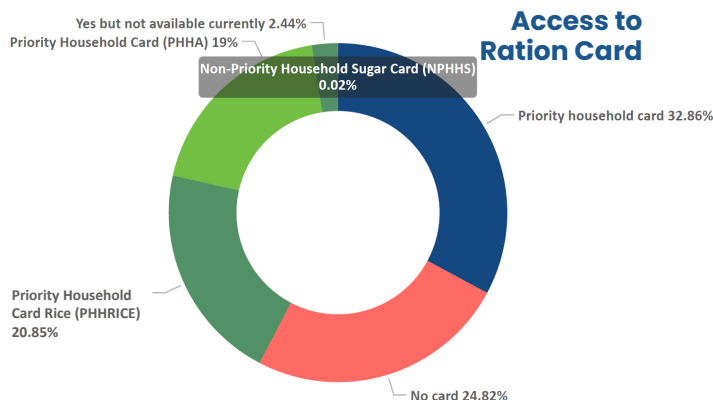
**Access to Banks**



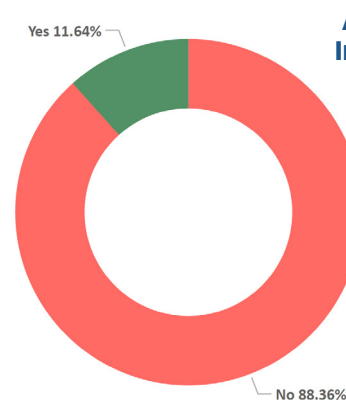
**Taken a Loan?**



**Access to Ration Card**



**Access to Insurance**



### 3.2.7. Housing status of CSWs

The baseline data of enumeration revealed only 28% of sanitation workers in Odisha currently reside in \*pucca (permanent) housing, while 40% live in \*kutcha (temporary or semi-permanent) structures.

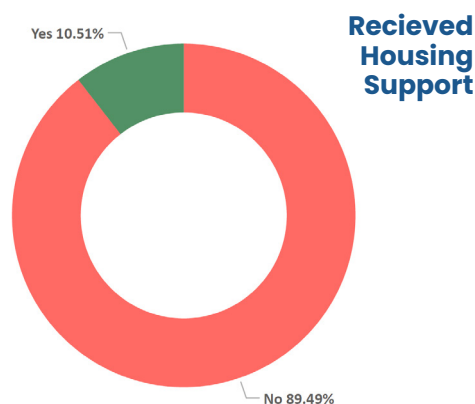
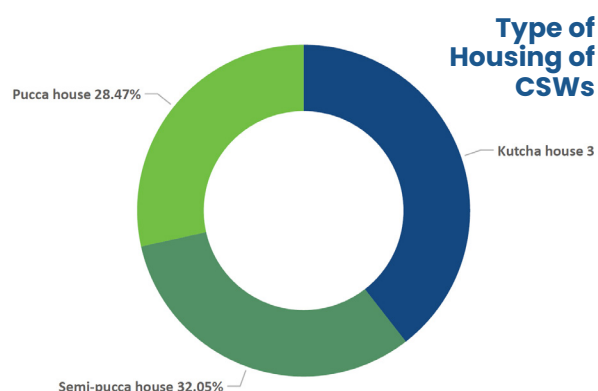
Just 11% have reported receiving any form of housing support, highlighting a critical gap in access to safe and dignified living conditions.

To address this, the Government of Odisha, under the Garima Scheme, is enabling secure and dignified housing for Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) through targeted interventions led by the Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM) in convergence with PMAY.

Using data from the Garima enumeration, CSW households are categorized based on their land tenure status.

- Those with patta (land ownership documents) are supported under the Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC) component of PMAY-Urban, with up to 90% of the housing cost covered through a combination of central, state, and Garima Scheme funds.
- Landless CSWs are being provided housing through the Affordable Housing Partnership (AHP) model, with flats in multi-storey apartment complexes.

A detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed to guide smooth implementation. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are responsible for facilitating entitlement camps, application support, verification, fund disbursement through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and construction monitoring to ensure timely and transparent delivery.



A Garima worker in Berhampur received house allotment under the PMAY Scheme.

\* As per Census of India definition

### 3.2.8. Employers and employment patterns of CSWs

The baseline data of enumeration revealed that a majority of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) in Odisha are employed either directly by Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs) (56.75%) or through Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and parastatal agencies (19.3%). This means that over 76% of the workforce is engaged through formal or employer-linked arrangements.

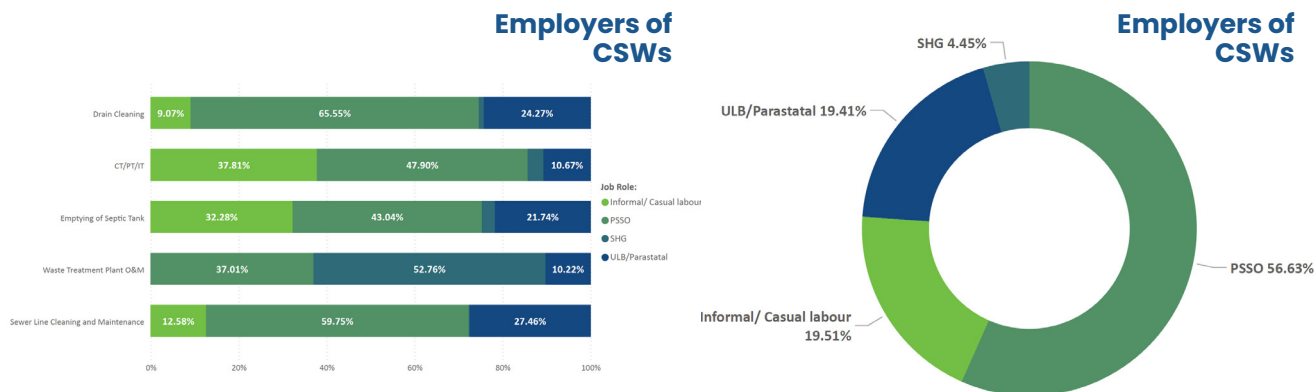
While direct employment with ULBs or government agencies tends to offer relatively better job security and access to entitlements, a significant portion of the workforce is still employed through contractual or informal arrangements, with fewer safeguards and limited social protections. In fact, close to 20% of all CSWs enumerated under Garima are informally engaged.

Among all job roles, cleaners of community and public toilets (CT/PT) exhibit the highest share of

informal employment, with nearly 40% of workers in this category lacking formal employment contracts. In contrast, Grade 1 workers—those involved in septic tank cleaning and sewer line entry—are more likely to be formally employed through PSSOs and ULBs, due to the technical risks and regulatory sensitivity associated with their tasks. As such, regulatory oversight of PSSOs plays a critical role in safeguarding worker rights and well-being.

In response, the Garima Scheme has introduced a Model Contract that mandates strict adherence to CPHEEO guidelines and safety protocols; deployment of only trained personnel for desludging operations and adherence to set ERSU protocols.

These institutional safeguards under the Garima Scheme ensure that even the most vulnerable sanitation workers are protected through a system that is accountable, professional, and aligned with national safety standards.



Grade I Workers have been recognised as Highly Skilled workforce in Odisha



Workers gathered for Enumeration

### 3.2.9. Payment patterns of CSWs

The baseline data of enumerated CSWs showed that while 65% of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs) report not having any formal proof of employment, 73% receive their wages through bank transfers. This reflects a critical gap—workers are providing their bank details to employers and receiving payments, even in the absence of formal employment documentation or contracts. This is especially concerning for Grade 1 CSWs, who are engaged in high-risk tasks such as septic tank and sewer line cleaning, and are more likely to be paid in cash—a practice that undermines wage security and accountability.

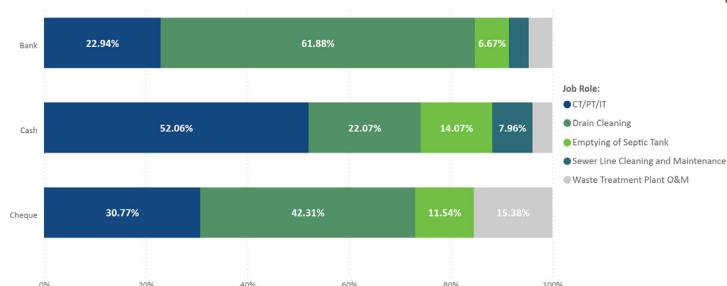
To address these challenges and move towards a more formal, transparent, and regulated employment ecosystem, the Urban Management Centre (UMC) has developed a prototype digital platform—the Employer Management System (EMS). The EMS is being considered for piloting as a tool for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and parastatal agencies to track, monitor, and manage Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs) more effectively.

Once implemented, EMS will enable:

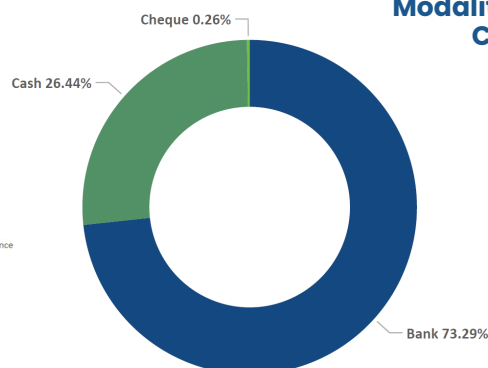
- Registration and empanelment of PSSOs
- Attendance tracking of sanitation workers (including half-days)
- Automated calculation of wages and allowances
- Direct bank transfer of wages to CSWs, reducing reliance on cash transactions

By introducing a data-driven, digital approach to regulating employment in sanitation services, EMS has the potential to enhance transparency, improve compliance, and ensure timely, fair payments to workers—laying the groundwork for systemic reforms in how sanitation work is organized and compensated. If adopted and scaled, EMS could become a cornerstone in strengthening institutional accountability and protecting the rights of some of the most vulnerable workers in our cities.

