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Foreword

As the world settled into the ‘new normal’ post the pandemic, Pune’s waste pickers reconciled themselves to their old normal - hard work, grit, determination and an unwavering commitment to explore newer terrains whilst continuing to fight old battles! Among the worst affected communities during and after COVID 19, they adapted then, and they adapted since.

With the complete lifting of mobility restrictions and easing of health advisories, projects and activities soon resumed and were implemented with renewed vigor and speed to make up for lost time. Relief work quickly gave way to capacity building, livelihood strengthening, outreach, communication, research, publications and increasing access to basic entitlements for waste pickers.

We continue to draw inspiration from the waste pickers, enhance our knowledge and learning with their experience and insights, and gain strength from their immutable resolve.

Lakshmi Narayanan,

(Trustee, Kashtakari Panchayat)
About Us

Kashtakari Panchayat was established in 2010 with an aim to support the waste pickers, their families and collectives. The support includes capacity building and advocacy to facilitate their access to education and health entitlements, creating and enhancing livelihood opportunities, and strengthening their organisations. The trust undertakes participatory training, research, outreach and publication, to create awareness about waste pickers issues, and increase their voice and visibility. It functions as a platform bringing together like-minded individuals and organisations and stakeholders, and solicit their engagement and participation to further its objectives.
Key Objectives

The activities and projects of the year reflected the key organisational objectives of direct strengthening of waste picker collectives in livelihood enhancement and access to basic health, education and social security, and support functions in bridging the societal inequities and gaps between waste pickers and the more privileged.

Enhancing Livelihoods:

Livelihood enhancement projects focused on exploring newer spaces within the spectrum of both organics and non-biodegradable waste management. This was complemented by designing and developing the requisite infrastructure. Simultaneously, waste pickers were supported through initiatives encouraging them to scale the value chain of recyclables.

Enabling Entitlements:

The waste pickers, belonging to one of the most marginal and vulnerable groups, face many barriers to accessing welfare and social protection. Through concerted efforts over the years KP facilitates their access to welfare schemes ranging from education, health and other social protection measures. The following section looks at the programs and initiatives undertaken to ensure waste pickers and their children are able to access social protection along with activities undertaken to empower them to increase their knowledge and bargaining power as citizens of this republic.

Building bridges to challenge inequities:

Another significant area involved capacity building of waste pickers, in their transition from waste managers to climate champions. Participatory research was undertaken to build evidence driven strategies and blueprints for waste management with the municipality. Waste picker voice and visibility were validated through powerful outreach films made consultatively with them.
The waste pickers of Pune, under the aegis of their cooperative, SWaCH, are engaged in a unique Pro Poor Private Public Partnership, that has enabled their transition from itinerant waste pickers to respected, recognised and valued service providers. Over 3700 of them offer a doorstep waste collection service to 9 lakh properties of the city.

Although the formalisation of their livelihood through SWaCH, has both provided a sense of dignity and security to the waste pickers and an opportunity to operate in associated spaces such as composting, recycling, biomethanation, their role hitherto has been primarily focussed on waste collection. This precludes their participation in the more technical, and potentially better paying work within waste management systems. Concerted efforts to explore newer avenues and spaces in waste management and carving such roles for themselves, were called for, in order to sustain and create livelihoods in the face of increasing privatisation.
Infrastructure development for green jobs

To ensure the green jobs created sustain, appropriate infrastructure for various purposes were designed, developed and made accessible to waste pickers.

Waste pickers associated with the SWaCH Pune Cooperative collect segregated waste from the doorsteps of citizens of Pune and divert a substantial portion of dry waste directly to recycling. The efficiency, quantum and income derived from diversion of recyclables is directly proportional to the space available for sorting and temporary storage of such waste. Sorting spaces allow waste-pickers to store materials for a few days, making even low value recyclables like flexible plastics, multi layered plastics and low-grade paper board viable for recycling thereby increasing their income. Ability to store also means protection of recyclables from rains, wind, animals and thieves, while ensuring they are not an eyesore for citizens and businesses in the area.

