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WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT OF MID- SIZED URBAN LOCAL BODIES

Gender Perspective at Sanitation Department

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List of Abbreviations

AMC	Ajmer Municipal Corporation
FLPR	Female Labour Force Participation Rates
ILO	International Labour Organization
JMC	Jhansi Municipal Corporation
MMC	Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIUA	National Institute of Urban Affairs
OB	Organizational Behaviour
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
PRIA	Participatory Research in Asia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ULB	Urban Local Body

1. Background and Introduction to Diversity

## 1.1. Diversity at the Workplace[1]: The ULB and Sanitation Context

1.1.1. Meaning of diversity at the workplace:

Various researchers have defined diversity in the context of the workplace, or organisational diversity, in different ways. As per one of the definitions, 'diversity is a mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organization'[2]. As per another definition, diversity is a combination of visible and invisible differences that shape our worldview, our perspective and our approach[3].

Diversity in the workplace is achieved when an organisation employs individuals from diverse backgrounds having varied characteristics. Therefore, a diverse workforce contains persons of varying attributes including gender, age, religion, ethnicity, cultural origin, sexual orientation, languages, education, skills, physical abilities, etc.[4]

Researchers have identified two main dimensions of organisational diversity: socio-cultural and demographic. Socio-cultural dimensions comprise of caste, religion, and language, while demographic dimensions cover gender, age, physical ability, the region of origin, and sexual orientation[5]. Another view classifies diversity into 'visible' and 'thought diversity'. Examples of 'visible diversity' include gender and race, while 'thought diversity' is about the difference in perspectives and capabilities[6].

Figure 1: Key diversity dimensions at works place
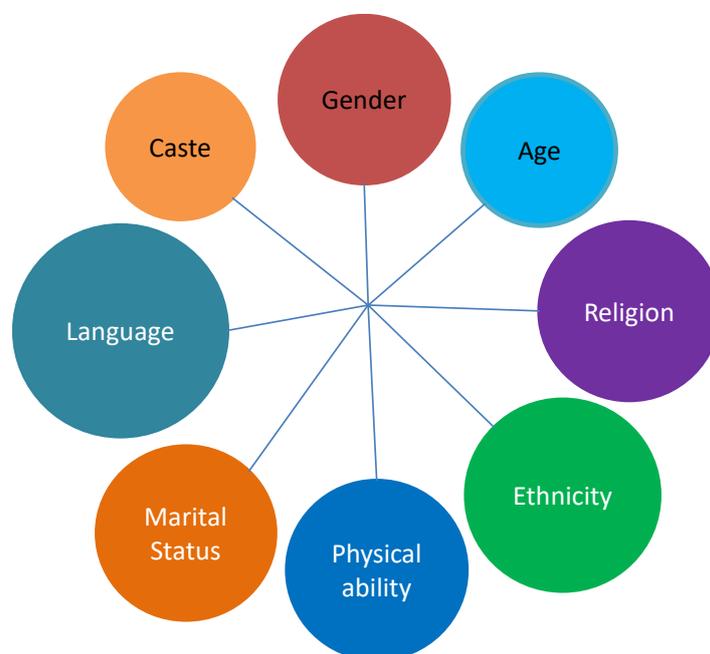
1.1.2. Role of workplace diversity:

Diversity in organisations   is proven to promote innovativeness, better work outcomes, and improved performance[7]. A diversified workplace is productive and efficient. Organisations with high diversity are also desirable among job seekers.

However, diversity has another aspect, as well. An abundance of diversity or unmanaged diversity may not work well under conditions of uncertainty and complexity. A high level of diversity may make it difficult to arrive at an agreement which may lead to cultural clashes and negative group dynamics[8]. Since a reasonable degree of diversity is vital for the betterment of an organisation, they need to strive to achieve this. Before coming to diversity in the context of urban local bodies, let us have a look at gender and its importance as a dimension of diversity.

1.1.3 Gender diversity at the workplace

Gender is an essential socio-economic dimension of diversity. Women constitute close to half the population of India, and their presence in organisations is vital to workplace efficiency. A gender-diverse organisation is a better reflection of its customer (society) and shows the inclusive approach of the organization. Moreover, healthy gender diversity at workplaces has a significant role to play in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG-5): Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls[9].

The statistical estimates show a declining trend of gender diversity at workplaces in India. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, the Female Labour Force Participation Rates (FLPR)[10] has fallen from 33.8 percent in 2000 to an all-time low of 26.8 percent in 2012. In urban areas, the FLPR was found to be as low as 20.5 percent[11]. The low female labour force participation rates reflect the status of gender diversity at workplaces in India. It also provides a sense of the potential of the more significant   economic impact of gender-diverse workplaces.

Gender diversity in organisations varies significantly as per the location, type, nature, sector, vision, values etc. of the organisations. The following section attempts to set the context of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and the sanitation departments as organisations.

1.1.4 Urban Local Bodies (ULB) in India and their sanitation function

Local bodies are institutions of self-governance which look into the administration of localised areas such as villages, towns, or cities. The Local bodies constituted for local planning, development and administration in urban areas are referred to as Urban Local Bodies[12]. Local government is a state subject as per the Constitution of India. Urban local bodies are the third tier of the government, as per the 74th amendment of the Constitution of India. Article 243Q of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act has provisions for three types of Urban Local Bodies - Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils and Municipal Corporations. The quantitative definitions of the three types are specified by serval states differently, as per their own Municipal/Nagar Palika acts.[13] The Gujarat Municipalities Act 1963, Bihar Municipal Act 2007, and Rajasthan Municipalities Act 2009 are some examples of Acts that regulate functions of the ULBs.

Sanitation, a critical service from the health and environment perspective, is one of the core functions of ULBs. The department dealing with sanitation is responsible for managing solid waste and cleaning the drains in small cities. It is known as the health department in many cities and headed by a health officer. Since the work of the sanitation department is to deliver sanitation (cleaning) services in all parts of the city, it deploys a high number of human resources. Like other departments of the ULB, the sanitation department is also organised hierarchically at three or four levels. There are many attributes of the sanitation department which make it unique, including its large size, gender and caste dimensions, skill diversity, the spread-out work locations and more.

1.1.5 The Urban Local Body (ULB) as a workplace and its workforce

ULBs are organised into departments based on functions. As a workplace, ULBs are characterised by formal working environments, multidisciplinary work and variety of job profiles etc. Because of the

multiplicity of functions, they are hubs of professionals (employees) having many traits. There are a variety of departments dealing with various functions delegated to the ULB from State Governments. Work in ULBs is of two types – office-based and field-based. Office-based departments generally include accounts, administration etc. Most service delivery departments like sanitation, lighting, water supply etc. are predominantly field-based. In the sanitation department, it is often seen that the higher-level employees are required to spend lesser time in the field in comparison to sanitation workers[14]. Their working environment is characterised by less informal and social interactions. Seating arrangements are generally based on divisions and are meant for the office-based staff. Since ULBs handle many basic services, unplanned visits to the service delivery sites by the staff responsible is a common occurrence.