Payment Modality of CSWs- Job Role Wise



Payment Modality of CSWs





# CASE STUDY:

## Improved Livelihood and Dignity Through the Garima Scheme: Hinna Kinnar's Story

Hinna Kinnar, a 36-year-old transgender woman from Berhampur, has lived through a journey marked by courage, resilience, and transformation.

Like many transgender persons in India, Hinna's early years were filled with economic uncertainty and social exclusion. For a long time, she earned a living through traditional cultural performances and by offering blessings at community functions; one of the few spaces society made available to people like her. But even that was far from secure. Some months, she would earn nothing.

On better days, she might bring home ₹7,000–₹8,000. The unpredictability of her income made it difficult to meet even basic needs, let alone imagine a future with stability or dignity.

Finding respectful and stable employment has long been one of the greatest challenges faced by the transgender community. Many transgender persons are denied work opportunities due to stigma, discrimination, and lack of institutional support—forcing them into informal, unsafe, and exploitative livelihoods. Dignity, choice, and security have remained out of reach.



But change began when the Government of Odisha took a progressive and inclusive step—bringing vulnerable communities, including transgender persons, into the sanitation workforce through the Garima Scheme.

**In a landmark move, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) led by transgender persons were entrusted with the operation and maintenance of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) across the state.**

Hinna, a member of one such SHG, was selected to manage daily operations at the FSTP in Berhampur. It was the first time she had a structured job—where she was not only assigned a critical role, but also recognized as a skilled contributor to the city's sanitation system.

Still, the early days were not easy. Despite the importance of her work, Hinna did not receive a fixed salary or any formal protections. Her contribution remained invisible within the larger system—until she was identified and enumerated as a Core Sanitation Worker (CSW) under the Garima Scheme. That changed everything.

Under the scheme, Hinna began receiving a monthly salary of ₹13,500, along with a 7.5% Risk and Hardship Allowance, acknowledging the difficult and often hazardous nature of her work. For the first time, she had a steady income, financial independence, and the ability to plan for her future.

She was also provided with industrial-grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—gloves, boots, a mask, and more—ensuring that she could carry out her work safely and with confidence. No longer invisible, Hinna now proudly dons her safety gear, participates in



team meetings, and takes an active role in her workplace.

But perhaps the biggest transformation has been how she is treated. Hinna is no longer judged for her gender. She is seen for her skill, her hard work, and her contribution. She is now respected—not only by her co-workers and supervisors but also by her community.

Today, Hinna stands tall—not just as a sanitation worker, but as a role model for the transgender community in Berhampur. Her story is one of inclusion, empowerment, and possibility.

When people—regardless of gender or background—are given respect, fair wages, safety, and recognition, they don't just survive—they thrive. Hinna's journey through the Garima Scheme is proof that dignified livelihoods can transform lives and create ripple effects of change for entire communities.





Garima has enabled a systemic shift towards mechanised cleaning

### 3.3. Enabling the Shift to Mechanized Sanitation Work

**Mechanization is a critical step toward eliminating hazardous manual handling of faecal waste and ensuring the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.** For decades, sanitation work in India has involved unsafe, high-risk practices that expose workers to toxic environments and health hazards. Mechanizing key sanitation operations—particularly desludging, drain cleaning, and sewer maintenance—not only reduces direct human contact with waste but also enhances the efficiency, reliability, and professionalism of sanitation service delivery.

**In line with this vision, the Garima program undertook a detailed assessment to evaluate the performance and operational effectiveness of sanitation machines across select cities.** The primary objective was to understand how effectively these machines were minimizing manual interventions and to identify areas for improvement in design, deployment, and training.

The review surfaced critical insights into operational gaps in the transition toward mechanization. **It emphasized the need to align equipment specifications with the unique topographical and infrastructural characteristics of each city. Variations in terrain, drain and sewer configurations, and the capacities of local sanitation teams significantly influenced the usability and effectiveness of machines.** Based on these findings, the government acknowledged the importance of procuring context-appropriate equipment and enhancing capacity-building initiatives to ensure their optimal usage.

**To deepen learning, the state facilitated cross-learning visits to cities that have shown exemplary performance under the MoHUA-led Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge, including Indore, Chandigarh, and Surat.** These visits enabled Odisha to benchmark its progress against national best practices and draw actionable lessons on operational safety, mechanization models, and institutional strategies.

## 3.4. Ensuring safety in confined space entry through ERSUs

In 2019, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) issued an advisory recommending the establishment of Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) at the district level. These units were envisioned as specialized team-professional, well-trained, adequately equipped, and motivated, **to respond to high-risk sanitation situations where mechanized cleaning is not feasible, such as severe blockages in sewers or septic tanks, narrow lanes inaccessible to machines, or instances where mechanical methods have failed.** The primary objective was to prevent fatalities resulting from unsafe manual entry into confined spaces without proper training, safety protocols, or personal protective equipment (PPE).

**In alignment with this national advisory, H&UDD chose to implement a more contextually responsive model under the Garima Scheme. Instead of placing ERSUs at the district level—as broadly recommended—Odisha established them at each ULB level.** This strategic decision was rooted in a practical understanding that ULB and parastatal heads are more closely connected to day-to-day sanitation operations and are therefore better positioned to ensure swift, real-time emergency responses.

**By localizing ERSUs at the ULB level, the state has ensured quicker deployment, timely adherence to safety protocols, and closer on-ground monitoring.** This model not only enhances operational efficiency but also reinforces Odisha's commitment to safeguarding the lives of sanitation workers. Furthermore, Odisha designated the ULB head or relevant parastatal authority as the Responsible Sanitation Authority (RSA),

recognizing that their direct involvement ensures greater accountability and responsiveness—an approach that better aligns with the state's urban governance structure and field realities.

To operationalize this localized approach and ensure prompt and technically sound decision-making, especially in emergencies that may require confined space entry, **the state developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that outlines a standardized process for responding to sanitation emergencies, with the aim of safeguarding workers while enabling efficient service delivery.** This SOP lays out roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, on-ground assessments to be undertaken to ascertain that mechanical cleaning would not be possible, a hazards assessment and a preparatory process.

**A dedicated helpline 14420 which operates within the ULB has been set up to receive all service requests of desludging and sewer line complaints.** The aim was to centralise the desludging service provision by the ULB through ULB and empaneled PSSOs. To make access easier for citizens who typically use existing ULB helplines, these numbers have been integrated with 14420.

**A designated call operator engaged by ULB, manages this helpline** to register service requests, forward call request to the designated Duty supervisor and PSSO, handle grievances, coordinate sanitation-related responses, and address queries related to the Garima Scheme. These operators play a critical role in ensuring timely and efficient resolution of urban sanitation issues.

### 3.4.1. ERSU composition in Odisha:

Each ULB has one ERSU set up and guidelines have been issued to ensure role clarity across different state level agencies such as the ULB, WATCO, PHE and OWSSB.

**The ERSU is headed by a Responsible Sanitation Authority (RSA) who is:**

- the General Manager of WATCO in sewered cities like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Rourkela, and Puri.
- the Additional/Deputy commissioner at the Municipal corporation level and Executive Officer at Municipality & NAC level in non-sewered cities.











### The RSA is responsible for:

- Procuring and maintaining personal and institutional protective gear.
- Empaneling Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs) and managing de-empanelment.
- Notifying service fees and charge structures for ERSU-related services.
- Reviewing the assessment of confined space entry requirements and provide written permission based on the assessment report submitted by the Duty Supervisor.

To ensure legal compliance and worker safety, the RSA are responsible for preventing any agency or individual from engaging in hazardous manual cleaning without appropriate authorization, training, and safety provisions.

### The ERSU consists of the following key personnel arranged by the RSA:

- **Telephone Operators:** Engaged by the ULBs, these operators manage the dedicated 14420 helpline (or any integrated helpline) to log service requests and sanitation-related grievances.
- **Duty Supervisors:** Officials such as Sanitary Inspectors, Junior Engineers, Assistant Managers, or other designated personnel responsible for site assessments, issuing command certificates, and supervising compliance with safety protocols during both mechanical and manual cleaning.
- **Sewer Entry Professional (SEP) Teams:** Comprised of trained personnel employed either directly by the ULB or through empaneled PSSOs. One SEP team is deployed per 500 septic tanks or 50 km of sewer network.

For mechanical cleaning operations, the duty supervisor issues a “Command Certificate” to the PSSO, verifies the availability of required equipment and safety devices at the worksite, and ensures field-level compliance. The PSSO or Desludging Operator captures geo-tagged photographs from the site to document operations and submits a Completion Report to the Duty Supervisor.