Portable Material Storage Facilities – Pinjras - for temporary storage of recyclables by waste pickers, deployed at the road-side or in small municipal /public spaces are a perfect solution, useful for storage of waste-pickers equipment like buckets, aprons, bags, small personal items etc. These women face multiple challenges while they sit on the roadside to sort the recyclables including harassment at the hands of men, who tend to occupy the public spaces with ease. These units accord a sense of dignity and recognition and play a role in the empowerment of waste pickers who are essential contributors to the recycling sector. For waste-pickers who ply their trade in the elements with public roads and footpaths as their workplace, pinjras carve out a rightful slice of the city’s public space for them to recycle the city’s waste. Providing waste pickers with such secured spaces leads to a direct and tangible increase in the level of recycling for that area, as waste pickers are able to reclaim and store more types and larger quantities of materials safely. Over 52 units were deployed in the previous financial year, in 22-23, with the support of 2 corporates, 70 more units were deployed - impacting more than 150 waste pickers in the city.
Organic waste management

Organic waste comprises 76% of the waste coming from households. Organics mismanagement is the highest contributor to Greenhouse Gas emissions and Urban Local Bodies are attempting to manage it at source of generation to reduce the burden on SWM and reduce the impact of organics. It is also foremost among green jobs in waste in terms of its potential to support livelihoods. This year, we made a major push towards shifting organic waste management practices in the city, and in creating new livelihood opportunities for waste pickers.

Composting and Biomethanation are two established mechanisms for management of organic waste. While composting brings in operational challenges, the capital cost is lower and can be functional at small scale and hence is the preferred choice of management in a decentralized manner. Biomethanation on the other hand is capital intensive, but requires little maintenance and operational cost and provides a direct source of energy to the user bringing down utility costs. New Biomethanation technology is now possible at small scale (2 Kg per day) and is supported by technology operators locally in Pune as well.

In a bid to create a live-demonstration zero-waste model, and advocate for its replication in Pune City and urban centres across India, a grant was procured with an aim to reduce organic waste in the municipal waste stream by in-situ composting, as well as curb plastic pollution through increased diversion to recycling. Through the development of markets for local consumption of re-usable municipal waste, the integration of waste-pickers to independently operate the model was envisaged. Development of informational content for citizens to encourage better handling of waste was also a planned outcome. This initiative, ‘Waste Matters’ is supported by the Plastics Solutions Fund and the Oak Foundation. The 2019 PMC policy to promote and encourage in-situ composting was examined for lacunae and reviewed. The policy offered a subsidy of INR 1200 for individual household composters, and of INR 120000 for Bulk Waste Generators (or 25% whichever is lower) and 5% property tax rebate for all properties undertaking in-situ organic waste management. However, in the absence of a reliable database of BWGs to serve as a baseline for monitoring compliance and unavailability of property tax data available to identify either property type or compliance with the organic waste management policy incentive, the policy was virtually a
non-starter. Further, the subsidy proposed was for capital expenditure, while the in-situ management of organic waste would require continual operational oversight, and a mechanism to track compliance and penalize defaulters. Verified vendors for the set up and provision of operational services to manage organic waste processing at-source were also a critical requisite for in-situ composting to take off.

Kashtakari Panchayat under the Waste Matters project proposed a multi-pronged policy strategy:

**Stratified subsidy based on financial capacity, of up to Rs. 500 per household, against a commitment for two years of effective at-source organic waste processing by a verified vendor with a penalty for non-compliance.**

**A vendor registration process based on submission of documents, mandatory adherence to in-situ organic waste handling guidelines, on-field verification by PMC and a provision for blacklisting in case of breach of terms.**

**Monitoring of Bulk Waste Generator after creation of baseline data and monitoring data for a 2-year period.**

**A system to link the identified and verified BWGs with property tax data for ease of disbursal of the property tax rebate.**

The municipal vendor empanelment system was supported through the development of a form for collecting registration information of eligible agencies providing in-situ organic waste management services or technology. A list of 55 vendors was published on the PMC official website here. (Unfortunately, the PMC eventually registered vendors without a rigorous verification process, effectively creating a list of agencies, rather than empaneled vendors.

To develop a baseline, linked with property tax information and monitoring for BWG compliance, data of 3357 potential BWGs was obtained from the PMC which was scrubbed and cleaned to shortlist 2582 properties that qualified as BWGs, which were further reduced to 1403 based on an independent verification survey. The data included property type, location, occupancy, year of construction, status of organic waste management, compliance. Findings from the baseline and monitoring survey are summarized in the charts below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Compliant BWGs</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Non-Compliant BWGs</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total surveyed</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The policy was rolled out based on the financial terms proposed, and commitment of residents for source segregation, to manage organic waste at source with a service contract of at least 2 years, to engage with re-use and recycling initiatives, participate in awareness programs on sustainable waste management practices and support livelihoods of informal waste pickers. Incentive was provided to 2,774 households (26 BWGs) for in-situ composting, serviced by waste pickers.