Typically, urban local bodies are large organisations, employing many persons. A study by National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) reported that the total numeric strength of the ULBs of Indore, Nagpur, and Patna is 1000, 1300 and 3200 respectively[15].

Recruitments in ULBs are generally guided by Acts, rules and other notifications released periodically. For example, the state of Bihar has the Bihar Nagar Palika Office-bearers (Appointment & Service Conditions) Rules, 2008[16]. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh has Uttar Pradesh Palika (Centralised) Service Rules, 1966. It has been observed that urban local bodies, in addition to its permanent (core) staff, engage contractual staff for specific tasks through outsourcing agencies. Service orientation, answerability, need to engage with citizens, inclusive views, catering to urgent service delivery needs, promptness in mobility etc. are some of the desired attributes of the workforce of ULBs.

1.1.6 Gender diversity (at the workplace) in the context of the ULB and the sanitation department

Urban local bodies, similar to other organisations across the socio-economic spectrum, are required to become gender-diverse to reflect their commitment towards sustainable development and become more efficient. Gender diversity becomes more critical in ULBs because they are Government entities that employ a large number of people. Being a Government entity, they have a larger role to play in achieving economic development and promoting inclusivity. To ensure at least the minimum level of representation of women in Government jobs, Governments have provisioned reserving seats in vacancies for Government posts, including urban local bodies.

Sanitation, being the largest department of the ULB, has a significant role in determining gender diversity at the ULB level. Gender diversity in the sanitation department has the potential to contribute to economic development, through higher FLPR and achieving the SDG-5 targets. A gender-diverse sanitation department can help in increasing the efficiency of sanitation services in cities. Some of the advantages of a gender-diverse sanitation department include ease in engaging with citizens, especially with women and children, opportunity to build better teams for effective service delivery, and creating a vibrant and desirable place of work.

There has not been much research on gender diversity in urban local bodies and the sanitation department. Some of the research indicated that gender diversity in the sanitation department can be attributed to the stigma attached to sanitation work and it's link with caste and sanitation being the job of the women of these castes. Almost all sanitation workers belong to the lowest Dalit sub-caste communities. In faecal matter or liquid waste related sanitation, approximately 50 percent of sanitation workers are women who work as drain or toilet cleaners [17]

1.2. About the Study

Most of the organisational studies across the world are largely about corporate organisations. Many aspects of organisational behaviour, including gender diversity, have been well researched in the

context of private sector organisations. Nonetheless, the organisational diversity contextual to urban local bodies and their department of sanitation seems to be a less researched area among organisational behaviour (OB) or diversity researchers.

This study examines the gender aspect of organisational diversity in the three urban local bodies of Ajmer (Rajasthan), Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) and Muzaffarpur (Bihar) in India. It takes a wider view of overall organisational gender diversity at the Municipal Corporation level. Thereafter, it takes a deep dive into the gender diversity dimension of sanitation department through an 'action research' oriented approach. The sanitation department is analysed as a focal point for two reasons: it is the largest department in terms of the number of staff, and it displays relatively more complex and interesting dimensions of diversity. The analysis for the sanitation department has been undertaken at two levels: at the level of sanitation workers (frontline workers) and the higher level of the department.

The study uses participatory methods to sensitise through interaction, investigate reasons, and further build upon the observations to explore policy and programmatic interventions at the ULB and higher levels of governance, along with other societal interventions. The study aims to facilitate the improvement of organisational capacity of the three Municipal Corporations and throws light on the ways forward for more gender diversified ULBs.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The key objective of the study is to explore the status of gender diversity in the departments dealing with sanitation in municipal bodies in three cities and sensitise different levels of governance through the findings, on key elements of organisational diversity. Other objectives of the study are:

- To understand the role of workplace gender diversity and its importance in effective delivery of municipal services

- To identify the reasons and impact of absence or abundance of diversity in the ULB's sanitation department

- To suggest initiatives to manage and improve gender diversity within the ULB organisation

- To identify measures pertaining to societal, policy and program regimes to improve diversity in sanitation departments and ULBs

1.4. Methodology and Limitations

The methodology consists of a combination of primary and secondary methods of data collection. The data obtained has been analysed using various quantitative and qualitative methods. The key secondary data is the details of the staff of three municipal corporations collected in 2019. A participatory research methodology, comprising of engagement with the staff of these municipal bodies (mainly sanitation department), has been used. Participatory research involves doing research 'with' people rather than doing research 'on' or 'for' people. It is based on the principle that ordinary people are capable of reflection and critical analysis, that their knowledge is both essential and valuable in any research or development intervention[18]

The intention behind using participatory methodology for this study was to develop a critical understanding of the real reasons of the existing status of gender diversity and its important nuances with the ULB's staff. During the study, discussions were conducted in the month of July-August 2019, using semi-structured questionnaires with approximately 15 staff members (and councillors) of each Municipal Corporation, mainly from sanitation department. This included both women and men at different levels. The flow chart of the methodology used for the study is presented in Figure 2.

For creating a deeper understanding on the subject of organizational and gender diversity, a literature review was conducted. It was realised that there is a lack of case studies on workplace and gender diversity, especially in the Indian context. Most of the literature available is about diversity in private organisations, whereas studies on public sector entities are minimal. This study covers only the staff deployed by ULB for analysis. There is scope for expanding the present study through follow-up research to cover other organisational diversity dimensions such as age, caste, ethnicity, language, education, skills etc. subject to availability of data on these aspects to provide a more comprehensive view of ULBs.

