

Weekly Livelihoods Update

10 April 2019

✚ **India Urgently Needs Safer Sanitation Solutions:** The death of six persons including three members of one family due to asphyxiation in a septic tank in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, is an ugly reminder of the enormous task that lies ahead to make our sanitation solutions safe and sustainable. According to the government of Tamil Nadu, as many as 55% of all households depend on on-site sanitation solutions in the absence of sewerage networks. Further, as per the Census 2011, 38% of the urban households in the state had constructed septic tanks for disposal of liquid waste. Given that sub-urban households in Tamil Nadu (which are not connected through underground sewerage systems) increasingly prefer septic tanks to dispose of their waste, one would assume that this technology is cost-effective and safe. However, reports suggest serious discrepancies in construction that affect the normal functioning of a septic tank, as well as the management of effluent and faecal sludge. The public perception that large tanks fill up slowly needs to be addressed properly by the government. While mason training programmes are critical, households need to be educated about the options available for on-site sanitation systems and how to construct and maintain them in the long run. Owing to the concerns related to septic tanks, the Swachh Bharat Mission has emphasised on the construction of twin-pit latrine systems. This is because of the cost-effectiveness of constructing twin-pits when compared to septic tanks and also the ease of maintenance. Twin-pit latrines efficiently treat waste at the site, making it safer for the households to manually handle the decomposed manure and use it in their agricultural fields. Nevertheless, septic tanks are here to stay as an alternate on-site sanitation solution, as sub-urban populations that are unconnected to sewerage systems continue to prefer them due to their capacity to hold larger volumes of waste. The Swachh Bharat Mission might indeed make India open defecation free by October 2019, but this status can only be sustained if we focus on the entire cycle of waste generation, disposal and treatment. There's much more to be done beyond toilet construction and spreading awareness to use them. The next phase of SBM has to shift its focus towards liquid waste management if we are to truly make India clean and healthy.

[For Further reading: <https://thewire.in/government/india-urgently-needs-safer-sanitation-solutions>]

✚ **If India Really Wants More Women in the Workforce, We Need to Think More about Migration:** India has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world. Between 2005-06 and 2015-2016 this figure has reduced by almost 12%. Economists use the feminisation U-hypothesis to explain this trend; it predicts that the women workforce participation of a developing economy declines and rises again later due to the changing nature of socio-economic factors within the national ecosystem. The decline in the curve is a result of factors such as the incompatibility of work and family duties, the stigmas surrounding women working outside the home, and the high incomes of their spouses rendering their contribution to family income negligible. In India, female labour force participation rates are 22 points below their expected level on the curve. While there are several factors which contribute to these numbers, internal migration must be recognised as one of the key factors which deters the entry of women into the higher education, skilling and employment ecosystems. Women have limited opportunities as they are restricted to 'traditional' jobs which are closely linked to typical ideas of what women can and cannot do. According to a [*2018 McKinsey Global Institute report*](#), India could add up to USD 770 billion to its GDP—more than 18%, if it simply advances gender parity in work and society. The above narratives tell us that when it comes to women migrating for work, social norms become excuses to delay structural reform, and in turn, these institutional barriers prevent community mindset change.

[For Further reading: <https://thewire.in/women/women-india-migration-work>]

✚ **Relief in Odisha:**The Naveen Patnaik government's Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme, launched on December 31, 2018, is all set to empower Odisha's farmers as the Mission Shakti programme has empowered women in the State. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik seems to have taken a cue from Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme, launched in early 2018, to make this intervention to alleviate farm distress. More than 37 lakh farmers have been extended financial support in the State up to March under KALIA, with a total of Rs.1,851 crore transferred to the accounts of beneficiaries. Another 20 lakh beneficiaries are likely to be covered under the scheme, according to senior officials. There are vulnerable families in rural areas that require social security through pensions. KALIA recognises this rural reality and intends to give Rs.10,000 a year to such vulnerable families," he added. He said target families had been identified. The Chief Minister has stressed on several occasions that no deserving family should be left out. KALIA takes care of the life insurance cover for farmers and intends to provide interest free loans up to Rs.50,000. After the

launch of KALIA, the State government went all out to ensure its implementation by mobilizing staff at the grass-roots level. Naveen Patnaik has written to the Prime Minister saying that the PMKSN scheme would have benefited farmers more if the quantum of assistance equalled or exceeded that of the KALIA scheme. Both schemes, launched ahead of the general elections, will end up being handouts only if they are not implemented in their true spirit. Both the schemes are introduced before the General election and for getting of power. The party leaders are making the gimmicks and throughout the net of welfare scheme to get the votes in the election. Every time, the voter does the same thing. In this scenario, there is need to change the people and casting their vote to suitable leaders for their nation builds among the developed countries.

[For further reading: <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/article26643451.ece>]

Bitter of Sugarcane Farmers: The Rs.7, 000-crore bailout package for the sugar sector comes as a relief to farmers, who are in genuine distress, but experts say such measures will not help in the long run. India's sugar industry is not just a source of income and sweetener for millions; it is a key ingredient in the country's politics. An Rs.80, 000-crore labour-intensive industry that is spread across the country, sugar cultivation and its value chain are a main source of employment in large tracts of rural India. In several regions, voting patterns depend on the treatment given to the sugar sector. In the past year, the sugar industry has been plagued by a glut in production that has led to distress in the farming sector as mills are unable to pay farmers for the oversupply. It became increasingly evident that the situation needed to be addressed, failing which the road to the 2019 general election would not be sweet at all. An Rs.7, 000-crore bailout package for the sector was announced in early June, proving yet again that sugar would always get preferential treatment. On the flip side, analysts said, farmers were in genuine distress and needed the bailout but these "band aids" were not a long-term solution.

[For Further reading: <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/agriculture/article24321068.ece>]

Right to NYAY: The Congress party has announced the minimum income guarantee scheme or Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) in the General election Party Manifesto last few days back. It gives the Rs. 72000 per year for 20% poor families in India. It has brought to the centre stage the moral imperative of pursuing a welfare agenda for guaranteeing the minimum economic agency of

the poor. During the past few days, the debate on the credibility of this promise has shifted accountability on to the “common man” to treat minimum income guarantee as “security” and not as a dole or benefit. A similar concern, however, is also pervading the public mind as such political promises tend to casually use “social security” and “doles” interchangeably. This, in effect, would lead to the dilution of the accountability mechanism that makes any democratically elected government answerable for their failure to ensure citizens’ constitutional rights to dignity of life and justice. But, is this reading of the promise merely a -reflection of the insensitivity or naivety of the sceptical common mind regarding the political significance of social security and dole? Or is it conditioned by an institutional architecture of -service delivery that has pervasively undermined the spirit of human life and dignity? It is understandable that implementing such an expansive programme will entail much trial and tribulation, and the answers to some of these questions may come through only after implementation. But, it rests with the electorate to ensure that such a lofty manifesto is not merely deemed to be a politics of nomenclature. The party manifesto under reference would have to give a realistic picture of the resources that would make this promise yield some concrete result. It is incumbent upon the political party to demonstrate its political will by ensuring that endurance is not stretched to the extent of procrastination if such a scheme is ever implemented; for, nyay (justice) delayed is nyay denied. Both the cases, however, would require fundamental shifts in mindset at all relevant levels. Both the commoners and the government (whether potential or current) must recognize that, first, justice and dignity are rights and not allowances or benefits, and second, that rights are neither discretionary conferment nor aspirational targets, but only the lawful claims of the beneficiaries.

[For Further reading:<https://www.epw.in/journal/2019/14/editorials/right-nyay.html>]

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