100% subsidy was also provided to the Divisional Commissionerate in Pune to set up a 100 kg bio methanation plant operated by waste pickers, to increase visibility of in-situ organic waste management and encourage more citizens and institutions to adopt similar practices.

Community engagement in composting was achieved through small scale trials, consultations with experts and secondary research. These insights were compiled to prepare a composting manual with an introduction to composting and importance of in-situ management of organic waste, overview of the dos and don’ts, troubleshooting solutions, menu of options of at-source organic waste management, information on costs, maintenance, space requirements, advantages/disadvantages and types and quantum of waste accepted.
“Commit to Zero” campaign was launched to bring together thematically related but functionally distinct services and initiatives implemented by Pune’s waste pickers, promote the adoption of in-situ organic waste management, encourage better pre-disposal and handling of all waste, and provide curated awareness programs for citizens.

A team of zero waste facilitators was appointed and trained to approach BWGs for organic waste management, provide information to citizens on Pune’s waste management system, conduct awareness programs and activities for citizens, and more. Communication materials including presentations, brochures and emailers were developed for effective communication with citizens.

A web-based platform, AWARA, was developed where citizens could access such information with the help of two consultants.

The above initiative underlines the value of community led, decentralized organic waste management solutions that promote transition to green livelihoods for waste pickers, compared to capital-intensive and centralized solutions, both from the perspective of environmental sustainability and cost effectiveness, waste management practice.

To complement the Waste Matters project, we sought to encourage waste pickers to shift toward using biogas to replace LPG or wood burning stoves in their homes. Biogas is considered the next frontier of organic waste management, and we propose to introduce highly decentralized small scale modular Biomethanation units in slum households to create a paradigm shift in organics management. By taking up these practices directly, waste pickers can themselves champion progressive climate solutions.
Through identifying waste-pickers with sufficient space in their households, **50 Bio methanation units** were deployed in slums generating awareness, interest, creating a new model for local bodies and governments to follow suit and replicate.

**Moving up the Value chain**

In keeping with the priorities identified for the year, Kashtakari Panchayat applied for a call for proposals to Co-Impact, to bring about systems change in the field of waste picker integration within Solid Waste Management. This ambitious project seeks to correct the existing caste, class and gender inequities in the waste recycling pyramid. Most waste pickers in Pune are women from the historically marginalized dalit castes, considered ‘untouchable’ due to the perception of their work as dirty. They are an integral part of two distinct systems – the informal waste recycling system and the city’s formal municipal solid waste management system. The image above depicts the components of each of these systems, and the position of waste pickers within each system i.e. as the first link in each chain. Although women waste pickers constitute the vast majority of workers within the informal waste recycling pyramid (below), the distribution of power and agency within the system is skewed, with males occupying positions at the apex of the pyramid.
Notably, 90% of Pune's 8,000 waste pickers are women, who sell recyclables to over 600 scrap shops of which less than 2% are owned or managed by women, who in turn sell to aggregation, pre-processing and recycling entities, none of which are owned by women. The waste pickers and scrap dealers at the base of the recycling pyramid are at the mercy of frequent, unpredictable market fluctuations. In contrast, at the apex of the pyramid, typically male recyclers enjoy the benefits of stable prices, and large margins that accommodate routine market fluctuations. Apart from these formal recycling enterprises, most of the recycling chain remains informal, operating with high resilience at low margins, in informal spaces, unable to comply with tax, environmental and statutory wage regulations. With large private players entering the recycling ecosystem, the informal waste pickers and scrap dealers who have been shouldering the burden of recycling for decades, stand to be dispossessed without a legitimate claim to the resource that their livelihoods have historically been built on.

Furthermore, the impending implementation of the ‘extended producer responsibility’ (EPR) regulations in India, threatens waste picker livelihoods not only within the municipal waste management system, but also within the informal recycling value chain. The proposed regulations make no mention of waste pickers or the informal sector, and effectively encourage their displacement in favor of private sector corporations establishing parallel formal supply chains and syphoning plastic waste out of the existing recycling economy. All these changes threaten the position of waste picker within both - the waste management and the recycling sector.