Figure 2: Flowchart of methodology
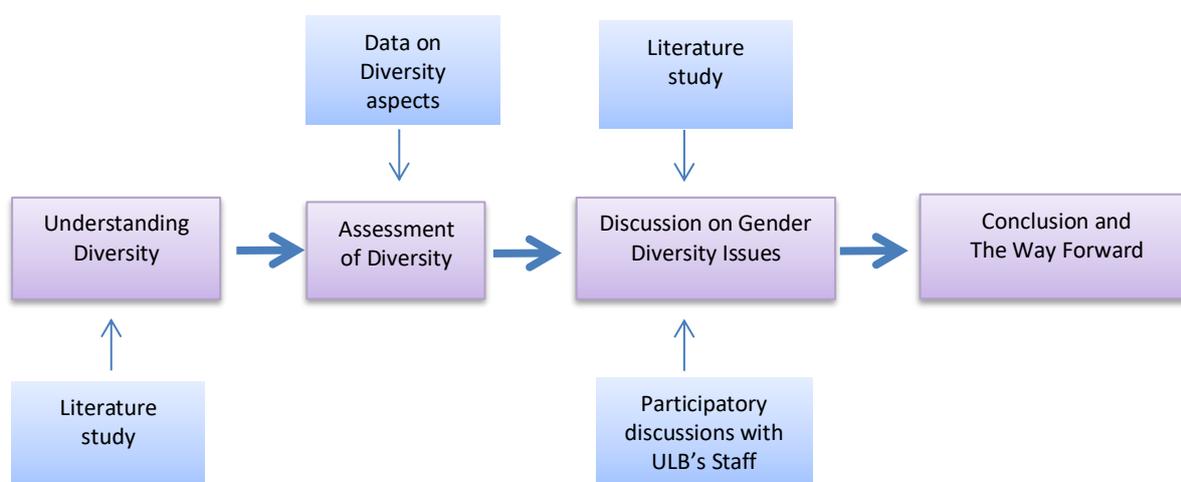
1.5 Urban Local Bodies of the Three Cities: Workplace and Workforce

In all three cities, ULBs are in the form of Municipal Corporations. Offices of these Municipal Corporations are located in central areas of their respective cities. Ajmer Municipal Corporation (AMC) and Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation (MMC) are among the oldest Municipal Corporations of the respective states. Areas under jurisdiction of the Ajmer and Jhansi Municipal Corporations are divided into 60 wards each, while the Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation is divided into 49 wards. The workplaces of their staff are spread across the geographic areas of these cities, covering approximately 219, 150 and 26.43 sq km[19] respectively.

Municipal Corporations of the three cities have two wings - elected and executive. The staff of the executive wing is considered to be the actual staff or employees. The designations of executive wing's employees vary in the three cities. Some of the designations of permanent staff are ward inspector, revenue inspector, health officer, account officer, peon, tax collector, pump operator etc. Below are the key departments of the three Municipal Corporations:
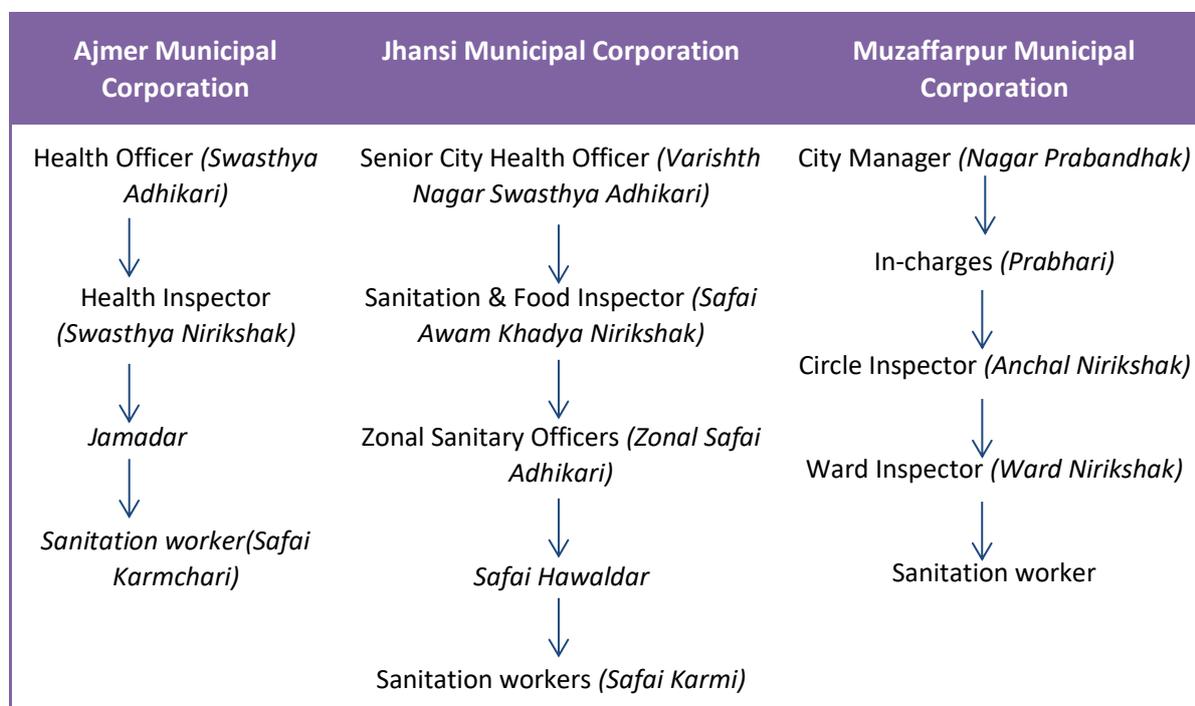
Table 1: Glimpse of main Departments of three municipal corporations

Ajmer Municipal Corporation	Jhansi Municipal Corporation	Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation
Prashasan	Tax	Account Section
Lekha	Civil	Advertisement Section
Anya Kar	Health	Birth & Death Section
Kasturba Hospital	Light	General Section
Sansthapan	Birth/Death Registration	Engineering Section
Yojana	Account	Legal Section
Garden	Properties	Right to Information
Roshni Shakha	Garden/Horticulture	Tax Section
Swasthya		Store
Janma Mritue		Computer Cell
Fire		

Source: Websites of respective municipal corporations

Sanitation Department: The department looking into sanitation services in Ajmer is known as the Health Department (*Swasthya Vibhag*), while it is known as Sanitation Department (*Safai Vibhag*) in Jhansi and Muzaffarpur. The administrative structures in the three cities also vary accordingly. Below are the administrative structures of the departments dealing with sanitation:

Table 2: Administrative structure of sanitation departments

| Ajmer Municipal Corporation	Jhansi Municipal Corporation	Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation
Health Officer (*Swasthya Adhikari*)	Senior City Health Officer (*Varishth Nagar Swasthya Adhikari*)	City Manager (*Nagar Prabandhak*)
↓	↓	↓
Health Inspector (*Swasthya Nirikshak*)	Sanitation & Food Inspector (*Safai Awam Khadya Nirikshak*)	In-charges (*Prabhari*)
↓	↓	↓
Jamadar	Zonal Sanitary Officers (*Zonal Safai Adhikari*)	Circle Inspector (*Anchal Nirikshak*)
↓	↓	↓
Sanitation worker(Safai Karmchari)	*Safai Hawaldar*	Ward Inspector (*Ward Nirikshak*)
	↓	↓
	Sanitation workers (*Safai Karmi*)	Sanitation worker

The departments dealing with sanitation typically have a four-tier structure, with one senior officer heading the department. The second tier is composed of officers usually designated as inspectors. Sanitation workers are immediately supervised by *Jamadars* or *Hawaldars*. In Muzaffarpur, the immediate supervisors are designated as ward inspectors.

