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Foreword

The waste pickers were among the worst affected communities when the second wave of Covid 19 hit. Just as they were beginning to make sense of the situation, and adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances, second wave washed over much of the progress and the waste pickers again found themselves becoming vulnerable. However, they chose to show resilience in face of all these challenges.

The usual projects underwent significant changes keeping in mind the mobility restrictions, the public health concerns and the immense technological shift in our everyday lives. While the relief continued to be prominent activity this year, projects towards improving livelihood of the waste pickers and ensuring access to social welfare were also focused upon in a big way.

We believe that this wouldn’t have been possible without the massive support that we have received from our donors combined with the philanthropic efforts of individuals. We are immensely grateful for the same.

This year has seen us through many ups and downs but it is enduring spirit of the waste pickers that has kept us going.

While this report highlights the way in which the waste pickers were supported, it is the waste pickers that have inspired us with their resilience, their hope and their courage, that we wish to celebrate here.
About Us

Kashtakari Panchayat was established in 2010 with an aim to support the waste pickers, their families and collectives. This support is provided in the form of cash transfers to facilitate their access to education and health while also advocating for their rights and access to entitlements, livelihood opportunities, resources and services. The trust is also responsible for training, research and publication, to create awareness about waste pickers issues, increasing their visibility in the society. This is a platform for different stakeholders to come together and engage meaningfully with each other. It is a means of linking financial and non-financial resources for effective action, that will ultimately improve the lives of all the stakeholders.
Key Objectives for the year 2021–2022

This was a year of uncertainty, and insecurity for our members. With public health being the paramount concern, objectives were designed keeping in mind the needs of the members. And so, relief projects remained significant this year as well. Consequently, our areas of focus were:

- Providing relief to waste pickers in the terms of safety gear, food security, medical reimbursements, monetary aid and other need-based support.

- Exploring newer and more creative pathways of enhancing waste pickers’ livelihood in order to improve their working conditions and reduce income insecurity.

- Increasing visibility and creating awareness among citizens about the waste pickers’ lives through social media platforms, and publications.

In order to capture the diverse spaces in which the Kashtakari Panchayat operated, this report will highlight the three crucial aspects that have impacted the waste pickers in the past year, namely, Covid-19, Livelihood and Social welfare.

"I knew that I could not afford to miss a single day's work. When there were restrictions on travel, I decided to live in a rented room near my area of work.....Even before the government announced that waste pickers are providing essential services , I knew that my work had always been an essential service."
Waste Pickers and Covid

Waste pickers continued to provide their essential services in the midst of the second wave. They were protecting their communities across the city whilst facing elevated risks to their own health. The constant threat to their livelihood only added to the insecurity. The itinerant workers too had to rely solely on daily recyclables which too had been drastically reduced due to a slowed down economy. The older waste pickers had to stop collecting waste altogether, unable to support themselves and their families. Moreover, many of the family members of the waste pickers were daily wage workers which meant that their income had been compromised too.

To add to this, majority of the waste pickers live in crowded spaces making social distancing an impossibility. Owing to these concerns, some waste pickers even lost their lives.

However, in the face of these adversities, waste pickers were determined to be resilient. Every morning they have donned their uniforms, and showed up at their waste collection point.

Supported by various philanthropic initiatives, the organisation was able to provide ration to the over 6000 waste pickers. They were also provided with relief funds in the form of direct cash transfers. These funds were allocated keeping in mind the various vulnerabilities at the intersection of gender, age and disability. The amount transferable was also subject to the number of vaccinations that waste pickers had taken. A minimum of Rs 2000 was given to the each and every waste picker identified under this initiative.

- 6591 ration kits were distributed
- 4345 waste pickers are partially or fully vaccinated
- 6591 waste pickers received cash transfers
- 74 insurance claims were settled
The waste pickers of SWaCH were also provided with PPE kits complete with masks, gloves, detergents, soaps and sanitisers to help reduce any health risks. These kits were provided to them in once in two months to ensure that they do not use any old or expired materials. Waste pickers were trained on how to use these kits as well as informed of the precautions they must take when at work. Leaflets were made regarding the dos and don’ts on how to handle waste during this health emergency, ensuring their safety and that of their families.