The project seeks to transform leadership in the waste management and scrap value chain to better represent the interests of women waste pickers and ensure their inclusion, by involving and empowering them to occupy and control positions at higher levels and build sustainable and equitable systems. The first phase of the project in this Financial Year saw the consolidation of the design of the entire grant, including a holistic and comprehensive analysis of the strategies, outcomes, systems change envisaged and the steps to achieve them.

**Project Protoprint**

Another flagship project supporting the ascent along the scrap value chain, took off in this year as a partnership with SWaCH Pune Seva Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, SWaCH Plus Seva Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, Social Seva Initiatives Private Limited, and Adelphi Research GGMBH, supported by the European Union SWITCH-Asia programme. Project Protoprint aims at promoting socio-economic transformation by empowering informal waste pickers for production of 3-D printing filaments in Pune. Due to their network-like structure and the extent of manual labour involved, they play a very significant role in the downstream processes and achieve
very high collection rates, but realise only a small fraction of the value of the plastic they collect. Through the SWITCH-Asia project, supply chains for plastic waste processing which incorporate waste pickers will be set up with the objective of improving their livelihoods.

Project Protoprint envisages 4 decentralized plastic waste supply chains owned and operated by 1000+ waste pickers to create value-added products from HDPE and PP plastic waste. The supply chains will consist of scrap shops which receive sorted recyclable waste from waste pickers, and processing units which will receive HDPE and PP plastic from the scrap shops for processing into intermediate products such as plastic flakes and high-value products such as 3D printing filament. Through this process, there will be value creation for HDPE and PP material, which will be passed on to the waste pickers. The high-value products - 3D printing filament - will be certified for quality and will be produced in line with fair-trade principles. This project will be executed in line with the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission, and will include partnerships under the recent Extended Producer Responsibility framework. It is anticipated that over 60 jobs will be created and waste pickers and/or their next of kin will be trained and employed in these roles, and empowered with the financial and technical aspects of the processing activity in order to own, operate and manage them longer term.

The implementation has pushed us along unfamiliar terrain with the waste pickers, as we negotiate time and cost management, prioritizing quality over scale, and work around new technology, compliances and permissions. Although significant progress has made in the integration of waste pickers and their next generation in this new space, the project has been beset by limitations of significantly higher (40%) than presumed costs, municipal and pollution control permissions, quality control issues and concerns, lack of access to well-located spaces, uncertain long-term financial sustainability and the development of sustained
inroads into the scrap dealer network. The site for the first recycling unit is in the process of being set up and will begin operations in the coming weeks.

Co-funding and complementary support for Project Protoprint came from The Incubation Network, who enabled the training of the managers of the cooperative scrap shops set up in the previous year, in upgrading their financial skills by using the Tally accounting software for the scrap sales and purchases.

Infrastructure upgradation was also undertaken at all shops based on the identified requirements and logistics, and a new cooperative scrap store was set up in the city’s western outskirt, Kothrud. Although nascent, and yet to break even financially, the shop like the other cooperative stores, has impacted the immediate neighboring privately run, exploitative scrap shops and their practices significantly and dented the market in favour of waste pickers. It has reached 30 households, collects a monthly average of 11 Metric Tonnes of plastic, and improved the livelihoods of 50 waste pickers, most of whom are women.

Vani Sharda Madhukar has been picking waste for over 22 years. She has been selling scrap material to a private scrap shop all her life. On the day of the inauguration of the informal waste pickers cooperative scrap shop, she was the first waste picker to sell to her own (cooperative) scrap shop. She received more than twice the total sales than she normally would, on her first trade.

### Multi-Layer Plastic recycling project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total MLP collected</td>
<td>3,100 + Metric Tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of waste pickers impacted</td>
<td>1,000+ waste pickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in monthly income per waste picker</td>
<td>Rs. 500+ per month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the cooperative scrap shops and recycling initiative allow waste pickers to scale the value chain, there are materials that fall beyond the value chain. In an attempt to bring non-recycled plastics into the value chain, Kashtakari Panchayat partnered with ITC Limited. In this globally unique initiative, a market-based system is created to enable waste pickers to collect and sell which is typically non-recycled low value flexible plastic waste. In this initiative, an entire collection system was set up to collect waste from waste pickers, and bring it to a facility to sort and bale it, before it is sent for recycling.
1. Household waste generated
2. Waste picker collects waste
3. Waste picker sorts MLP
4. Waste picker sells MLP
5. Vehicle goes to warehouse
6. MLP sorted at warehouse
7. MLP baled
8. MLP sent to recycler