Figure 3: Distribution of workforce at the three ULBs

Distribution of workforce at three ULBs
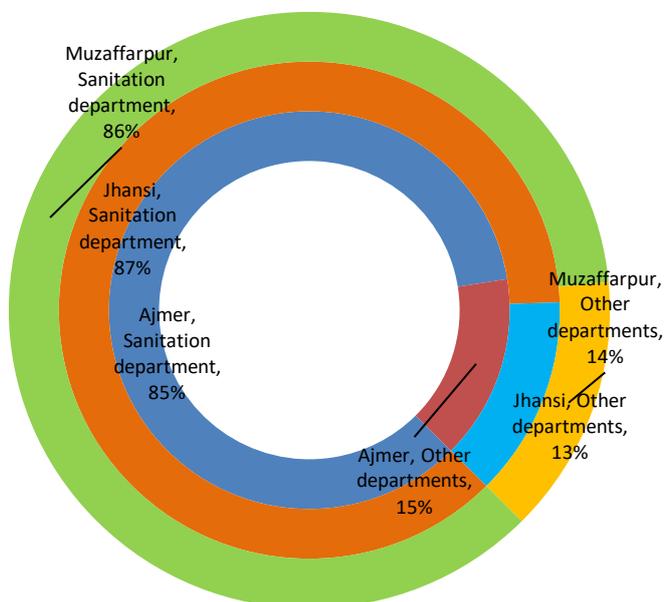
Sanitation Workforce at three ULBs
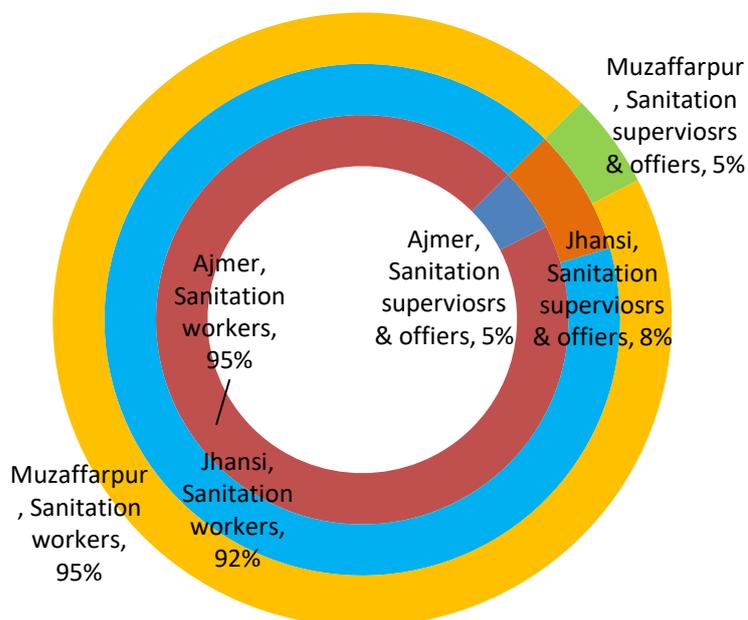
The sanitation departments in the three cities employ human resources in the range of 900- 1,400 people, which constitutes close to 85 percent of the total staff. 92- 95 percent of the total sanitation staff is sanitation workers. This includes permanent and contractual employees deployed by the Municipal Corporations. The higher-level staff (the staff supervising and managing the work of sanitation workers) in the sanitation department constitutes around 5- 8% of the total sanitation staff.

2. Gender Diversity in Three Urban Local Bodies

2.1. Gender Diversity at the ULB Level

Figure 4: Gender ratio of staff at 3 ULBs
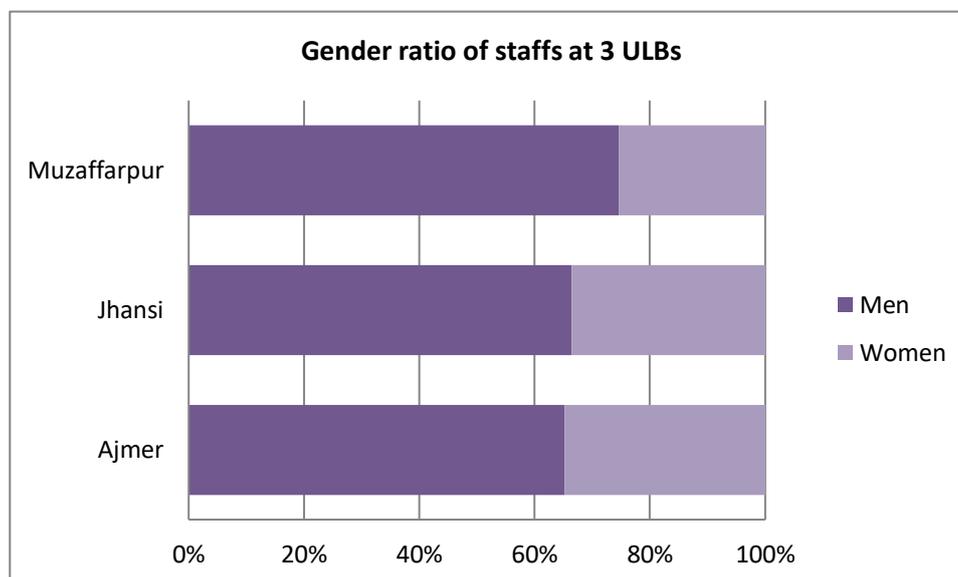
Women constitute 25- 35 percent of the overall workforce of the three ULBs. The ratio of women in Ajmer and Jhansi is higher than that in Muzaffarpur. The sanitation department is the largest employer of women in all three cities.