The organisation was also able to secure insurance for the waste pickers. The families of waste pickers who lost their lives to Covid, were provided with a compensation of 1 lakh rupees. Families of 74 waste pickers have had their insurance claims settled and received compensation.

The helpline also operated a lot more rigorously through this period. 1175 cases were registered with the helpline regarding Covid support.

KP also supported migrant workers and their families as part of Covid-19 relief. A group of 100 people, consisting of 66 adults and 35 children, had come from Badwani district in Madhya Pradesh to work in the sugarcane fields of Wai-Bavdhan and Bhuinj in Satara district. After working in the fields with their families for three months, their request to return home was declined by the private contractor, who also accused them of theft. They were rescued after their families in Madhya Pradesh sought help from Jan Sangharsh Manch and the police. They were brought to Pune and had to spend two nights at the railway station along with their children and luggage, while arrangements for their return were being made. During this time, Kashtakari Panchayat provided meals for these migrant families. The meals were supplied by an eatery for labourers and weaker sections of the society called Kashtachi Bhakar. The families were eventually sent back on 11th February 2022 with the help of a few organizations in Pune.
Vaccination Drive

A vaccination drives were organised for the waste pickers in Pune as well as in Pimpri Chinchwad. Declared to be a priority group, the Pune municipal corporation had authorised waste pickers to get vaccinated in the first few phases. Due to insecurity of income many waste pickers were unwilling to lose out on day’s work owing to the side effects of the vaccination. Along with this, was the concern of increased travel expenses as many of the allocated vaccination centres were far away from their area of residence.

With numbers being extremely low of those being inoculated even after the second wave hit, Kashtakari Panchayat began to reach out to waste pickers. Pamphlets were sent out into the communities explaining the benefits of vaccines. Waste pickers expressed their concerns regarding their health and how the vaccines would interact with their other ailments. Booklets were made in consultation with doctors and health experts to help address myths around vaccines and other risk-based concerns.

In collaboration with Pune Municipal Corporation, vaccination campaigns and drives were organised. 6000 waste pickers were identified under this initiative, of which 1088 waste pickers have been completely vaccinated and have been partially vaccinated. However, over 2500 waste pickers continue to be highly susceptible to the virus.

3257 waste pickers partially vaccinated

1088 waste pickers are fully vaccinated

5 in 10 waste pickers are still vulnerable to Covid-19
Waste Pickers and Livelihood

Waste pickers play a critical role in the city’s waste management system; however, they are unable to contribute effectively to the circular economy due to lack of recognition by authorities coupled with socio-economic inequalities and insecurity embedded in the informal sector. They also experience social exclusion and health problems owing to their occupation, while being at constant risk of being displaced by private waste management solutions. This calls for a need to improve the working conditions while enhancing and diversifying the spaces in which waste pickers operate.

Upgrading the scrap shops

After the near total shutdown of informal recycling in the aftermath of pandemic the waste pickers largely lost out on their daily income. As lockdown began to ease, scrap trade re-initiated. A relief grant was allocated for upgrading infrastructure of the scrap shop run by waste picker’s co-operative in Ramtekdi, Pune.

The formalisation of the livelihood through SWaCH, has not just provided a sense of dignity and security to the waste pickers but has also provided them with an opportunity to operate in diverse and interlinked spaces such as composting, recycling, bio-gas production etc, which also highlights their role as protectors of the environment. This past year, an effort has been made to enhance the livelihood to formalise this sector and improve the working conditions of the waste pickers.
There are a total of 3 scrap shops set up across Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad.

Scrap shops made an average profit of 6.7 in the year 2021–2022

The profits made are divided among the waste pickers who sell their scraps and recyclables here.

The 3 shops collectively impact 317 waste pickers.

With this grant, the existing shed of 3000 sq. ft. was renovated to build a toilet and install electrical fittings along with a CCTV to secure the shop. Set-up support was also provided in the form of furniture, weighing scales, PPE, safety equipment, pest control and consumables.