**In situations where confined space entry becomes unavoidable, the process is governed by strict ERSU protocols and the Prohibition of Employment**

### Each SEP team includes:

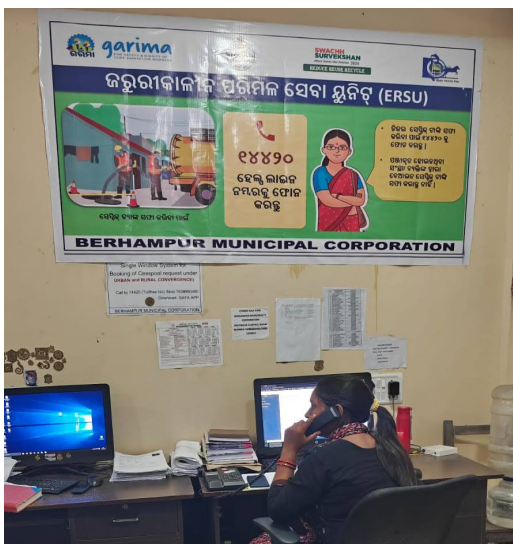
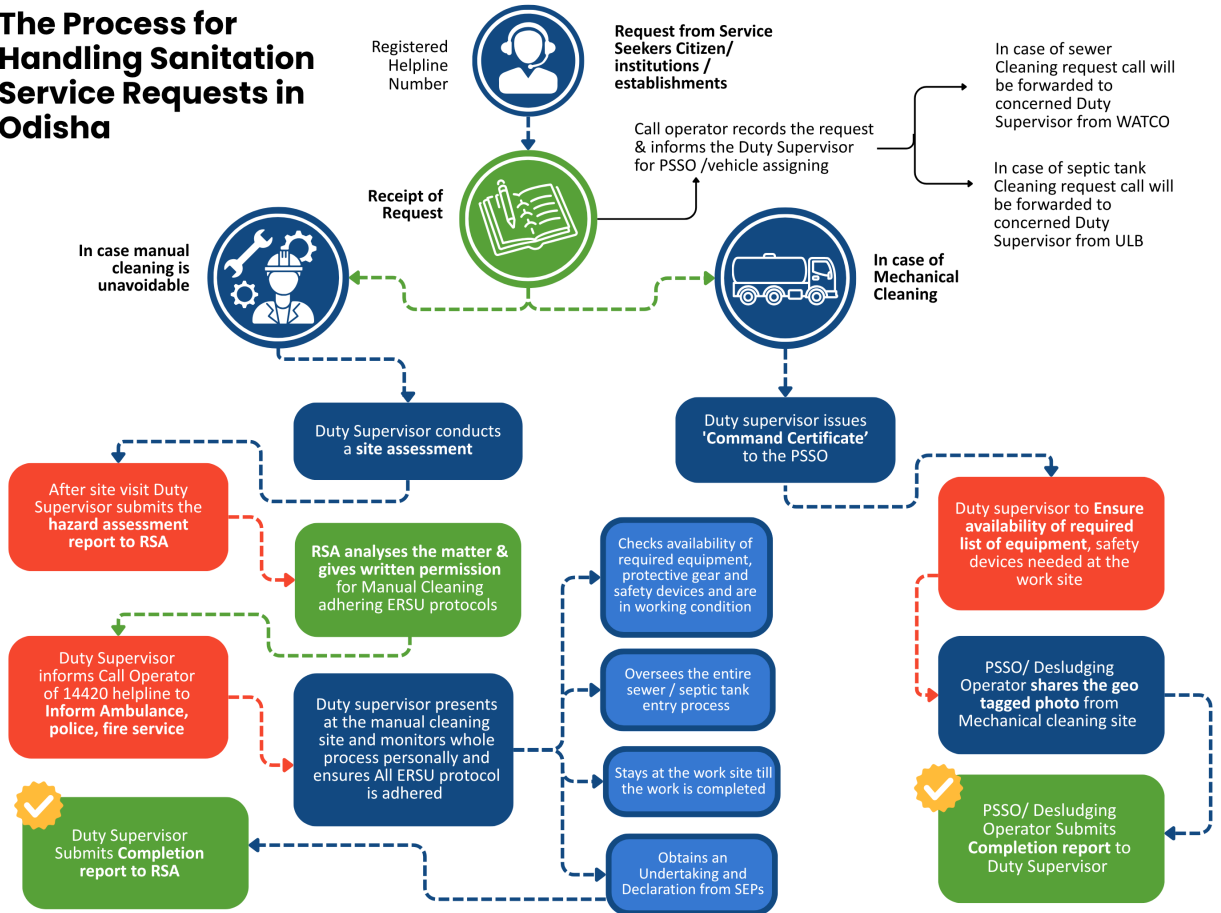
- **Authorized Entrants:** Certified workers permitted to safely enter septic tanks or sewers.
- **Attendants:** Individuals stationed outside the confined space to monitor safety and support the entrant, as per the ERSU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

**The process for handling sanitation service requests in Odisha begins when citizens or establishments place a request through the 14420 helpline/ ULB helpline.** The call operator records the request and informs the duty supervisor for appropriate assignment of a Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs) and vehicle. **Based on the nature of the request, the call is routed to the relevant agency, sewer cleaning requests are forwarded to the duty supervisor concerned from WATCO, while septic tank cleaning requests are directed to the Duty Supervisor from the respective ULB.**

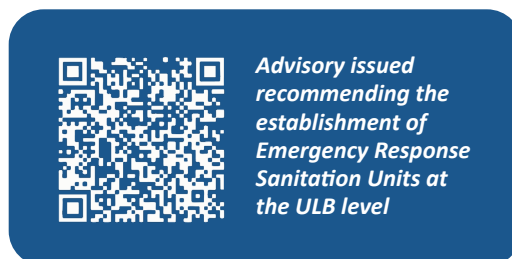
**as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act, 2013.** The duty supervisor first conducts a detailed site and hazard assessment and submits a report to the RSA. Only upon careful evaluation and written approval from the RSA is confined space entry permitted. The duty supervisor also ensures that emergency services ambulance, police, and fire departments—are alerted in advance. They must be physically present at the site throughout the operation to oversee compliance with all safety norms, including mandatory PPE usage, and submit a final Completion Report to the RSA post-intervention.



## The Process for Handling Sanitation Service Requests in Odisha



The 14420 helpline call operator at Berhampur Municipal Corporation



# CASE STUDY:

## Ensured Safety in Sanitation Work: Raju Nayak's Story

For years, sanitation work in Berhampur—like in many Indian cities—was handled informally, often in ways that were unsafe, unregulated, and invisible. Desludging was frequently done by workers without safety gear, entering septic tanks manually, risking their health and lives to keep the city clean.

That's why the change in Raju Nayak's daily routine is so powerful.

Raju, 45, is a trained sanitation worker affiliated with a Private Sanitation Service Organisation (PSSO). Today, he operates a 5,000-litre desludging truck. But just a few years ago, he would often be asked to manually clean septic tanks—without any safety gear, guidance, or recognition.

**“Back then, we just had to take whatever work came our way,” he recalls. “No one asked how we did the job, or if we were safe.”**

Now, things are different. Every service call Raju receives comes through Odisha's centralized 14420 toll-free helpline, a platform created to handle all sanitation-related service requests in a safe, efficient, and worker-friendly manner. Managed by trained operators, the helpline connects requests to the nearest ULB or PSSO based on availability. For Raju, it has brought structure, fairness, and dignity to what used to be a chaotic process.

Every time he goes out to desludge a septic tank, Raju does so with full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and uses mechanical tools only—no more manual entry. “Now I start each day with proper gear and clear instructions. My work is safer. My family worries less.”

This transformation is part of a broader shift in Berhampur, supported by the Government of Odisha's Garima Scheme. With two Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) operational, the city ensures that all faecal waste is disposed of safely and scientifically. The data trail doesn't end with the job—each desludging service Raju completes is documented both manually and digitally through the SUJOG portal, and verified with records at the FSTP. This cross-verification ensures that all work complies with Emergency Response Sanitation Unit (ERSU) protocols, closing the loop on safety and accountability.

Behind the scenes, the integration of the 14420 helpline with ULB grievance redressal systems has streamlined communication, reduced illegal dumping, and improved citizen satisfaction. But the real impact is felt most by workers like Raju, who now earn their livelihood with dignity, professionalism, and peace of mind.

**“I'm proud of what I do now,” Raju says. “My work is organized, I'm treated with respect, and I know I'm doing it the right way.”**

Berhampur's model is more than just a system upgrade—it's a powerful example of how technology, training, and compassion can come together to build a safer, cleaner, and more equitable sanitation ecosystem. It shows that when cities put their minds to it, they can end unsafe practices like manual scavenging and create a new standard of care for both citizens and workers.



### 3.4.2. IEC around ERSU

As part of the broader sanitation reforms under the Garima Scheme, **extensive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns have been conducted across Odisha** to raise public awareness on safe sanitation practices and the legal implications of unsafe manual cleaning.

#### Key messages include:

- **Dial 14420:** Citizens are encouraged to call the 14420 helpline for all requests related to septic tank or sewer cleaning. This ensures that services are delivered through trained, registered sanitation professionals and in adherence with safety protocols.
- **Do Not Engage Unregistered Workers:** Households and establishments are strictly advised not to hire informal or untrained individuals for sanitation work. Engaging such workers puts lives at risk and violates the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act, 2013.
- **Legal Consequences:** It is illegal to employ untrained sanitation workers for septic tank/sewer cleaning. Hefty penalties and legal action may be imposed on individuals or institutions that do so.
- **Promoting Dignity and Safety:** The campaign also aims to reinforce the importance of ensuring dignity, safety, and proper protective measures for sanitation workers, while holding citizens accountable for contributing to safe and legal sanitation systems.





*Zindagi Bula  
Rahi Hai: A film  
to encourage  
sanitation workers  
to wear PPE*



*Zindagi Bula  
Rahi Hai: A film  
to encourage  
sanitation workers  
to wear PPE (Odia)*



*Khabar rahe: A  
film for citizens'  
awareness  
on safety of  
sanitation  
workers*



*Khabar rahe: A  
film for citizens'  
awareness  
on safety of  
sanitation workers  
(Odia)*



*Tutorial on  
Emergency  
Response  
Sanitation Unit*



*Tutorial on  
Emergency  
Response  
Sanitation Unit  
(Odia)*



'IEC for citizens displayed on hoardings and walls

## 3.5. Strengthening Capacity: SEP Training Ecosystem for Sanitation Workers

The SEP training program, implemented in Odisha, has been designed to enhance the capacity and skills of SEP teams, duty supervisors, 14420 telephone operators, and ULB officials. This structured 3-day training program in Odisha focuses primarily on ensuring that SEP teams are skilled, trained and equipped for confined space entry.

**A robust SEP training ecosystem has been established in the state that includes:**

**1. A Centre of Trained Master Trainers:** Master Trainers (MTs) are key facilitators of the SEP training program, delivering theoretical and practical sessions, adapting content to regional needs, maintaining training quality, and assessing participants for certification.