2.2. Gender Diversity at the Sanitation Department Level

Figure 5: Gender ratio of sanitation workforce at 3 ULBs
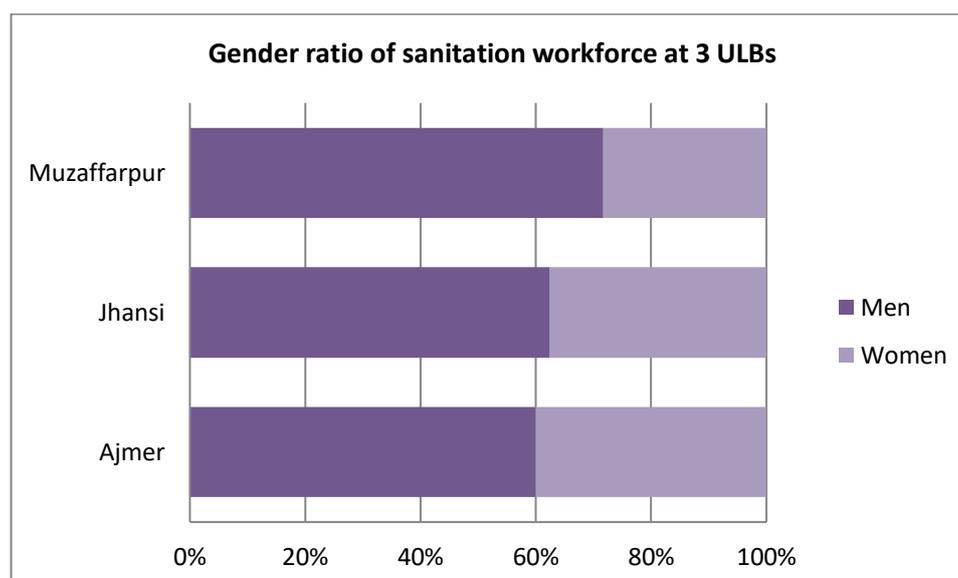
In the sanitation departments of all three cities, the ratio of women is higher than their ratio in the total ULB's staff. Ajmer has the highest percentage (40 percent) of women in the sanitation

department (*Swasthya Vibhag*), which may be attributed to a high percentage (45 percent) of women newly recruited as sanitation workers.

Figure 6: Gender ratio of sanitation workers at three ULBs

Gender ratio of sanitation workers
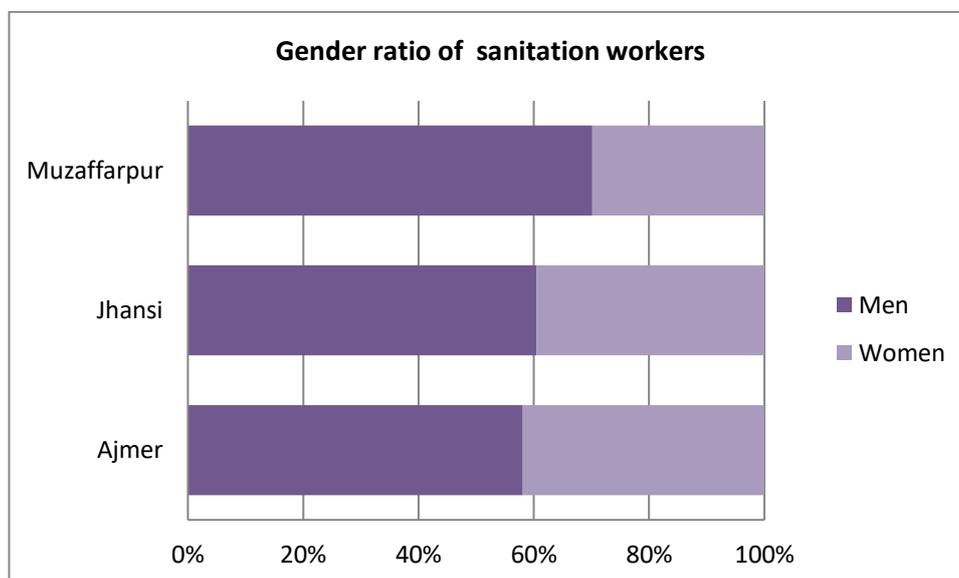
The percentage of women is slightly higher in sanitation workers, compared to the sanitation staff. Again, Ajmer is leading with the highest ratio of women sanitation workers, whereas Muzaffarpur has the lowest percentage of women sanitation workers.

Figure 7: Gender ratio of higher level sanitation staff at three ULBs

Gender ratio of sanitary supervisors and officers
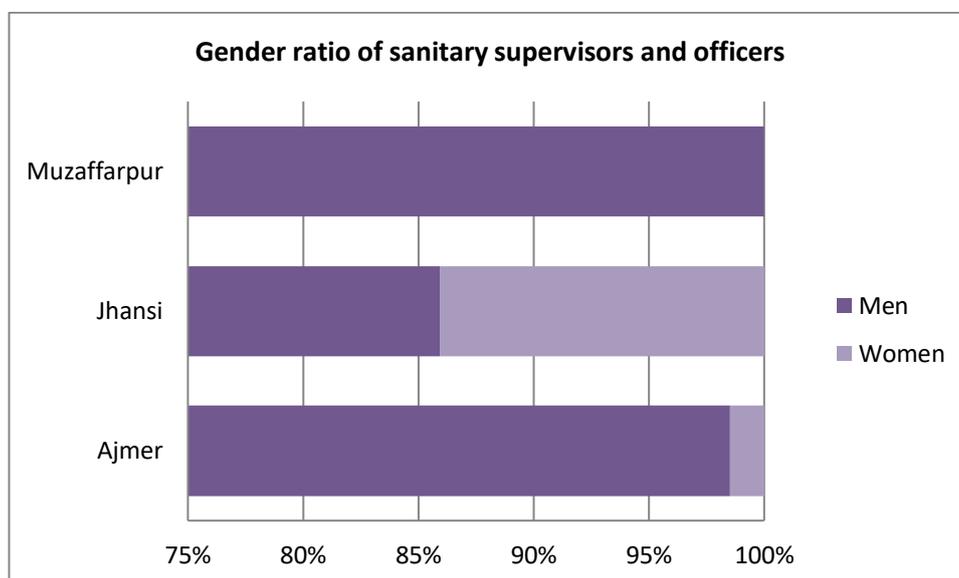
It is obvious from the above bar-chart that all higher-level staff in the sanitation department is male, in Muzaffarpur. Jhansi has the highest ratio of women supervisors at approximately 15 percent women being *safai hawaldars*.

Below is a summary of observations from the statistical data on gender diversity in the three ULBs:

Gender diversity is poor at the ULB level: the presence of only 25-35 percent women in ULBs indicates less gender diversified organisations with a vast majority of women (96-98 percent) centred in a specific department (sanitation).

Sanitation department is more gender diversified: In the sanitation department, gender diversity is higher than in the ULB as a whole, with, on average, close to one third of the employees being women.

The gender diversity is extremely skewed at the higher-levels of the hierarchy: It is obvious from the data that though the percentage of women sanitation workers is significant, their presence in the higher–levels of staff (as supervisors and inspectors) is negligible.

The next section will discuss various issues pertaining to the existing status of gender diversity in the three urban local bodies.

3. Explaining Gender Diversity Issues

This section is based primarily on the participatory research conducted with the staff of three ULBs. The analysis in this section attempts to synthesise the inputs captured through the participatory discussions with the ULBs' sanitation staff and other referenced resources, and tries to draw meaningful pathways. Various issues related to gender diversity, mainly focusing on the reasons for less gender diversity and its impacts, were discussed. The issues and aspects were divided into two parts: demand and supply. The issues of demand were more 'internal' in nature, as these connect directly with the women, covering socio-cultural aspects, education and skill development, etc. Issues of supply were mainly related to provisioning of facilities, the situation at workplaces, Government policies, etc.