Since March 2021, this improved scrap shop has benefited 173 waste pickers of which 116 are women waste pickers. This is a collectively owned scrap shop and follows fair trade practices based on transparency in order to ensure an equitable distribution of profits. Aligned with the flagship initiative of the central government, Swach Bharat Mission, the scrap shop allows for maximum recovery of recyclables in turn increasing their value.
Spaces for Recycling

This year also saw the setting up of Portable Material Storage Facilities for waste pickers across the city of Pune. These Storage Facilities, also known as Pinjras, were set up with an aim to increase incomes of women waste pickers by facilitating the recycling of dry waste. This project was designed for the semi-formalised women waste picker who provide door-to-door waste collection services. Women were identified across the city, based on their need for waste sorting and storage along with availability of space.

The objective of the Pinjras is to ensure that women waste pickers have a safe and secure space to store their recyclable waste which will add to their income while resolving the issue of visual uncleanliness. Moreover, it is also being used to store their waste collection equipment such as buckets, aprons, bags etc. These storage facilities have helped address many of the challenges that women face when sorting waste by the roadside. These units provide dignity to their labour and recognition that further empowers them.

The project rolled out in phases. First, the spaces were identified for deploying of these units. Next, the Pinjras were fabricated and painted. Then, these units were transported to the finalised spots. Deployment of the units was done through coordination between SWaCH staff members and waste pickers before finally being handed over to the latter. 52 Pinjras have been set up in the city, collectively impacting 130 waste pickers.

Mohini Bhaaushankar is a waste picker working with SWaCH near Dandekar Pul, Pune. She says that the storage facility has truly made her life easier. “Before the pinjara, 4 other waste pickers and I would keep our scraps and recyclables in a bathroom of the building where we collect waste. People cleaning the bathroom would threaten us that if the scraps are kept for longer than 6 days then they will take it away. We knew that amidst such threats and even thefts, our scars were not secure and neither was our livelihood. All this was worrying for us. We have to collect scraps for over 8 days to really earn a substantial income on it. But now, with the storage facility, we don’t have to worry anymore. We can store our scraps and recyclables for up to 15 days which has significantly added to our collective income”, recalled Mohini Tai. She also shared that since the storage facility is now their place of work, they ensure that the inside and outsite is kept as clean as possible. “People often litter in front of the Pinjara. We keep cleaning the place and they keep throwing waste. To address this problem of littering we kept a picture of God near the shed. It has helped as littering has reduced, but we would like to grow plants here so that people are even more motivated to keep this area clean”, she added.

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Plastic Brand Audit

The annual plastic brand audit was conducted as part of the global initiative of Break Free from Plastic. This global movement was launched in 2016 to advocate for systemic change and lasting solutions to combat the growing plastic waste crisis. The members of this movement demand accountability on the part fast moving consuming goods companies for the large-scale plastics they have introduced into the environment.

Plastic brand audits are citizen led initiatives to identify companies that are most responsible for plastic pollution. For decades now the narrative has been constructed that consumer are responsible for the growing plastic pollution due to improper handling and consuming of the good. The plastic brand audit aims to challenge this narrative. Moreover, it also highlights the integral role waste pickers play in collection and disposing of plastic waste, without whom the environmental cost would be much larger.

Pan India Plastic Share

- MLP: 35%
- LDPE: 31%
- PP: 14%
- PET: 12%
- HDPE: 7%

Milk Packets
The Largest Contributor to Plastic Waste in Pune

9,533 Plastic Items Audited

55% of all Plastic Waste in Pune was MLP

This year the brand audit was conducted by surveying litter waste in Yerwada, Swargate and Hadapsar, and household waste in Baner. An estimated total of 9500 pieces of plastic were audited by 65 volunteers across the four locations.
What do we do with these small (multi-layered) sacets? They cannot be composted. They do not have any value so we cannot sell them. They are so small that we can’t even pick them up. We urge companies to produce packaging that we can pick up, recycle or compost.