Sanitation workers are nominated for SEP training by ULBs based on specific criteria, including age (18-45 years), willingness to participate, and relevant field experience. In Odisha over the past year, nearly 850 sewer and septic tank workers have completed training in 30 batches.

In Odisha, MTs undergo a 3-day program conducted by the Odisha Urban Academy (OUA) with support from UMC. It included participants from WATCO, OWSSB, PHEO, and select PSSO supervisors, with a batch size of 30. Currently, there are 18 certified Master Trainers across Odisha. The selection process prioritised individuals with prior experience in the WASH sector. Post-training, they were evaluated based on performance and formally certified as Master Trainers by the OUA.



Master Trainer conducting SEP training program



# CASE STUDY:

## From Informal Labourer to Skilled Professional: Hemanta Kumar Nayak's Journey in Bhubaneswar

Hemanta Kumar Nayak, 37, comes from Kamaguru village in Odisha's Khordha district. In 2000, driven by mounting financial pressures at home, he left his village and moved to Bhubaneswar in search of work. Like many in his position, Hemanta had to leave school early to support his family. His father worked as a sweeper with the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), and Hemanta too followed a similar path.

He began his working life as a hotel housekeeper. The hours were long, the pay was meagre, and the work—though steady—barely covered the needs of his growing family. Hoping for something more stable, Hemanta took up a job in sanitation, working with a Private Sanitation Service Operator (PSSO) to clean sewer lines. He knew the risks, but steady income was what mattered most.

For years, he worked without any formal training or safety equipment—no gloves, no boots, not even a mask. The job meant entering confined, hazardous spaces with bare hands, often inhaling toxic gases. He fell ill frequently but had no choice but to continue. Like thousands of other sanitation workers, he remained invisible to the system—doing essential work, but without recognition, protection, or support.

That changed in 2021, when Hemanta was identified and enumerated as a Core Sanitation Worker under the Garima Scheme of the Government of Odisha. That one step brought a turning point in his life. His monthly income, which once hovered between ₹5,000 and ₹7,000, rose significantly—reaching ₹25,000 with the inclusion of a risk and hardship allowance. The improved earnings meant he could finally manage household expenses more comfortably and plan for his children's future.

Under Garima, Hemanta was also nominated by his Urban Local Body to attend the Sewer Entry Professional (SEP) training.

**For the first time in his life, he was taught how to work safely—how to enter sewers with proper protocols, how to use machines instead of bare hands, and how to wear and maintain protective gear.**





The training not only gave him skills but instilled confidence and a sense of pride in his work. Recognizing his dedication and the experience he brought, Hemanta was soon selected to become a simulation trainer and facilitator under the SEP programme. Today, he has trained over 90 sanitation workers—equipping them with life-saving knowledge, encouraging safer work practices, and showing by example that dignity and safety can and must go hand in hand.

Hemanta now works in a secure environment. He follows safety protocols, wears full PPE, receives a stable salary, and—perhaps most importantly—feels

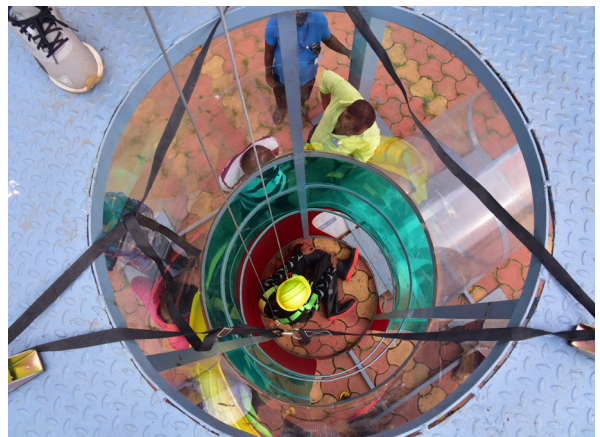
respected. But his biggest dream lies not in his own success, but in the future he hopes to build for his children. He wants them to stay in school, explore new opportunities, and lead lives free from the hardship he once knew.

Hemanta's story is one of quiet courage and transformation. From being an invisible worker risking his life in silence, to becoming a trainer helping others stay safe, his journey reflects what becomes possible when governance is rooted in dignity. With the support of the Garima Scheme, Hemanta has not only reclaimed his own safety and respect but is now helping shape a safer future for others like him.



Workers taking a break in a Garima Hall





## 2. Established Training Infrastructure with simulation models:

H&UDD has set up three training centers each in Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur, and Rourkela. These training centers are equipped with the necessary tools, PPE, safety devices, and accommodation to provide a practical learning environment to SEPs in their region.

Each centre has simulation models of maintenance holes and septic tanks, providing practical sessions on gas detection and entry/evacuation procedures to safely prepare workers and attendants for real-life scenarios.



### 3. Established Training Pedagogy to align with literacy levels of workers:

The training program is a mix of theory sessions, interactive discussions and hands-on practice. Each training session has pre-and post-assessments to capture learning curve of attendants.

The modules cover key topics such as the PEMSR Act 2013, ERSU Guidelines, PPE and safety devices, and workers' entitlements and rights. Sessions are conducted in Odia language to ensure ease of understanding, making the content relevant and engaging for participants. The attendees expressed that the training modules were particularly meaningful, as they directly addressed the challenges they face in hazardous work conditions, resonating with their daily experiences.

Practical sessions are a critical and significant part of the training, focusing on the proper donning and doffing of PPE and practicing safe sewer and septic

tank entry techniques using simulation models, gas monitors and other safety devices. These simulations enable workers to assess potential risks and practice effective mitigation strategies, making practical exercises the most engaging and impactful aspect of the training. Given that many participants are encountering these procedures for the first time, they actively engage in the exercises, demonstrating enthusiasm and a keen willingness to learn.

To assess the worker's learning progress, pre-and post-training assessments are conducted. The assessments are presented in a pictorial format, with master trainers providing detailed explanations for each question to encourage active participation and ensure trainees fully understand the material and can respond effectively. The assessments help measure workers' comprehension of safety protocols and their ability to apply this knowledge in real-world scenarios, boosting their confidence and ensuring they are well-prepared for their roles.

Pictorial format of training assessment

The form is titled 'ନିମ୍ନଲିଖିତ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ' (Below questions) and includes fields for name (ନାମ: furusation malla), phone number (ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ ନମ୍ବର: 9337372167), and date (ତାରିଖ: ୧୨ - ୧୫/୦୫/୨୦୨୧). It contains three sections of questions, each with a pictorial illustration and three response options: 'ଅତି ପ୍ରଶଂସା' (Highly Praise), 'ସାଧାରଣ' (Average), and 'ଅନୁରୋଧ' (Request). The questions are: ୧. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମ ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦିଆଯାଇଥିବା ତାଲିମର ବ୍ୟବହାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the training provided by the training provider?), ୨. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମର ପ୍ରକାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the type of training?), and ୩. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମର ବ୍ୟବହାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the use of training?).

The form is titled 'ତାଲିମ ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀଙ୍କ ଆବେଦନ' (Training provider's application) and includes a field for name (ନାମ: Sordam koshika). It contains three sections of questions, each with a pictorial illustration and three response options: 'ଅତି ପ୍ରଶଂସା' (Highly Praise), 'ସାଧାରଣ' (Average), and 'ଅନୁରୋଧ' (Request). The questions are: ୧. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମ ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦିଆଯାଇଥିବା ତାଲିମର ବ୍ୟବହାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the training provided by the training provider?), ୨. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମ ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦିଆଯାଇଥିବା ତାଲିମର ପ୍ରକାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the type of training provided by the training provider?), and ୩. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ତାଲିମ ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦିଆଯାଇଥିବା ତାଲିମର ବ୍ୟବହାର କେତେ ପ୍ରଭାବୀ? (How effective is the use of training provided by the training provider?).



#### 4. Certification Process

Upon completing the training program and meeting the required standards, participants are awarded certification as Sewer Entry Professionals.

**This certification recognizes their competence in safely performing high-risk tasks, ensuring they are well-equipped to handle sewer and septic tank entry with the necessary skills and knowledge.**

The certification holds significant value for workers, fostering a strong sense of identity, dignity, and confidence. Many workers proudly carry smaller

versions of the certificate as a symbol of their pride and self-worth in their wallet. The certification process boosts their confidence, recognizing their hard work and commitment to safety. The workers returned to their respective ULBs not only with enhanced skills but also with certificates that validated their expertise in maintaining safety and handling sanitation tasks. This recognition not only elevated their self-assurance but also earned them respect within their teams and among peers, promoting a more professional and safety-conscious work culture.



Lecture being held as part of the established training module

# CASE STUDY:

## From the Shadows to Leadership: Satyasai's Journey as a Garima Supervisor

For over 13 years, Satyasai Pattanaik, a 52-year-old sanitation worker from Sidhamahaveer in Puri, worked in silence, cleaning sewers under private contractors with no safety gear, no steady income, and no recognition. Some days he did construction work, other days he looked for odd jobs, anything to keep food on the table for his wife Dhira and their daughter Shreya. The work was dangerous, and payments were often delayed. He worried constantly, not just about surviving the day, but about his family's future. That changed in 2022 when he was identified under the Garima Scheme, a government initiative to ensure safety, dignity, and fair working conditions for sanitation workers. He was nominated by the ULB to undergo Sewer Entry Professional (SEP) training, where he learned how to work safely and use machines.

Recognising his dedication and long years of experience, Satyasai was soon promoted to the role of Garima Supervisor, a shift that changed not only his job, but his position in the community. Today, he oversees teams from PSSOs working under WATCO in Puri. His job is to ensure workers use mechanised cleaning equipment, wear PPE, and follow ERSU safety protocols. He works closely with ULB

officials, attends meetings, and helps resolve field-level issues. With a regular salary, health coverage, and social security benefits, he finally has financial stability and peace of mind.