3.1 Issues of demand

Socio-cultural issues

India, like many other parts of the world, continues to be a patriarchal society. Since women are the ones that give birth, there is a deep rooted sense that women's primary role is care giving. Working to earn a livelihood being the responsibility of men, while women take care of household work, is a common belief across geographies, socio-economic classes, and religions. The gender disparity from an economic perspective has been quantified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). As per the OECD data, in India, the time spent by women towards unpaid work[20] is 5 hours 51 minutes per day against less than 2 hours by men[21]. During our participatory interaction with the staff of three municipal corporations, many views emerged reflecting associated issues:

> " To give time to their children and the time required at home, especially during festivals, are the major reasons for less women being inspectors"
>
> A male ward inspector in Muzaffarpur

> " The issue with women is that they give priority to household work and only come for duty after completing all household work "

<div style="text-align: right;">A male ward inspector in Muzaffarpur</div>

The above views provide a glimpse of the socio-cultural dimensions related to gender diversity in the sanitation departments of ULBs. The socio-cultural practices have resulted in the creation of stigma around working women. Coffey D et al. wrote about this social stigma. Their study revealed that approximately half the adult persons across Indian cities think that women whose husbands earn a good livelihood should not work outside the home[22]. A women councillor shares her perspective on the situation:

" Appointment of women in Municipal Corporation has been low due to old thinking. Nagar Nigam (Municipal Corporation) does not think that women will work "

<div style="text-align: right;">A female councillor in Muzaffarpur</div>

A similar mind-set is visible in the response of another sanitation staff member, reflecting on a societal disbelief in the ability of women to undertake inspection jobs:

" Women cannot deal with many sanitation workers very well. They are not able to handle arguments with workers and other people"

<div style="text-align: right;">A male safai hawaldar in Jhansi</div>

One of the perceptions that emerged from the participatory discussions also explained the higher proportion of women sanitation workers in the three cities (Ref. 2.2). Many people believed that women are good at cleaning. This perception can be correlated with the general societal belief about women being good at certain occupations (Ref. 3.2). Below are some of the expressions:

" Women have been in cleaning work for a long time. They clean at home as well as outside. Women do the job of sweeping the streets better than men"

<div style="text-align: right;">A female sanitation worker in Ajmer</div>

" There are many women as sanitation workers. Traditionally, more women are into this occupation"

<div style="text-align: right;">An male officer in Ajmer</div>

In addition to the above mentioned aspects, a linkage can be found in the nature of work in sanitation department. There are many other factors closely linked to socio-cultural issues like economic class, education, regional variations etc. The root cause of the various issues is the socio-cultural structure. These factors are discussed in the upcoming paragraphs.

Lack of appropriate education and skills

Lack of education and advanced skills have often been cited as one of the reasons for a lower presence of women in the workforce. As a report by the consulting company Deloitte notes, "women and girls lack education and access to skill building and employment opportunities, resulting in fall in women employment from 35% of the workforce in 2005 to 28% in 2018"[23]. Similar to the general economic scenario and in the specific context of delivery of urban services, the lack of education, especially higher (technical) education, and other skills is observed to be the cause of lower presence of women. This factor seems to be the main cause of the lower percentage of women at the higher levels, as reflected in the analysis of staff data (Ref. 2.2). The same is echoed in the views of the sanitation staff in the cities:

" Women do not have the skills required for managing sanitation workers, preparing muster-roles etc."

An male officer in Ajmer

" Women sanitation workers are not educated. Therefore they cannot qualify in the interview for the hawaldar positions"

A female safai hawaldar in Jhansi

The lack of education and skill has induced apathy in women and girls and dissuaded them from applying for jobs in the urban local body, since they are neither qualified nor possess the required skills. Some of the sanitation staff at ULBs opine:

" The reason for fewer women at the higher-levels is lack of education and lack of interest."

A female sanitation worker in Ajmer

" Somewhere, there is a lack of interest in women for working in these areas. Another reason could be lack of education "

A male officer in Muzaffarpur

It should be noted that the reasons for the lack in education and skills is also rooted in socio- cultural practices mentioned earlier in detail. It was revealed in the paper by Pande et al., that education of women (girls) is beneficial only in an environment of less patriarchy and stronger support systems, and good market opportunities[24].

Variation across economic classes

Klasen et al. concluded that income levels have a great impact on the decision of women to work or not work. The decision of women to participate in the work force is negatively related to the income of the household[25]. In other words, women of low income households take up low income jobs to support their families, while the economically well-off families prefer to stay away from work. This explains very well the reasons behind the significantly high percentage of women sanitation workers while fewer or no women in the higher levels of the sanitation departments of three ULBs.

3.2 Supply side issues

Nature of work in the sanitation department of ULBs

The nature of work is a major determinant for women's participation in the workforce, considering the physical abilities, familial responsibilities, safety during commuting, specific timings etc. Let us have a look at the views expressed by the staff of the three ULBs in this regard:

> "
> At the level of inspector, there is a lot of running around, which women are unable to do properly. At the level of officers, there are less women because women's participation in vacancies is low"
>
> A male officer in the sanitation department

> "
> Though there are no issues with the work atmosphere here for women, the major reason for low number of women inspectors is the nature of job which requires extensive field work. However, the men and women should be 50-50 percent in the Corporation"
>
> A female officer in Jhansi

> "
> The Municipal Corporation work is more difficult, one needs to work with people to solve problems and the field work is more, so women don't like it. The job of a Jamadar is also difficult, it is difficult for women to roam around from one street to the other and listen to the people"
>
> A female councillor in Ajmer

> "
> Women cannot undertake the work of cleaning the drain in absence of men workers"
>
> A male safai hawaldar in Jhansi

The above views indicate the nature of the jobs in the sanitation department that requires employees to possess certain attributes. The work at the level of sanitation workers is significantly different from the work of supervisors (jamadars or hawaldars) and sanitation inspectors.