This year as well, Pepsi Co, Coca Cola, Unilever, Mondelez and Nestle continued to be the top five international polluters in Pune while Indian polluters included Chitale, Parle, Britannia, Amul and Sumeru. Multi-Layered Plastics accounted for 55% of all plastic waste. Parle, Unilever and Britannia were found to be the top producers of multi-layered plastic in the city. Moreover, the uninformed plastic policy is threatening the livelihood of informal waste pickers and producing false solutions such as chemical recycling and incineration whose environmental impact is still unknown. To this end, the audit also emphasised on how the voices of the communities which have been picking up this waste for years now, are of most prominence in order to ensure responsible and effective plastic reduction. This initiative also saw an active participation of young students under the youth program of KP.
V Collect Centre - Promoting Re-use and Strengthening Economy

V collect is an initiative towards encouraging a more meaningful recycling effort on the part of the consumers. Instead of discarding, all the old, unused household items, clothes, electrical devices, toys, books and other such items can be dropped off at the V collect centre. These items are either repaired to be further sold or dismantled and put for recycling. In this way, all these items are channelised away from dumps into recycling and re-use.

These goods which are repaired are sold at nominal prices to those who need it. Torn cloth materials are made into bags, coasters, mats etc to ensure maximum recovery of the material

This year the V collect centre was renovated to increase efficiency of space and better storage. The working space was made more secure for by fixing the floors, and waterproofing the centre. New electrical fittings and rack installations led to improved and organised display of items from the additional space.

An old gramophone, canvas paintings, antiques, vinyl records and other collectibles, too, find a place at this centre, giving it a charm of its own.
Chaga Govind Naravde is a waste picker who is now working at V collect centre. Her responsibilities include sorting the items that are donated at the centre. For more than 10 years she has been working as a waste collector until one day when the private waste contractors asked her to quit, due to old age. “One day they called me and said to me that I am too old, and incapable of working, so I should sit at home now. I live alone, I have no one to take care of me, how can I sit at home when I don’t know where my next meal will come from”. Chaga bai, then learnt about the V collect centre. She was told that there is need for someone who can help sorting different materials. She jumped at the opportunity and joined the initiative. Her voice still carries a tone of anxiety and worry, unsure about how long she can continue to do this. But, for now she has V-collect that she can rely on.

During the festival of Diwali, various V-collect drives were organised across 5 locations in the city, supported by an active participation of the citizens.
A total of 267 drives have been organised in the past year. Citizens can also visit the centre and donate materials. For individuals who are unable to donate at the centre or through drives also have the possibility of door step collection where the materials are picked up directly from the households.
This centre supports the livelihood of 12 waste pickers. Moreover, any profit that is generated is directed towards education of waste pickers’ children.

267
Drives organised

2067
Citizens donated at the centre

187
Door step collections

277
Tonnes of materials recovered

10200
Citizens/ Households Reached

*Chaga Govind Naravde* is a waste picker who is now working at V collect centre. Her responsibilities include sorting the items that are donated at the centre. For more than 10 years she has been working as a waste collector until one day when the private waste contractors asked her to quit, due to old age. “One day they called me and said to me that I am too old, and incapable of working, so I should sit at home now. I live alone, I have no one to take care of me, how can I sit at home when I don’t know where my next meal will come from”. Chaga bai, then learnt about the V collect centre. She was told that there is need for someone who can help sorting different materials. She jumped at the opportunity and joined the initiative. Her voice still carries a tone of anxiety and worry, unsure about how long she can continue to do this. But, for now she has V-collect that she can rely on.
Plastic to Ocean Model Testing and Application in India

The veritable lack of data related to plastic and its processing have produced uninformed policies. Data on waste, recycling technologies, and waste processing plants is hardly ever consolidated, to failing to make data driven policies at micro and macro level. This leads to setting up of processes which eventually fail and plastics leak into the environment through landfilling or burning. Moreover, plastic management policies rarely consider the consequences on the people who work to manage plastic waste.

Through Plastic to Ocean model, the aim was to develop accurate data base on capital and operational expenses behind the whole waste management process in the city, including the revenue from recycling and data on total number of personnel employed throughout the plastics value chain.

The project took place in three phases. The first phase was waste categorisation. Through a strategic purposive sampling 2000 houses were chosen, representing varied income groups. A mock survey was done to familiarise the data collection team with different waste categories. In this phase city level data on solid waste management was also collected by approaching the Pune Municipal Corporation. The State government of Maharashtra and Maharashtra Pollution Control Board were also consulted.

The doctorates of National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, specialising in plastic polymer technology have largely contributed to the process of review of literature.