**But for Satyasai, it's not just about a better job, it's about what it means for his family. His daughter Shreya now proudly tells her friends that her father is a supervisor.**

Satyasai dreams of starting his own business someday. "If I get the right support," he says, "I want to build something of my own, not just for me, but to give work to others like me."

His journey from invisible worker to field leader is a powerful reminder of how dignity, opportunity, and recognition can transform lives. Through the Garima Scheme, Satyasai has not only changed his own future, but is lighting the path for many others to follow.



## 3.6. Enabling provisions of PPE and safety devices

**Sanitation workers routinely operate in high-risk environments, frequently exposed to hazardous waste, toxic gases, and unsanitary conditions. Despite this, one of the most persistent barriers to their safety is the consistent availability, appropriateness, and effective use of PPE and safety devices.** Environmental factors such as extreme heat, high humidity, and intense monsoon conditions reduce the durability and comfort of standard PPE and safety gear, often making them unsuitable for sustained field operations. Moreover, the lack of equipment tailored to workers' body types or specific roles limits functionality and comfort, leading to inconsistent or incorrect usage.

**The absence of gender-sensitive PPE and safety devices further disadvantages female sanitation workers,** who often struggle with ill-fitting or inappropriate gear. Delays in replacing PPE and safety devices in line with wear-and-tear cycles, coupled with weak quality control systems, frequently result in the distribution of damaged or substandard equipment. This undermines the fundamental objective of safeguarding workers' health and safety.

**Safety devices such as helmets, gas detectors, harnesses, and high-visibility reflective vests are equally critical.** These tools not only provide protection against physical injuries, falls, and gas exposure but also enhance visibility, especially in high-traffic or low-light

settings, significantly reducing the risk of accidents. Equipping sanitation workers with the right combination of PPE and safety devices is essential, not just for their personal well-being, but also for maintaining public hygiene and reducing occupational hazards.

In response to these longstanding gaps, **the H&UDD, through the Garima Scheme, has institutionalized a worker-first approach that prioritizes the health, safety, and dignity of CSWs.** Acknowledging that engineering solutions like mechanization alone cannot fully mitigate risks, the scheme mandates the provisioning of high-quality, task-specific PPE and safety devices as non-negotiable safeguards.

**Garima emphasizes robust procurement systems that ensure that the PPE is environmentally resilient, tailored to the diverse physical profiles of workers, and appropriate to the specific demands of sanitation tasks.** Significantly, the scheme advocates for gender-responsive PPE and safety gear to accommodate the needs of female workers. It also mandates structured protocols for timely replacement and stringent quality checks to prevent the circulation of worn-out or defective items. Through these measures, Garima reinforces the message that well-equipped sanitation workers are central to safe, dignified, and effective sanitation service delivery.

### 3.6.1. Principles Guiding Procurement of PPE and safety devices

- **Compliance with Indian Standards:** Must adhere to ISI and CPHEEO standards to ensure durability, protection, and compliance with national safety benchmarks.
- **Environmental Suitability:** Equipment's are selected to perform effectively in Odisha's varied climatic conditions, including high heat, humidity, and monsoonal rain, without compromising worker comfort or safety
- **Proper Fit and Task Relevance:** Must suit the physical profiles and specific tasks of CSWs, ensuring ease of movement and high compliance.
- **Gender-Inclusive Design:** Recognizing the participation of women in sanitation work, the scheme ensures that PPE and safety devices incorporate gender-inclusive designs that meet the ergonomic and functional needs of female workers.



- **Adjustability and Customization:** Features such as adjustable straps, belts, and elastic fittings are prioritized, and provisions are made for custom sizing as needed.
- **Scheduled Maintenance and Replacement:** Clear protocols are in place for inspection, cleaning, and periodic replacement of PPE based on usage intensity and wear and tear.
- **Quality Assurance:** Emphasis is laid on sourcing from reputed manufacturers, with checks on product quality, warranty, and adherence to safety standards.

### 3.6.2. Standardization of PPEs across job roles

**Garima Program undertook to identify, assess, and standardize high-quality PPE, safety devices, and sanitation equipment:**

- **PPE Assessment and Usage Study:** A structured assessment was conducted to evaluate the comfort, usability, and effectiveness of various PPEs used by CSWs during cleaning activities.  
As part of this exercise, CSWs were provided with complete PPE sets from different manufacturers, which they used over a period of three days while performing regular cleaning tasks. Interactions were held with different categories of CSWs to understand the range of PPEs typically used and gather their feedback on fit, comfort, ease of use, level of protection, and suggestions for design improvements. This participatory process enabled an evidence-based understanding of PPE suitability and worker preferences across different sanitation roles.
- **Secondary Research & Market Study on various types of PPEs, Equipment & Safety devices available for Sanitation Workers:** UMC team explored various manuals to understand the different types of PPEs used in sanitation sector. Secondary research was done on various types of PPEs used by different categories of CSWs involved in liquid waste management based on their frequency of use, industrial standards. Essential PPEs manufactured by leading Indian and International manufacturers have been shortlisted based on the secondary research. Accordingly, H&UDD prepared a list of PPEs, Equipment & Safety devices to procure across the 115 ULBs of the State. The list was prepared after various rounds of discussion with manufacturers & CSWs based on their standards, frequency of use & tentative price.
- **Consultations on Human Centric & Gender inclusive PPE for Core Sanitation Workers:** H&UD Department in coordination with UMC team organised a series of consultations with leading manufacturers, suppliers, sanitation experts to enable deliberation between key stakeholders for introducing Human Centric & Gender inclusive PPE for Core Sanitation Workers.

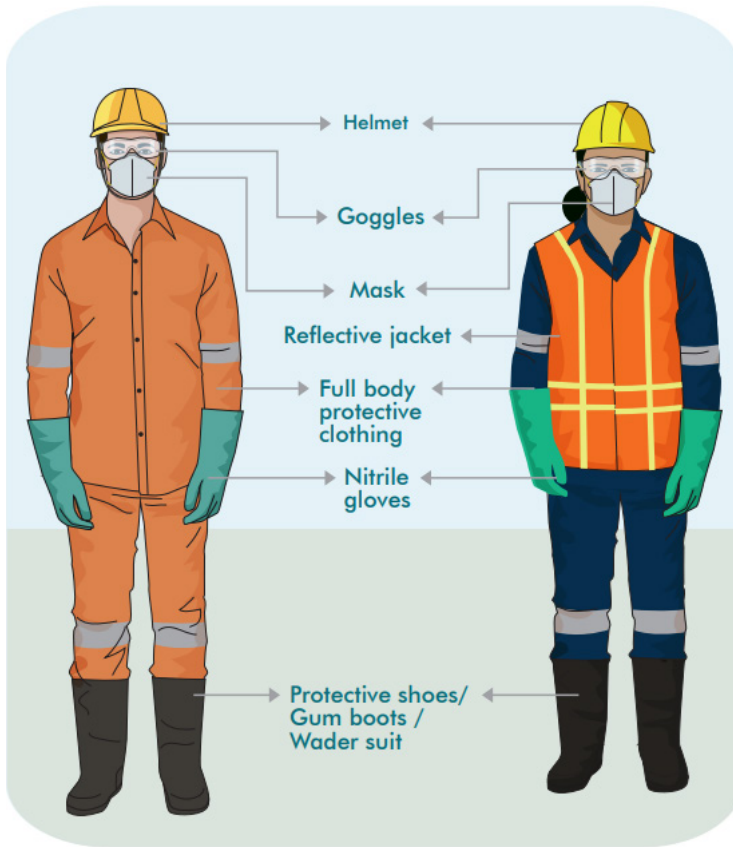
**To enhance the safety of sanitation workers involved in sewer line and septic tank cleaning, the Government of Odisha, under the Garima Scheme, initiated the procurement of industrial-grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), safety devices, and equipment across key cities.**  
Based on consultations with sanitation workers and manufacturers, the Urban Management Centre (UMC) advised WATCO to procure essential gear for frontline workers in Puri, Bhubaneswar, and Cuttack.

**To ensure regular monitoring and accountability in PPE usage, a dedicated WhatsApp group was created, where Responsibility Support Associates (RSAs) share daily geotagged photos of cleaning activities.** This approach helped bring visibility and real-time oversight to safety practices on the ground. Building on the learnings from this initial experience, the H&UDD issued a directive to expand the procurement of PPEs and safety equipment to nine AMRUT cities initially, which was subsequently scaled











up across all 115 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the state.

To ensure quality assurance and efficient delivery, H&UDD empanelled regional vendors for the supply of PPEs and safety devices. This cluster-based procurement strategy allowed for competitive pricing

while maintaining uniform standards and ensuring timely delivery to each ULB.

The procurement was financed through the Garima Corpus Fund, reaffirming the state's strong commitment to improving the occupational safety, health, and dignity of its sanitation workforce.



*Handbook  
for Sanitation  
Workers on the  
use of Personal  
Protective  
Equipment*



PPEs for each job role have been specified under Garima

### 3.6.3. PPE procurement mechanism

**To streamline, standardize and expedite PPE procurement across the state, the H&UDD empaneled Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and Authorized Dealers for a period of three years to supply PPEs to all 115 ULBs.** WATCO played a key role in assisting with technical standardization and led the vendor empanelment process through a competitive tender process. ULBs were grouped into eight geographical clusters, with vendors allowed to operate in a maximum of five clusters to ensure equitable distribution and competition. ULBs then issued purchase orders to the allocated vendors.

**Upon delivery, similar to the process of ULBs process of the ULB level procurement of machines, Technical Inspection Committees, conducted thorough quality and quantity checks.** Only after approval by the

committee could the ULB or parastatal agency raise payment requests with the State, which would then release funds to the ULB for disbursement to the vendor.

