

## **Discussion on the presentation on Women and Waste by Barbara Harriss White**

I finally got the time to listen to it carefully. These issues (minus the in-depth low down on contribution of women to this sector and the intricate role that Capitalism plays) have come up in various ways during the course of the work we have done. Sharply in the case of the Kanpur study on the way the change in urban waste pollution and non functional STP plants ended up destroying once very profitable farming practises downstream of Kanpur. Based on this I have the following points.

a. In terms of trends, there is a sharp move to use technology to deal with the waste while eliminating/ignoring the large number of people engaged in the sector which in one study was estimated as an Rs 40,000 crore business. There are experiments like the one in Jamnagar where the urban waste disposal system put in place incorporated wage labour as intrinsic to the process; however I have not studied the gender angle to this issue, or whether the alternative actually ended up displacing any labour. The alternative however is male dominated.

b. Barbara's analysis about rural consumption patterns and its impact on rural waste disposal is very correct, it is really a tall order to correct this process but systemically this is essential if we are to make any real dent. Barbara indicates that even in low Capital intensive occupations, the working of capital determines the flow of assets and wages, yet the increasing unemployment and burgeoning issues of resultant wage management suggest that it is possible to make a break if one is able to dissect the process of decentralised governance and rebuild it the way it should function in practise.

c. Low sense of dignity, humiliation and low wages accompany this form of waste management, the breakdown of traditional forms of waste management have accentuated this. However when an alternative is tried, human aspirations generally tend to sabotage potentially beneficial solutions involving decentralised governance and collective decision making in the manner of Gareth Hardin's tragedy of commons. Is it possible that the wealth of experience over the years can help redesign the Employment guarantee scheme to make these essential systemic changes? Will the logic of capitalism necessarily conspire to scuttle all such attempts?

d. On the question of waste as in all occupations, low paid manual work is dominated by women, conditions being such that the mental and collective wherewithal to challenge discrimination is limited. The recycling of bio-waste coupled with knowledge of biodiversity and decentralised governance provides a promise for a radically different approach to the whole issue.

I have marked to my colleagues, Sunil and Leena who are working on these issues as also others who are working on questions related to decentralised governance. I have also marked Dr Onkar Mittal who anchored the Kanpur study. This deep study done by Barbara White pointing as it does to the question of where women fit in at present will prove very helpful.

Viren

On Sun, Apr 18, 2021 at 11:04 PM Rajesh Ramakrishnan <[rrajesh31@gmail.com](mailto:rrajesh31@gmail.com)> wrote:

Thank you. This was a masterpiece of fieldwork informed by theory. For those who missed it, there's a recording at <https://youtu.be/77xsrKTl5kw>

----- Forwarded message -----

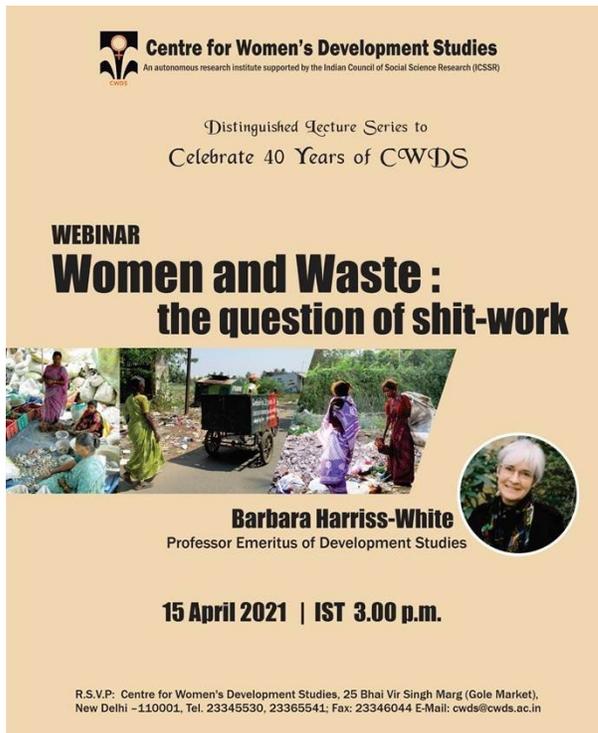
From: **Mary E John** <[maryejohn1@gmail.com](mailto:maryejohn1@gmail.com)>

Dear All,

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMsc-qqqTgtG9cyjU-0SotJgXcEEgyppUkP>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



The poster is for a webinar titled "Women and Waste: the question of shit-work" by Barbara Harriss-White. It features the logo of the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) at the top left, which is an autonomous research institute supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The text on the poster includes "Distinguished Lecture Series to Celebrate 40 Years of CWDS", "WEBINAR Women and Waste : the question of shit-work", a photograph of women working in a waste recycling facility, a circular portrait of Barbara Harriss-White, and the date and time "15 April 2021 | IST 3.00 p.m.". At the bottom, it provides the contact information for CWDS: R.S.V.P. Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25 Bhai Vir Singh Marg (Gole Market), New Delhi - 110001, Tel. 23345530, 23365541; Fax: 23346044 E-Mail: cwds@cwds.ac.in.

Please forward this invitation to those who may be interested.

Mary E John  
Acting Director

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