The baseline data was then entered in the P2O software program and the members of Kashtakari Panchayat provided feedback on various aspects of the tool including user interface, clarity of instruction, ease of use for scenario modelling, applicability to the Indian waste landscape, etc.

Scenario building workshops were held with representatives of government agencies including the Pune Municipal Corporation, State Government and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, civil society groups working with informal waste pickers and/or on waste management and private sector entities such as plastic producers, plastic users and recyclers to co-create scenarios for testing.

Data on characterization of waste handled by the informal sector was collected through a study of a sample of informal waste pickers and itinerant buyers operating in Pune city.
Waste Pickers and Social Welfare

Informal workers often belong to economically poorer background which leads to further systemic marginalisation. Waste pickers confront a similar reality where they are discriminated on the basis of class, caste, and gender. To address the multiple forms of discrimination, it is necessary that waste pickers get access to welfare. Social protection is not possible without being able to claim the various rights. Unfortunately, they are either unaware of the various entitlements or get trapped in bureaucratic red tape.

Kashtakari Panchayat have set up various interventions which ensure that social welfare and benefits do not elude the waste pickers. These interventions aim to protect and promote education, health, financial security and individual well-being.

Helpdesk

The helpdesk was set up 2018 to assist waste pickers in whatever support that they may need, from filling admission forms to providing monetary support for health problems, the helpdesk has been largely instrumental. The waste pickers are given a helpline number, operated by helpdesk staff member, which they may call to ask for any kind of welfare or rights-based need. If the caller requires any documentation related information the operator directly provides direction for the same. If case is more complex in nature and requires expert intervention, then it is sent to thematic leads and helpdesk coordinators. Emergency cases, such as medical emergencies, corporal punishment at school, refusal to give fee reductions or legal emergencies are reported to the thematic lead and the helpdesk coordinator for immediate action.
Since 2018 there has been a surge in the cases registered with the helpline. For certain recurring cases, standard operating procedures have been developed which are shared with all the leads for systematic and effective intervention. Cases are tracked by the helpline coordinator who also monitor the process and closure as well as observe the trends in the cases registered. The themes under which cases are registered include documentation, education, financial aid, health, employment, legal aid, pension, as well as ration. This year also saw an addition of Covid relief as a separate theme. In this way, the themes aim to address all social needs of the community.

There is an increasing trend in the cases registered with the helpline. This year, 6212 cases were registered, increasing the frequency by 28 %
The Kashtakari Seva Kendras also make an important part of the helpdesk. These are community-based centres that provide services and information to the waste pickers. They have been set up in vicinity of 12 communities to bridge the gap in last mile delivery of services. During the pandemic, these centres have proved to be instrumental in establishing contact with the waste pickers on the account of a massive digital divide across communities.

- **Cases under 'other'** included support regarding Covid relief, information and guidance on vaccine, and phone bill payments.
- The category for death also included Covid 19 related deaths, which accounted for 7 % of the total deaths.
- Waste pickers registered most cases regarding work, finance and education after Covid relief, indicating towards the impact pandemic had on these specific sectors, in turn adding to the insecurity.
- The number of cases for ration went down drastically, from 975 to 81 as waste pickers received ration more regularly through the year.

**Thematic share of the cases registered**
Education Entitlements and Sponsorship

Ensuring government scholarships for the children of waste pickers has been one of the most prominent initiatives undertaken by KP towards their progress. The waste picker’s children experience a high dropping rate due to various reasons among which income insecurity, lack of material and non-material resources and lack of opportunity are some of the most commonly observed. In such a context, access to various scholarships has ensured that children continue their formal education for as long as possible. These scholarships include Annabhau Sathe, Maulan Abul Kalam Azad and Ghanbatta Shishyavruti awarded by the Pune Municipal corporation. There is also the Pre matric scholarship for children of those engaged in Cleanliness occupation which is awarded by Social Welfare Department.

The application process, saw delays this year as well due to changing nature of the education landscape, however, 1045+ applications have approved across the different scholarships, benefitting that many children.

Moreover, the sponsorship program under KP, too, has benefitted 300+ children in the past year. Sponsorship is awarded to children identified under the vulnerability criteria. Children who are orphans, abandoned, or being looked after by single mother are included her. Children with disability or those who are severely unwell are also supported under this project. The amount is directly transferred to the child’s bank account after verification of required documents.