For sanitation workers:

- Physical strength: to pull carts loaded with waste and lifting concrete slabs for cleaning of drains

For higher-level positions in the sanitation department:

- Ability to run around: the inspection and supervisory roles require visiting locations in many wards on self-driven two-wheelers
- Work at locations away from home: places needing attention may be away from home
- Irregular or changing timings of work: many cleaning tasks are urgent and not scheduled
- Handing many male members of the workforce: a supervisor or inspector needs to supervise the work of many male sanitation workers to get the work done and ensure discipline

As discussed in the section on socio-cultural issues, in the prevailing social settings, most women try to balance jobs along with housework. Some of the views expressed by one staff member confirms this:

> " Women have to take care of children and household work. How can they perform a supervisory task at 4 AM?"
>
> A female sanitation worker in Muzaffarpur

> " Some problems may emerge if there are so many women sanitation workers. For example, they cannot devote time properly towards their household duties"
>
> A male officer in Muzaffarpur

It may be noted that difficulties faced by women in handing challenges related to the job functions at different levels of the sanitation department, in the given socio- cultural atmosphere, is a major determinant of presence or absence of women. A similar situation is also observed, in the broader economic world, in the form of occupational segregation. Some occupations like basic agriculture, sales, handicraft making etc. are considered jobs suitable for women. Due to this, opportunities in other fields are reduced for women. Fletcher et al also found a connection with age in this regard and wrote, "The types of jobs women report wanting vary by age, but are primarily of a part-time nature, reflecting the demands of other household responsibilities, particularly in the context of marriage and childbearing."[26]

Safe working environment

> " There are some problems. If I have come out to work, issues will be there. Problems we confront are not very serious and are not worth complaining"
>
> A female sanitation worker in Muzaffarpur

> **"** Bad behaviour with women while they are at work remains a concern. If women are deployed as Jamadar, they will be proved to be less efficient than men"
>
> A male jamadar in Ajmer

The sentiments of the sanitation staff, expressed above, hint towards issues related to safety at workplaces. It also indicates a lack of awareness on issues of sexual harassment at workplace and the discomfiture around the topic caused by the prevailing socio-cultural structure. Though the participatory discussions did not reveal much about this, a thorough engagement with women sanitation workers in the three cities, on the part of PRIA[27], has captured many anecdotal findings. Safety, along with mobility, has been cited as one of the major barriers to work for working and non-working women.[28]

Support systems at workplaces

As previously discussed in the section on urban local bodies as workplaces, the working conditions for the sanitation department staff is not uniform in nature. For a majority of the frontline sanitation workforce, for a large part of the day, the roads are their workplaces. Facilities like drinking water, toilets, and first aid are typically not available for sanitation workers[29] . For women at higher-levels, office-based conveniences like child-care facilities are also generally missing at the offices of urban local bodies.

Behavioural elements and ease of interaction for women

From interactions with the sanitation staff, it emerged that in addition to the above mentioned physical aspects, certain behavioural elements are also responsible for low gender diversity in ULBs. Men's perception of women as co-workers is generally guided by their own value system and sensitisation on related issues. A diversified work environment requires equitable and respectful behaviour of peers, sub-ordinates and seniors. The following quotes throw some light on the situation at the three urban local bodies:

> **"** ….yes, problems happen. But is becomes more painful when they (officials) do not consider giving us leaves in 'those' three days and say that you are pretending"
>
> A female sanitation worker

Another quote from a male staff member expresses his observations on men's behaviour and reiterates the cognizance of issue.

> **"** The behaviour and the way they talk is not proper. Their behaviour, way of working and not understanding women's issues are the major reasons"
>
> A male sanitation worker in Muzaffarpur

It was also found that women employees and citizens feel comfortable in sharing their concerns with women officers.

> " Women are fewer at higher levels. If women are in good numbers, we can discuss our demands and issues openly"
>
> A female sanitation worker in Ajmer

> " Women hesitate in expressing their problems in the absence of women officers. If there are more women officers, women citizens will find it easier to put their point across"
>
> A male councillor in Jhansi

Recruitment policy and structure

> " Due to the absence of an honest policy and working structure to have an equal number of women as officers, the majority of officers are men. This is the case despite the government talking about equal opportunities "
>
> A male officer in Muzaffarpur

The above remark from one of the sanitation staff refers to the gaps at the policy level on the part of both the State and ULBs. All the three state Governments have implemented reservation for women in their respective states. The state Government of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar have already implemented 30 percent, 20 percent, and 35 percent reservations respectively for women in Government jobs[30]. However, its impact on making ULBs' sanitation departments gender diversified places is not visible. Though empirical data on this is not available, it is clear that more policy and programme based interventions will be needed.

4. Conclusion and the Way Forward

The discussions in the above section shed light on the issues pertaining to the lack of gender diversity and its variations, across hierarchies and activities of urban local bodies of the three cities. The extent, reasons and impacts of the presence or absence of gender diversity at different hierarchies have been discussed. A key reflection from the discussions is about the role of citizens (society) in changing the situation. Issues of demand and supply, both, indicate a direct role of citizens and society at large, as well as policy or governance initiatives.. Before delving into initiatives for improvement, it will be beneficial to understand some of thoughts of the staff, regarding the advantages of gender diversity in the three municipal corporations.

> " Presence of female staff is required to address several issues concerning women. It helps in putting across our views. I feel that due to the majority of staff being male, results are difficult to achieve in a defined timeframe, while if women are employed in their place, the

outcomes would be better"

<div align="right">A female councillor in Muzaffarpur</div>

" Due to a majority of staff being men, a fight for dominance is always there. All men boast about their access to higher- ups , do lobbying and politics"

<div align="right">A male sanitary Inspector</div>

" There will be no significant advantages if more women are in the Municipal Corporation because women employees do not contribute much in planning or meetings especially because their understanding of budgets is low "

<div align="right">A female councillor in Ajmer</div>

The above reflections show that the need for better gender diversity is acknowledged by most participants of the participatory discussions, but there are counter views as well. The counter views are the result of the many factors previously discussed. However, to improve gender diversity in urban local bodies, multi-dimensional interventions are required. These interventions are discussed below:

The interventions can be divided into two parts: interventions for the sanitation departments of ULBs and long-term/broader interventions. Interventions for the sanitation departments of ULBs cover, mainly, the issues of supply. These are further divided into two parts: the first dealing with human resources, and the second with the workplace environment and broad organisational structure. Long-term and broader interventions will largely address the issues of demand, including societal issues (familial and individual) and behavioural change, along with some issues of supply. This is further divided into two parts, society as a whole and urban local bodies as organisations.

4.1 Interventions for the sanitation departments of ULBs

Policy at the central and state level has potential to directly bring more women into the sanitation departments of ULBs. It can also play a major role in creating an enabling environment for enhanced women's participation in the sanitation departments of ULBs.

4.1.1 Workforce interventions

- **Redefining job types/profiles**: there is a need to modify or reclassify job profiles at the inspector or supervisor levels, taking into account women's strengths and constraints. Some profiles may be related to fixed-time inspections or area specific inspectors. Similarly there should be provisions addressing part-time work seeking women.

- **Deploying enabling-infrastructure through the use of technology**: some areas where manual intervention is required may have mechanical or technology-driven solutions, so that most of the tasks become gender neutral. For example, a small vehicle for carrying waste

many have a mechanised or battery operated system. To lift slabs covering drains, lifting machines can be deployed.