**Cluster-level workshops were organized to help ULB officials assess PPE requirements and ensure accurate demand estimation.** To support ULBs and sanitation workers, UMC developed a comprehensive PPE handbook outlining job-specific PPE requirements, proper donning and doffing procedures, and usage guidelines.

It is envisaged that ULBs will procure PPEs regularly each year. The responsibility of provision of PPEs to CSWs working with PSSOs are on the contractor and the revised model contract.

## 3.7. Mitigating occupational health risks for Garima Workers

**Sanitation workers face a range of occupational health hazards**, including headaches, dizziness, fatigue, asthma, gastroenteritis, cholera, hepatitis, typhoid, and various skin and eye irritations. Due to their physically demanding work, they are also vulnerable to musculoskeletal disorders resulting in back pain, wounds, cuts, trauma, and, in severe cases, fatalities. These risks are compounded by poor living conditions and limited access to Water, Sanitation and nutritious

food.

To safeguard the health of CSWs, the H&UDD, in **collaboration with the Health and Family Welfare Department of Odisha, has mandated biannual health camps. SOP, aligned with CPHEEO guidelines for ERSU** has been designed that outlines the required medical tests, disease screenings, and specialist consultations for both Grade-I and Grade-II CSWs.

**A detailed list with the mandated frequency of checks is provided in the table below:**

Name of the Disease	Frequency of Checkup	
	Grade I CSWs	Grade II CSWs
General consultation	Quarterly	Quarterly
Chronic skin disease	Quarterly	NA
High blood pressure	Quarterly	Quarterly
Asthma, bronchitis, or a shortness of breath on exertion	Quarterly	Quarterly
Deformity or disease of the lower limbs limiting movement	Quarterly	NA
Serious defects in eyesight	Quarterly	Quarterly
Lack of sense of smell	Quarterly	Quarterly
Back pain or joint trouble that would limit mobility in confined spaces	Half-yearly	Half-yearly
History of heart disease or disorder	Half-yearly	NA
History of fits, blackouts, fainting attacks	Half-yearly	NA
Meniere's disease or disease involving loss of balance	Yearly	NA
Deafness	Yearly	Yearly



These health camps are organized in a decentralized manner and conducted at Primary Health Centres (PHCs) across each ULB, where workers are tagged and issued health cards and files to document prescriptions, test results, and medical history. Records are maintained jointly by the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) and ULBs. Workers identified with major health issues are referred to tertiary government

hospitals for further treatment. Additionally, the SOP outlines mandatory fitness assessments for Sanitation Entry Professionals (SEPs), identifying medical conditions such as high blood pressure, claustrophobia, asthma, or restricted joint movement that disqualify candidates from engaging in confined space entry in high-risk environments.



Garima worker getting a health checkup in a Garima Health camp



Women getting a health checkup in a Garima Health camp



### 3.8. Garima Griha: Improving Working conditions for Sanitation Workers

CSWs operate in hazardous environments and are mandated to wear prescribed PPE. However, **initial consultations with sanitation workers revealed significant infrastructure gaps, including the absence of washrooms for post-duty cleaning, lack of designated spaces for PPE storage, for rest or meals between jobs.**

To address these challenges, the H&UDD decided to develop Garima Grihas as dedicated rest centres for CSWs. These are equipped with seating areas, bathing

rooms, toilets, and designated lockers, spaces to wash, dry, and store PPE.

The UMC supported developing detailed design and operations & maintenance (O&M) guidelines to support the construction and sustainable functioning of Garima Grihas. **As of July 2025, 35 Garima Grihas have been constructed and are operational across the cities in Odisha.** The intention is to expand these Garima Grihas across all ULBs in the state.



Workers taking a break at the Garima Griha



Workers washing up after duty at the Garima Griha

# CASE STUDY:

## From Informal Labourer to Skilled Professional: Ajay Naik Journey in Bhubaneswar

For years, Ajay Naik, a sanitation worker in Bhubaneswar, would finish his grueling shift cleaning sewer lines, —caked in waste, exhausted, and with nowhere to go. There was no clean toilet to freshen up, no bench to sit and rest, and no place to keep the heavy, soiled safety gear he carried home in a plastic bag. Changing clothes in the open or behind a bush became routine. After hours of hazardous, thankless work, Ajay returned home tired, unwashed, and unseen.

**“Some days, I didn’t even feel human. I just wanted a place to sit, clean up, and breathe.”**

That changed when Garima Grihas were established under the Government of Odisha’s Garima Scheme. These dedicated worker support centres, built and operated by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, were created to bring safety, structure, and dignity into the daily lives of sanitation workers.

Now, Ajay begins and ends his workday at a Garima Griha. He changes into clean PPE before heading out and returns to a clean space where he can bathe, rest, dry his equipment, and attend safety briefings. The centre offers him private changing rooms and clean toilets; lockers for personal belongings and PPE; a hygienic resting space with drinking water and first-aid supplies.

**“It’s the first time I’ve felt like my work matters. That someone cares about how we live and work.”**

Ajay no longer has to carry wet gear home or use public spaces to change. With every use of the Garima Griha, he not only finds physical relief but also a renewed sense of pride in his work.

Garima Grihas have transformed the everyday routine of sanitation workers like Ajay. They’re more than just buildings—they’re a symbol of respect, proof that when cities design with empathy, even the most invisible workers can be seen, supported, and valued.





## 3.9. Regulating work of sanitation contractors

Across Odisha, ULBs are strengthening the delivery of sanitation services either through direct service provision by ULBs themselves or by engagement of Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs). The state has made significant progress in establishing frameworks to regulate and standardize PSSOs operations, with a strong emphasis on worker safety and service quality.

As part of this effort, the H&UDD has introduced a **Model Contract for engaging PSSOs, which mandates**

**To be eligible for desludging work, PSSOs are required to adhere to the following requirements:**

- Valid vehicle registration and pollution control certificates,
- Insurance documents,
- Details of workers engaged in desludging,
- Proof of PPE distribution with signed acknowledgements from workers, and
- Confirmation that all collected sludge is disposed off at authorized treatment sites such as STPs or FSTPs.

**adherence to CPHEEO guidelines and safety protocols** for mechanical cleaning of sewer lines and septic tanks. The contract requires ULBs to ensure that only trained personnel are deployed for desludging activities. In cases where mechanical cleaning is not feasible, PSSOs must follow ERSU protocols as laid down by the State Government.

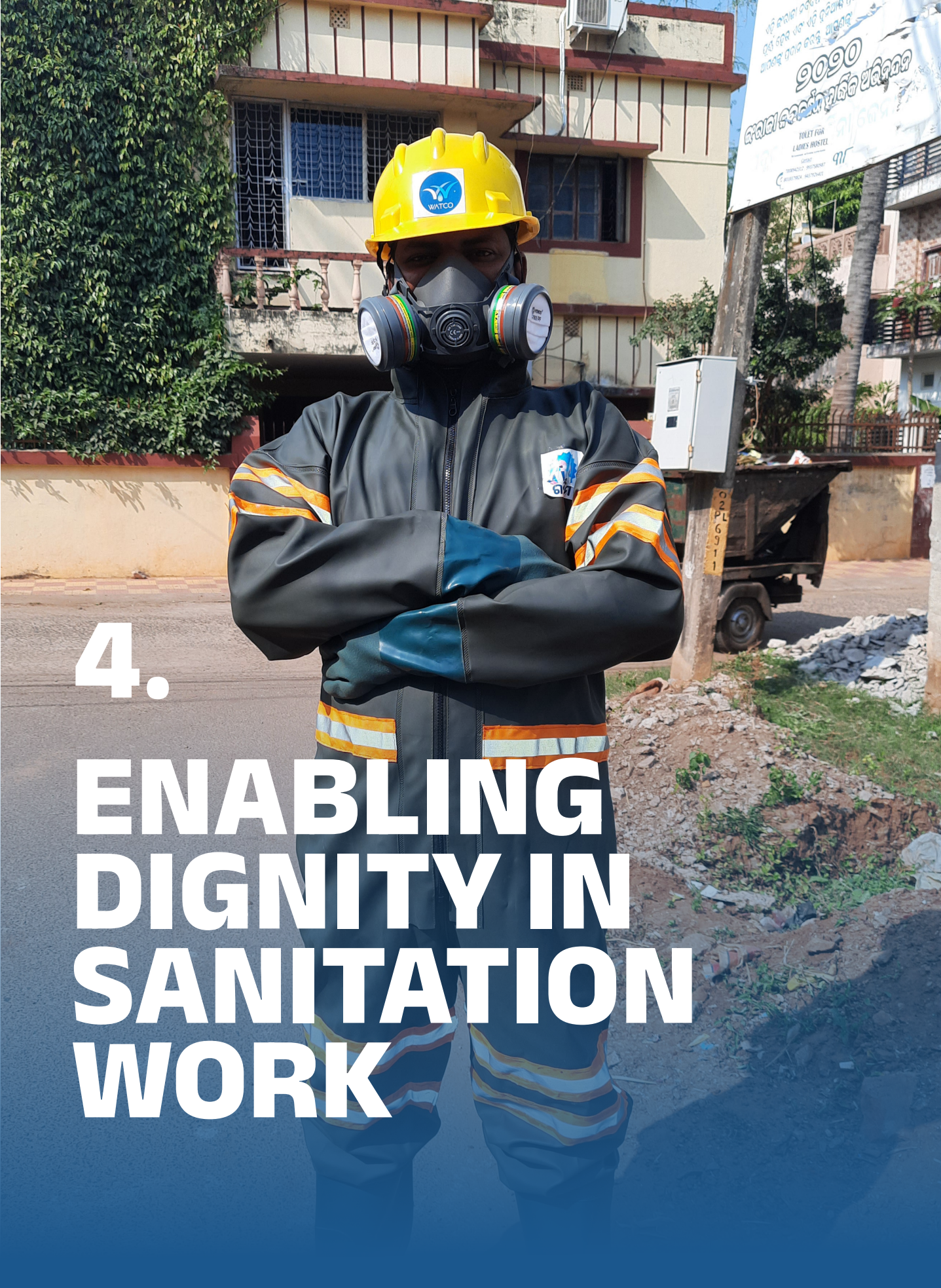
All cities have transitioned their contracts with PSSOs to these model contracts.