Jayashree Khavale is a worker of SWaCH from Yerwada. She is a door to waste collector and also a mother of three. Two of her children, Sakshi and Sharvani are covered under the sponsorship. Jayashree tai shared that last year was uncertain and difficult for all her children but they have now gotten used to the online mode. “We even allotted the phone with broken mic as School phone so Sakshi did not have to wait for me to come back from work.” This year Sakshi was in 10th standard so this was an important year for her but she worked diligently and never missed a class. She is now preparing for the common entrance test to secure admission in 11th standard. Sakshi is hardworking but she also supports her mother in any way that she can. Jayashree tai affirms, “Along with her school work she would also help me with all the house chores.”

In terms of expenses, the sponsorship was instrumental. “My husband died many years ago, since then I am the only one taking care of my children. My only wish is that my children should not suffer the way I did. I want them to not depend on anyone for their needs. They should have the freedom and not be victims of their circumstances. I tell my daughters that they should be independent and get married whenever they want to. They can even choose to not marry but they should never be force into doing anything they don’t want and education is the only way to ensure this.”
Right To Education Act

The waste pickers have shown keen interest in sending their children to private unaided schools so that they receive the quality education they deserve. To help them realise the same, KP identified 127 children who were eligible under this scheme. Of the applications filled, 7* applications have been approved under section 12 i c of the RTE Act.

| 1045+ children eligible for government scholarships |
| 300+ children benefited from private sponsorship |
| 7 children secured admission under RTE |

Jyoti Savitrinchi Lekra:

Jyoti Savitrinchi Lekra is an initiative to acknowledge and celebrate the children’s hard work and determination to stay in school. These children would work with the waste pickers, roaming around with a sack on their shoulder. Due to the lack of birth certificates and other documents, these children could not be enrolled in schools. Even if they made it to a school, they would face systemic discrimination at the hands of the administration. Jyoti Savitrinchi Lekra is celebration of that spirit and felicitates the members and their children who have cleared SSC, HSC or graduation.

Engaging the Youth

Through number of sensitising workshops and capacity building session, we have seen the children of waste pickers become more involved and responsible for their families and their communities. These issues have inspired the youth to become active participants of the society and prevent alienation that they may occur due to lack of opportunities and spaces. These spaces have provided the young adults with a platform to voice their concerns and come up with solutions.

This year, sessions were conducted on child sexual abuse, as well as child marriage, to promote safety and to increase awareness among the youth, while also bringing to focus child rights and child protection. This also began an important conversation around complexities of elopement. The youth also organised Anti- child marriage rallies in their communities and have been a part of advocacy campaigns for waste pickers and their children. They visited 27 scrap shops where they advocated against child labour.

*Number of admissions is subject to the lottery based system followed during RTE processes.
These young children attended sessions on menstrual hygiene and also advocated for use of cloth pads in their communities. They also volunteered for plastic brand audit and Plastic to Ocean survey, gaining better knowledge of the macro issues of waste collection.

Sessions were conducted through the year on topics such as waste segregation, tree plantation, rising poverty and the youth’s role in its eradication. Sessions on English speaking as an after-school program were also initiated to keep children occupied through the lockdown.

With the help of sessions on covid precautions and importance of vaccination, these children have helped their parents become more aware and encouraged them to take vaccinations.

Many of the youth leaders are also part of local, regional and national networks such as the Campaign against Child Labour, and Action for Rights of Child, helping them connect with like-minded people and to be part of a larger movement. The youth leaders participated in the making of Children’s Manifesto through the ARC network. The youth leaders participated in making the Children’s manifesto included the demands of children and was published in the media.