- **Skill training for the female staff**: skill training of the existing staff may help women in taking up higher-level responsibilities, which are presently being performed by men only. Driving vehicles, personnel management and communication skills are some of the areas which may help female staff at lower levels to take up higher-level jobs.

4.1.2 Workplace interventions

- **Providing support facilities at the workplace**: An article by ORF highlighted that insufficient or unhygienic sanitation infrastructure in urban India does not support working women[31]. Facilities for the sanitation staff become even more critical, as their workplaces are scattered. This indicates a need to achieve universal coverage through public toilets with necessary women-specific facilities.

- The provision of child-care facilities at workplaces will increase the availability of time for women to work. Additionally, professional elderly and child care facilities should be promoted in small and medium towns through policy interventions. For frontline sanitation workers and inspectors, mobile crèche facilities may be of great help. The NGO Mobile Creches provides child care services for women working on building construction sites.[32]

- **Making workplaces safe**: Sensitisation and compliance on the prevention of sexual harassment Act is a must for making urban local bodies a safe place for all women employees including the staff of the sanitation department. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 makes it mandatory for organisations to take steps to make workplaces safe for women. Under the Engaged Citizens, Responsive Cities (ECRC) programme, PRIA supported the Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation in setting up the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), as per the regulatory provisions.

- **Compliance with statutory provisions**: Compliance with the legal and regulatory provisions related to women, such as the Maternity Benefit Act 2017, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2013 should be met for all departments, including contractual and outsourced work, in the true spirit of these Acts. McKinsey Global Institute, in its report, highlighted the need for enforcement of laws intended to protect women, educating them on the laws, and training the allied public service members like the police force and judiciary.[33]

- **Promotional activities**: Organisational activities, including awareness events and celebrations of events such as International Women's Day, should be initiated at the ULB offices and field locations to create a sense of gender diversity. Training programs, workshops, and consultations should be organised with the aim of sensitising the staff on gender issues. Rewards and felicitation for the female staff who perform well and other staff who create gender-neural wings/ departments may be helpful.

4.2 Long-term and broader interventions

The key to the success of the above mentioned interventions for the sanitation departments of ULBs lies in changing broader societal norms governing the way people think and act on gender related matters. Interventions for changing such norms are more generic in nature and aim at a long-term change in society. These interventions are expected to significantly contribute to one of the targets

of SDG 5: recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate[34]. Another set of interventions pertain to the strengthening of urban local bodies covering much broader organisational aspects.

4.2.1 Creating a gender- equal society

Transforming the present society into a society which sees men and women as equal capacity individuals and believes in providing working and growing opportunities, without bias, is a long term task requiring a movement to transform the deep-rooted perceptions, beliefs and conceptions. Some initiatives that may be driven by civil society organizations, the private sector or Government agencies are mentioned below:

- The movement towards a gender-equalised society should start in the home. All households should have an equalised perspective towards boys and girls and should embed the message of participation of members of both genders in outside (livelihood) and household work. The leaders of households should practice sharing of unpaid work in the household. Informal and formal social groups should take the initiative to break the stigma around working women in society, through discussions in small and large forums alike. Effective interventions in this regard may be formulated using participatory learning methods.

- Adolescents and the youth have a major role to play in achieving gender equalised societies. Sensitising adolescents and young people, who are at the stage of forming their attitudes towards gender, has the potential to create gender equity in the long-term[35].

- Public sector organisations and private companies should start sharing gender dis-segregated data to create awareness around issues of gender gap and best practices for creating awareness on the status of women employment through data[36]. A system of citizen driven monitoring can also be established.

- Creation of job profiles suited to the women in different domains may be of great help in creating more work opportunities for women. Such profiles may be part time in nature and offer flexibility in terms of timings. These profiles may not be reserved for women and may also be open to men looking for part time jobs. There is potential for creating skill development programmes regarding this.

- In order to enable women to enter the workforce, one of the recommendations is to augment and strengthen vocational education and training programs for women especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic) to increase the number of women in technical jobs[37]. A Super 30-like program for girls may be helpful in this context.

4.2.1 Developing urban local bodies as strong organizations

The idea of achieving gender diversified ULBs is closely related to developing urban local bodies as robust organisations. The need of gender diversity can only be realised by an organisation if they have a vision of being a leading organisation, striving for excellence. Functional and financial devolutions as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act may prove to be the first step in this direction. Below are some other key ways to strengthen the urban local bodies organisationally:

Formulating organisational development initiatives for ULBs: Organisational development has been defined as a planned process of developing an organisation to be more effective in achieving its desired goals[38]. Before initiating organisational development in ULBs, the idea of the ULB as an organisation with a long-term goal needs to be established. ULBs need to set the organisational vision and mission in order to become great organisations of the future. The same can be

provisioned through a program oriented initiative at the State level, or a dedicated component under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)[39] reforms. Organisational development frameworks like McKinsey's 7-S model or Kotter's 8- steps may be utilised with the necessary customisation for planning at the level of the ULB[40].

Training and capacity building programs: ULBs need multidimensional capacity building and training programs for their existing staff. Such trainings may include exposure visits, trainings on citizen engagement, behavioural and other soft skills, etc. Other capacity building strategies may include on-the-job trainings through deputation in other ULBs, promoting study breaks and occasional knowledge building sessions in the municipal offices, etc. Capacity building of the existing staff should target the skills required to take up higher-level roles which may lead to an improvement in diversity at the upper levels. Focused training programmes should be created, to train employees (especially women) at lower level to take on higher-level roles. Such programme may include trainings on:

- Soft skills like oral and written communication
- Technical know-how
- Managerial skill- handling finances, legal matters etc.
- Civic engagement and participatory methods

To sum-up, it may be concluded that making gender diversified organisations, especially sanitation departments of urban local bodes, is a complex, long-term process. Below are some of the concluding broad-base questions that reflect the anticipated challenges in implementing the above discussed interventions:

$\Rightarrow$ What is the desired percentage of women in an organisation to it to be a gender-diverse organisation?

$\Rightarrow$ What is the desired distribution of housework and occupational work for women and men in households?

$\Rightarrow$ How significant is the role of Governmental policies and programs in achieving gender diversified workplaces of the future?

$\Rightarrow$ How difficult is to realise a gender-equal society in India?

$\Rightarrow$ How can the caste-based occupation system be changed in our country?

$\Rightarrow$ How long will it take to realise urban local bodies with functional and financial devolutions as envisioned in the 74th CAA?

Notes:

Many parts of the report, including quotations, are adapted from three research briefs being published by PRIA.

5. Endnotes

[1] Workplace is defined as 'a place where people do their jobs' by Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary. The definition of workplace given in The Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 covers any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment in addition to the Government and private offices.

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