Furthermore, PSSOs must ensure that all CSWs employed under their operations are registered with the respective ULB and equipped with appropriate PPE and safety devices. These regulatory measures are critical for advancing safe, accountable, and dignified sanitation service delivery across Odisha's urban areas.



Workers cleaning drains with Machinery





4.

# ENABLING DIGNITY IN SANITATION WORK



## 4.1. Financial Safety

The financial entitlements play a critical role in ensuring the economic wellbeing and social inclusion of sanitation workers. **These entitlements serve as an essential safety net, offering a foundation of financial stability and reducing vulnerabilities associated with informal and high-risk work.** As reported from the Garima Scheme indicates that **over 90% of sanitation workers are engaged in intergenerational occupations, reflecting the deep-rooted nature of occupational marginalization.** Additionally, nearly 20% are informally engaged as daily wagers, and more than 80% earn less than ₹10,000 per month, underscoring the need for

structured financial interventions.

**By facilitating access to education, healthcare, and alternative livelihood opportunities, financial support enables sanitation workers and their families to improve their quality of life.** Such measures are also key to promoting intergenerational mobility and long-term socio-economic advancement.

**Through the provision of structured financial entitlements, the Government aims to reinforce its commitment to inclusive development, dignity of labour, and equitable access to welfare for all sanitation workers.**

### 4.1.1. Bridging the wage gap under Garima: categorising roles for equitable pay

**Sanitation work is inherently hazardous and complex.** Workers engaged in cleaning septic tanks and sewer lines routinely enter confined, oxygen-deficient spaces to address infrastructure damage or remove waste that may have accumulated for years. These tasks require significant expertise and expose workers to serious health risks, including contact with human waste, toxic gases, and life-threatening situations like falls or suffocation, hazards that would be treated with utmost seriousness in other industries.

**Despite the technical demands and dangers, sanitation work does not get recognized as a “skilled” profession.** As a result, sanitation workers have typically received the lowest wage tier and have had limited access to professional training, insurance,

hazard allowances, or health support. In many states, sanitation jobs were grouped with general urban municipal labor and labeled as “unskilled,” ignoring the variety of tasks and the distinct risks associated with each role—especially for those handling liquid waste directly.

**Under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the Odisha Minimum Wages Rules, 1956, the Government sets wage rates for scheduled employments. However, sanitation work had never been formally recognized as a distinct employment category within this framework.** The absence of such categorization meant sanitation workers were not entitled to fair wages or specific protections despite the occupational hazards they face.

**Recognizing the critical gap in how sanitation work has historically been classified, the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD), in collaboration with the Labour and Employees’ State Insurance (LESI) Department, undertook a systematic effort to formally recognize core sanitation work as skilled and highly skilled employment.**



This classification was informed by a detailed comparative analysis of scheduled employment categories across states and the occupational hazards sanitation workers routinely face. Unlike other categories currently designated as skilled or highly skilled—such as electricians, pump operators, and machine operators—**sanitation workers perform complex, high-risk tasks such as desludging septic tanks, maintaining underground sewer networks, and operating STPs and FSTPs, often in confined spaces and hazardous environments.** These tasks demand practical expertise, physical endurance, and situational awareness, especially in the absence of full mechanization.

Ground-level evidence collected through the Garima Scheme, supported by feedback from ULBs and technical experts, reinforced that the skill and risk involved in sanitation work were comparable—if not higher—than several currently recognized skilled professions. Based on this evidence, LESI initiated the inclusion process to formally categorize sanitation work under the scheduled employment list, ensuring workers are brought under the ambit of the Minimum Wages Act with due recognition of their occupational profile.

#### Under this revised classification::

1. **Sewer and septic tank workers have been categorized as highly skilled,**
2. **Drain cleaners, community/public toilet cleaners, and FSTP operators are recognized as skilled workers.**

### 4.1.2. Provisioning risk and hardship allowance for sanitation workers

**The risk allowance is intended for employees engaged in hazardous work or duties that pose long-term health risks.** Sanitation work, by its very nature, involves significant occupational hazards, ranging from moderate to extreme levels—depending on the specific job role. While workers involved in the cleaning of underground drains and sewer lines are currently entitled to a risk allowance, this has been limited to a nominal amount of ₹60 per month, which does not reflect the severity of risks involved.

**On July 5, 2021, LESI officially notified sanitation work as a separate category under the Minimum Wages Act making Odisha as the first state in India to categorize sanitation work involving direct handling of faecal waste as “highly skilled” and “skilled” employment.**

This landmark move resulted in a substantial improvement in wages. Prior to the revision, sanitation workers earned a daily wage of ₹303 as unskilled laborers. With the new classification, minimum daily wages increased to ₹552 for skilled and ₹602 for highly skilled workers, marking an overall increase of nearly 50% in wages in 2021.

In addition to improving livelihoods, this recognition opens the door for structured training programs, better occupational safety standards, and provision of risk allowances. This also serves as a model for other states, and sets a precedent for other Labour departments to adopt this, underlining how committed governance can lead to transformative change for some of the most marginalized workers in society.

Recognizing the occupational risks associated with sanitation work, **the H&UDD introduced a Risk and Hardship Allowance as a compensatory measure to account for the health hazards and physical strain inherent in such roles.**

A committee led by the Principal Secretary, H&UDD, was constituted to comprehensively assess the occupational risks across various sanitation job roles.

**The committee identified high risk in operations such as:**

Desludging of on-site sanitation systems+  
Maintenance of sewer networks  
Cleaning of inspection chambers  
Cleaning and maintenance of septic tanks

The committee recommended that **core sanitation workers engaged in sewer and septic tank cleaning be provided a Risk and Hardship Allowance equivalent to 15% of their daily wages**. Again, it also recommended that **FSTP workers from the Grade-II core sanitation worker category be granted 7.5% of their monthly remuneration as Risk and Hardship Allowance**.

### 4.1.3. Disability allowance for sanitation workers: enabling financial security

**To strengthen long-term protection for sanitation workers, the Garima Scheme has provisioned disability compensation aligned with the standards set under the Employees' Compensation (EC) Act and the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act.**

While these laws mandate employers to compensate workers in case of disability, many Private Sanitation Service Operators (PSSOs) claim exemption by citing a workforce size of fewer than ten employees—placing workers at risk of exclusion from legal entitlements.

Given that sanitation is a state subject, the H&UDD has taken a proactive step to institutionalize compensation. **In the event of a disability, eligible workers under the Garima Scheme will receive compensation equivalent to the amount prescribed under the EC or ESI Act whichever is higher drawn from the Garima Corpus Fund**. This ensures equitable and reliable protection for workers, regardless of the employment structure of their service providers.

### 4.1.4. Expanding social security through insurance coverage

**Under the Garima Scheme, to safeguard the lives and dignity of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs), the Government of Odisha has included provisions for life insurance coverage**, calibrated to the risk exposure associated with different sanitation roles. Grade-I CSWs, who are directly engaged in high-risk operations such as sewer entry and septic tank cleaning, face significant occupational hazards. In alignment with the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Rules, 2013**, which recommend that employers extend insurance coverage to sanitation workers, the State Government has instituted enhanced life insurance protection for this category.

**Accordingly, an insurance coverage of ₹10 lakh is being extended to all eligible Grade-I workers in the event of death**. The premium for this coverage is being borne by the ULBs and financed through the Garima Corpus Fund, thereby ensuring financial security for workers' families without imposing any financial burden on the workers themselves. This measure reinforces the State's commitment to institutionalizing occupational safety and social protection for those performing the most hazardous sanitation work.

### 4.1.5. Advancing access to education through scholarship support

**Recognizing education as a foundational right and critical to breaking the intergenerational cycle of sanitation work, the Garima Scheme aims to extend educational support to the children of Core Sanitation Workers (CSWs)**. Numerous central and

state government scholarship schemes are currently in place; however, access remains limited for marginalised communities due to lack of awareness, documentation, and systemic outreach.



To address this, the Garima Program, has undertaken a detailed analysis of existing scholarship schemes, their provisions, eligibility criteria, and benefit structures. Leveraging data from the Garima digital enumeration, the team mapped the number of children eligible for educational benefits and shared this information with the Department of Education to facilitate convergence.

**The convergence seeks to connect eligible children of CSWs to appropriate scholarships and ensure targeted delivery of benefits.** The Government is taking steps to institutionalize a data-driven, equity-focused approach to enhancing educational access for families of sanitation workers across Odisha.

## 4.1.6. Housing assistance for sanitation workers

To enable access to secure and dignified housing for CSW, the H&UDD systematically captured housing-related data of each of the enumerated workers

through the Garima enumeration exercise to guide targeted interventions under the Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM).

**Based on the data analysis, CSW households were categorized into two segments:**

- Those with patta land or Record of Rights (RoR)
- Those without land or tenure security

**For beneficiaries with patta land, housing is being provided under the Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC) component of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana—Urban (PMAY-U). Financial assistance—covering up to 90% of the housing cost—is being jointly supported by the central and state governments, with additional top-up from the Garima Scheme corpus.**

**For landless CSWs, housing support is being extended through the Affordable Housing Partnership (AHP) model of OUHM. Apartments in multi-storey urban housing complexes are being allocated to these workers in eligible cities.**

OUHM has also developed a SOP to guide the delivery process. This includes organizing entitlement camps, supporting applications through the PMAY portal, ensuring verification and progress reporting, and facilitating fund flow through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) at key stages of construction. ULBs have been tasked with executing these efforts on the ground.



