From Occupational Risks to Dignified Work

How NAMASTE is Enhancing Safety and Security for Sanitation Workers

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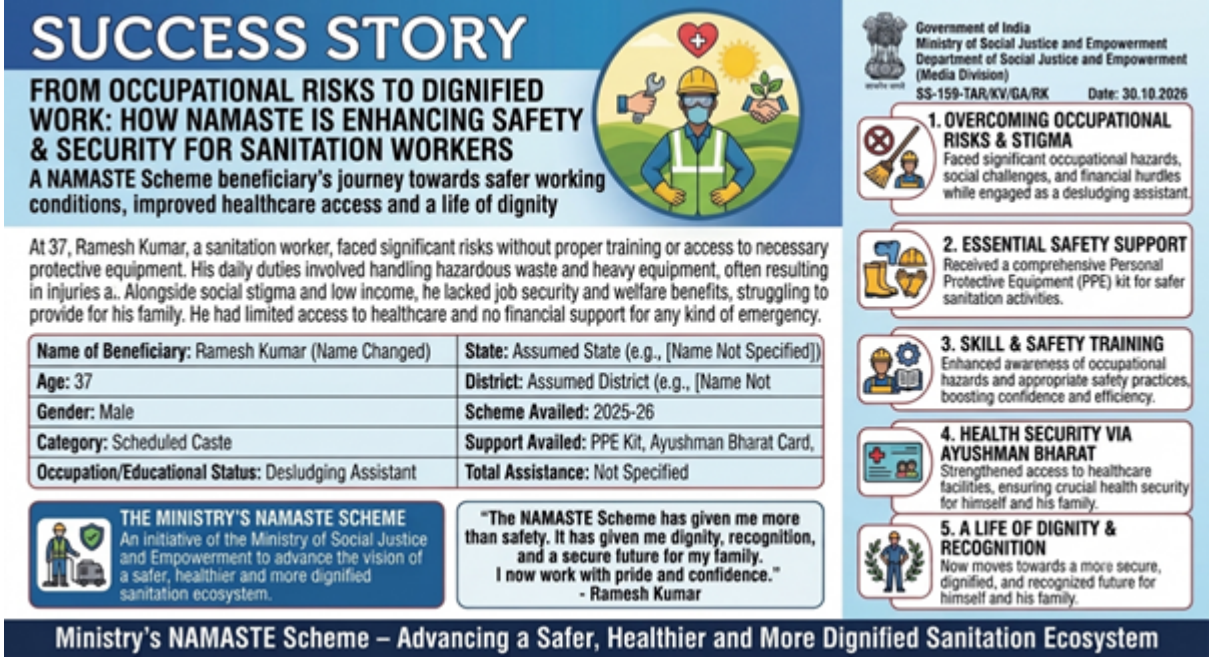
For Ramesh Kumar (name changed), the support extended under NAMASTE represents more than the provision of equipment and training. It is a step towards recognition, occupational safety and social dignity for sanitation workers. Improved healthcare access and safer working conditions have strengthened his confidence and helped him move towards a more secure future for his family.

At 37, Ramesh Kumar, a Scheduled Caste sanitation worker engaged as a desludging assistant, has experienced the occupational challenges associated with sanitation work.

Regular exposure to hazardous working conditions, inadequate safety equipment and limited access to welfare facilities made his profession particularly demanding. Alongside occupational risks, he faced social stigma, low wages and financial constraints while shouldering the responsibility of supporting his family, including his ageing parents.

Despite these challenges, he aspired to continue his work with dignity, ensure better healthcare for himself and his family, and improve their overall living conditions. However, the absence of proper protective equipment, limited awareness of workplace safety practices and inadequate healthcare support remained significant barriers.

A meaningful change came during 2025–26 through the **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) Scheme**, an initiative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Under the scheme, Ramesh received a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit, an Ayushman Bharat Health Card and skill and safety training.



The PPE kit provided him with essential protective equipment to undertake sanitation-related activities more safely. The skill and safety training enhanced his awareness of occupational hazards and appropriate safety practices, helping him perform his responsibilities with greater confidence. The Ayushman Bharat Health Card also strengthened his access to healthcare facilities, providing an important layer of health security.

These interventions have brought a positive change in his working conditions and overall outlook. With improved safety awareness and access to protective equipment, he is now able to carry out his work more securely and efficiently. Safer and more efficient work practices have also contributed to a moderate increase in his income.

Through initiatives such as NAMASTE, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment continues to advance the vision of a safer, healthier and more dignified sanitation ecosystem, ensuring that sanitation workers receive the protection, healthcare support and recognition they deserve.

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