The youth leader across different areas in the Pune have become role models for other children in their communities.
My climate reality: A short-film by Rakesh Chalvadi, waste picker’s son

When COP26 was called off in the wake of the pandemic, 330 young adults representing 140 countries across the globe came together to organise a Mock COP, which then became a movement to call the world leaders to attention on the climate change. To propel this to action, individuals who are experiencing climate change first hand were invited to share their stories. Rakesh’s story, among the five stories, was shortlisted to be turned into a short film. Picture Zero and Rubber Republic collaborated with Rakesh to produce a film based on the video conferences, discussions and research around the issues of waste management. Rakesh was trained to operate the equipment and he was actively supported by youths from his community in the shooting of this film. With due permissions from the Local Government Body of Pune, the film was shot at the Waste Processing Plant in Hadapsar along with other parts of the city that depict the threat improper management of waste can lead to. Rakesh’s sincere efforts to highlight the ongoing efforts of the waste pickers of Pune to resist the climate change is a call to action for all the stakeholders to take cognisance of this issue and act immediately. The film was screened at the Green Zone in the COP 26 in Glasgow.

Pramila Namdev Waghmare

Pramila, a 27-year-old youth leader from the Sinhagad Road area of Pune. She is a confident young woman. She lives with her parents and two younger brothers. Her mother provides waste collection services under SWaCH and her father is a waste picker who works on contractual basis. Pramila is a commerce graduate and works part-time at the billing counter in a Bata showroom. She used to work in a beauty parlour but due to the lockdown imposed by COVID, the parlour was shut down. “I liked my work at the parlour but due to COVID, everything was closed. I needed the money so I started looking for other jobs”, recalls Pramila. When asked what motivates her to be part of the sessions and workshops conducted, her eyes lit up. She believes that youth have a lot to offer but are often ignored and neglected. Citing her own example, she says that she has always been a woman with opinions. She would always speak her mind fearlessly and confidently, however, through KP she got a platform to put forth her views. She takes pride in being a confident and outspoken woman and wishes the same for the youth they’re working with. “I know so many young people, like myself, who have the potential to create a change in the society. We want to speak and debate, if only our voices were heard!” exclaims Pramila. Pramila not only wants to open up her own beauty parlour in the future but wants to work for the youth as well. She aims to facilitate and mobilize youth to help them realize their inner potential and enable a youth-driven change in the community. She has been selected to be part of the Global Opportunity Youth Network anchored by Pune City Connect where young leaders from across the world come together to advocate for productive and sustainable livelihood for the youth.
Local Impact Assessment on Child Labour in the Waste Pickers’ Community in Pune

In collaboration with Miss-Collect, Kashtakari Panchayat undertook an assessment study on the prevalence of child labour among waste picker communities. Through the survey, a total of 3399 waste pickers of the SWaCH cooperative were interviewed across 17 administrative wards of Pune city. 105 staff members of SWaCH were trained on conducting this survey. The preliminary surveys consisted of a pre-made questionnaire created and integrated into the KOBO collect tool, existing in English and Marathi. The integration into KOBO improved the effectiveness of data collection and analysis.

The research revealed that 493 children had been engaging in some form of labour. Of these 211 were identified from the SWaCH survey. A majority of the child labourers were found to be boys, consistent with International Labour Organisation’s notion that boys tend to engage in more physically laborious work. With the help of detailed interviews, it was found that financial hardships exacerbated by the pandemic was one of the major reasons for children being pushed into the workforce. Another prominent cause of child labour was lack of education opportunities. 70 children out of 211 were not enrolled in any kind of formal education institution.

This assessment has helped us identify the vulnerable children, which will further inform our advocacy efforts against child labour and our interventions towards increasing children’s access to education.
Way Forward

This was a year of challenges, uncertainty, and hardships, but it was also a year of hope, resilience and determination. The pandemic continues to test the waste pickers but they, too, are determined to keep the city clean and keep the citizens safe. Kashtakari Panchayat aims to ensure that they are supported in their mission and are recognised for the integral role they play in the city’s management. Our effort has been and will be to make sure that they are acknowledged as the essential service providers that they are.
Moreover, our work will also focus on compensating the waste pickers for their loss of livelihood while working to enhance and improve the spaces they operate in.
We will also be largely focusing on our education-based interventions, making them more robust and sustainable, based on the findings of a comprehensive educational survey, in order to cater to more specific needs of waste pickers’ children.
The pandemic may be subsiding but it has left a long-lasting impact on the lives of individual waste pickers as well as their community. Our work will be focused towards supporting them via dynamic and effective interventions as they adjust and adapt to the post pandemic world.
5, Pleasant Apartments,
80/2/2, Baner Residency,
Baner Road, Pune,
Maharashtra 411007