Garima has brought better wages, health benefits and dignity to sanitation workers and their families

# CASE STUDY:

## A Sanitation Worker's Journey to Educate His Child

For years, Debendra Das quietly did his job—operating a desludging vehicle in Berhampur as a Grade I sanitation worker. With limited formal education and little awareness of government schemes, he and his wife did the best they could to support their young daughter, Sasmita. They always dreamed of giving her a better life, one that included a solid education. But school fees, uniforms, and books were difficult expenses to bear.

In 2022, Debendra's life began to change when he was identified as a core sanitation worker under the Garima Scheme. The scheme didn't just bring safety gear, health check-ups, and social security benefits—it brought something far more meaningful: hope for his daughter's future. Until then, Debendra had never heard of the Pre-Matric Scholarship (Component 2), designed for children of parents engaged in hazardous or unclean occupations. Even if he had, navigating the application process—entirely online—was beyond his digital skills. But Garima brought with it a support system that extended beyond the workplace.

With the combined efforts of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation, the District Welfare Office, the Urban Management Centre, and supportive school teachers, the family received the guidance they needed. Sasmita's eligibility was confirmed through school records and her father's occupation was validated under the Manual Scavengers Act, 2013.

Field facilitators stepped in to help with each step—collecting Aadhaar details, uploading photos and bank information, and ensuring the application was submitted on time. On the very day Sasmita was re-admitted into Class III at Sanibarampeta School, her scholarship application was filed on the Odisha State Scholarship Portal.

A few weeks later, in February 2024, ₹3,500 was credited to Sasmita's bank account.

**That sum made a big difference—it covered her school expenses and ensured her education continued without interruption.**

For Debendra, Garima wasn't just about workplace dignity. It was about breaking a cycle, opening new doors, and showing his daughter that her dreams matter. His story is a powerful reminder that when sanitation workers are supported—not just as workers, but as parents and citizens—the impact can transform entire families and generations to come.





## 4.1.7. Enhancing Digital Inclusion through Mobile Phone Support

As part of its commitment to strengthening the safety, dignity, and digital inclusion of CSWs, **the H&UDD proposes to extend mobile phone support to eligible Grade-1 CSWs and Garima Supervisors under the Garima Scheme.** Eligibility for this support is linked to the successful completion of Sewer Entry Professionals (SEP) training and the issuance of a Certificate of Merit. The procurement of the mobile phones will be undertaken through the

Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC). The Government aims to institutionalize this initiative as part of its broader efforts to enhance service delivery and inclusion.

**The provision of smartphones represents a key step toward digital empowerment and strengthening last-mile delivery of services.**

### The initiative is designed to:

- Enable CSWs to record daily attendance, register grievances, and access social security benefits via the SHWAS app
- Equip Garima Supervisors to monitor sanitation activities, ensure adherence to safety protocols, and report digitally
- Foster inclusion by empowering CSWs to engage with digital tools, strengthening their participation in administrative processes
- Establish real-time communication channels between workers and authorities to ensure swift grievance, redressal and service delivery
- Support education access for workers' children and use of social platforms for scheme updates and IEC dissemination

By bridging the digital divide, this initiative reinforces the state's commitment to dignified, transparent, and inclusive systems for sanitation workers.



*Standard Operating  
Procedure for  
providing mobile  
phones to sanitation  
workers*

### 4.1.8. Tracking of wages and access to entitlements through the Employer Management System (EMS)

To enable ULBs and parastatals to ensure that all employers fulfill their responsibilities toward ensuring the safety of sanitation workers, UMC has developed a digital portal called the Employer Management System (EMS).

The EMS is being considered for piloting as a tool for ULBs and parastatal agencies to track, manage PSSOs.

The EMS will enable:

- Registration and empanelment of PSSOs
- Attendance tracking of sanitation workers (including half-days)
- Automated calculation of wages and allowances.
- Direct bank transfer of wages to CSWs, reducing reliance on cash transactions

The attendance feature of the EMS is uniquely designed to capture the number of days CSWs perform their jobs, including half days. **This data can then be used to automatically calculate the minimum wages and the risk and hardship allowance that the CSW is eligible to receive.** Further, the EMS has the potential to enable digital payment of wages directly to the bank account of the CSWs. This will enable ULBs to monitor that all CSWs receive minimum wages and that they are not exploited or underpaid by their employers. The EMS portal has been tested in few locations.

SHWAS - EMS

Dashboard

PSSO Details

Attendance & Payment

Attendance

Wages Payment

EPF/ESIC Payment

Advance Payment

PPE & Trainings

Reports

Settings

Attendance

Contract ID

Month / Year

OD-021-001

January 2024

Clear

View Details

Attendance

Emptying of Septic Tank

Garima ID	Details	Banking Details	Full Day	Half Day	Paid Leave	Total Payable Days (including paid leaves)
	Name: <div></div> Phone: <div></div> Gender: Male Contract type: Noncontract	Bank Name: Bank of Maharashtra Account Number: <div></div> IFSC Code: <div></div>	<div></div> 2	<div></div> 0	<div></div> 0	2
	Name: <div></div> Phone: <div></div>	Bank Name: Bank of Maharashtra Account Number: <div></div>	<div></div> 2	<div></div> 0	<div></div> 0	2

A snapshot of the EMS





# 5. INSTITUTIONALISING LEARNINGS

From Odisha to Tamil Nadu  
and Beyond



## Institutionalising Learnings: From Odisha to Tamil Nadu and Beyond

Launched in 2020 by the Government of Odisha, the Garima Scheme marked a transformative shift in sanitation governance by institutionalizing the safety, dignity, and welfare of CSWs across all 115 Urban Local Bodies of the state. Moving beyond welfare delivery, Garima introduced a system-anchored approach that focused on formalizing sanitation work, ensuring access to entitlements, and embedding worker protection into the everyday functioning of municipal systems.

Through structured enumeration, provision of protective gear, mechanization, skilling, and a dedicated state-funded corpus for entitlements such as insurance, healthcare, and social security, the scheme created robust mechanisms to safeguard workers' rights and wellbeing. Importantly, it established institutional accountability and financial sustainability, enabling long-term impact beyond the scheme's timeline. Garima's success has inspired replication in other parts of the country.

In 2022, Tamil Nadu launched the Sanitation Workers Development Scheme (SWDS) across all 649 ULBs, drawing from Garima's core design and implementation strategies. Similarly, the national NAMASTE Scheme, led by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, has incorporated key features of Garima-such as worker enumeration, skilling, mechanization, and convergence with welfare schemes and is now being rolled out in over 4,800 ULBs across India. In both Tamil Nadu and the national context, the Urban Management Centre, which played a central role in Garima's design and roll-out, continues to support implementation, enabling the cross-learning of institutional practices. What makes Garima particularly significant is its shift from fragmented, program-led approaches to a governance-driven model, demonstrating that with political will, dedicated resources, and strong systems, worker dignity, safety, and inclusion can be sustainably secured through the existing machinery of urban governance.





# LIST OF ACRONYMS

## **CPHEEO**

Central Public Health  
and Environmental  
Engineering  
Organisation

## **CSWs**

Core Sanitation Workers

## **DAY - NULM**

Deendayal Antyodaya  
Yojana – National Urban  
Livelihoods Mission

## **DLCC**

District-Level  
Coordination  
Committees

## **EMS**

Employer Management  
System

## **ERSU**

Emergency Sanitation  
Response Unit

## **FSTP**

Faecal Sludge Treatment  
Plant

## **FSSM**

Faecal Sludge and  
Septage Management

## **GeM**

Government  
e-Marketplace

## **GoO**

Government of Odisha

## **GF**

Gates Foundation

## **H&UDD**

Housing and Urban  
Development  
Department

## **IEC**

Information, Education  
and Communication

## **MoHUA**

Ministry of Housing  
and Urban Affairs

## **MoSJE**

Ministry of Social  
Justice and  
Empowerment

## **NAMASTE**

National Action for  
Mechanised Sanitation  
Ecosystem

## **NGOs**

Non – Governmental  
Organisations

## **OBC**

Other backward classes

## **OUHM**

Odisha Urban Housing  
Mission

## **OUSP**

Odisha Urban  
Sanitation Policy

## **OWSSB**

Orissa Water Supply &  
Sewerage Board

## **PEMSR Act, 2013**

Prohibition of  
Employment as Manual  
Scavengers and their  
Rehabilitation Act, 2013

## **PHE**

Public Health  
Engineering

## **PMJAY**

Pradhan Mantri Jan  
Arogya Yojana

## **PMJJBY**

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan  
Jyoti Bima Yojana

## **PMSBY**

Pradhan Mantri  
Suraksha Bima Yojana

## **PM SVanidhi**

Pradhan Mantri Street  
Vendor's AtmaNirbhar  
Nidhi

## **PPE**

Personal Protective  
Equipment

## **PSSO**

Private Sector  
Sanitation Organisation

## **QC**

Quality Check

## **RSA**

Responsible Sanitation  
Authorities

## **SBM**

Swachh Bharat Mission

## **SEP**

Sewer Entry  
Professional

## **SHG**

Self-Help Groups

## **SKA**

Safai Karmachari  
Andolan

## **SC**

Scheduled Castes

## **SOP**

Standard Operating  
Procedures

## **SSW**

Sewer and Septic Tank  
Cleaning Workers

## **ST**

Scheduled Tribes

## **STP**

Sewage Treatment  
Plant

## **SUY**

Swachhata Udyami  
Yojana

## **SWDS**

Sanitation Workers  
Development Scheme

## **TSU**

Technical Support Unit

## **ULB**

Urban Local Body

## **UMC**

Urban Management  
Centre

## **WATCO**

Water Corporation of  
Odisha





**garima**  
FOR SAFETY & DIGNITY OF  
CORE SANITATION WORKERS



 **Urban  
Management  
Centre**  
*Making cities work for everyone*