MLP Collection to Recycling
More than 1,000 tonnes of plastic waste was collected from 650 waste pickers. Each waste picker was therefore able to boost her earnings by an average of Rs. 530 each month. The sorting and baling facility set up as part of the initiative, supports full-time minimum wage employment of 25 waste pickers. Monthly training and capacity building activities are organised for the waste pickers working at the facility. Importantly, over 90% of the materials were sent for mechanical recycling. No plastic waste was sent for combustion-based end-of-life processing such as waste-to-energy or as fuel in cement plants. This initiative has brought together climate and social priorities and has demonstrated a high-scale solution for a challenging type of plastic waste.

V Collect Initiative

Another initiative of Kashtakari Panchayat in collaboration with the PMC, encourages 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 centres, where they are 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. A Thrift store, run on cooperative principles, and encouraging the waste pickers to deal in reusable materials, thus ensuring a smaller carbon footprint, had been started in the previous year. The store has sustained, and grown financially as indicated by the graphs below and above. This year, we supported this intuitive to grow and set up a new center.

![Graph: SVCC Inward 2023 Total Inward (Ton)]

*Item wise material collected in Tonnes*
Some glimpses of the in-situ wet waste model
The Helpdesk

The Helpline, which is centrally operated, has now become a go-to resource for waste pickers, and it is through empathy, creative solutions, and consistent interventions that this trust and assurance has been possible. While the helpline largely registers cases related to violation of rights, or access to programs and schemes, it also attempts to address personal and professional problems that the waste pickers encounter on a day-to-day basis. It can be seen that work (livelihoods) as the theme of intervention receives the highest number of cases, accounting for 22% of all the cases registered.

![Helpdesk image]

The themes of intervention have been decided upon by consulting the waste picker representatives and are areas that largely support and bolster the individual and collective well-being of the waste pickers. As a result, the helpdesk continues to address the health, financial, livelihood, education, legal, documentation, pension, ration, housing, and violence-related concerns of the waste pickers. The choice of these themes is also rooted in the idea that all these areas of intervention respond to an aspect of well-being be it fundamental rights, socio-economic welfare, social protection, or social justice.
The interventions are highly case-sensitive and designed based on the needs of the waste pickers. It may either mean working closely with individual waste pickers or it may consist of working with larger systems. The helpline also makes it possible to extract systematic data which points to recurring aid and support required by the waste pickers. In this way, it informs larger programs and advocacy efforts of the organization.

It has been observed that more and more waste pickers are now becoming aware of the various welfare programs, be it social entitlement or a program initiated by the organization, and calling the helpline to access the same. Waste pickers are now directly calling the helpline for the support that they need. This indicates increasing ownership of the helpline on the part of the waste pickers.

Overview of cases during the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Resolved</th>
<th>In process</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covid relief</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>000</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>046</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>062</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>022</td>
<td>063</td>
<td>085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>022</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When it comes to welfare schemes and entitlements, the helpline has a role to play in different stages of the process. There are two significant ways in which waste pickers access these. Creating awareness has been the most effective way of making sure that the waste pickers demand the protection that is rightfully theirs, after which they directly call the helpline and ask to be enrolled in the welfare schemes. Another way is when they call the helpline with a problem that they are facing that has the potential to be resolved with the help of a welfare program. For instance, waste pickers reach out to the helpline when they need support in cases of medical emergencies. In such cases, they are made aware of an appropriate health scheme before proceeding further. Similarly, they approach the helpline when they need monetary aid to pay their children’s fees, they are then informed of government scholarships and enrolled in the same so that they can continue to support their child’s education and prevent any drop out which is a very real possibility for most of the waste picker’s children.

Looking closely at some of the themes

**Health:** Health as a social welfare issue, is one of the most recurring one. It is also a space that almost always demands an immediate intervention. Waste pickers find themselves to be one of the most vulnerable communities when it comes to accessing health welfare benefits and this vulnerability is most often rooted in lack of information regarding the health care schemes. Moreover, they often find it difficult to access tertiary healthcare which is often expensive.

**Pension:** The waste pickers have often found themselves being overlooked when it comes to social protection. The pension scheme has not been any different. The waste pickers do not have any specific pension to address their needs but as informal workers belonging to a marginalized community, they are eligible for the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojna. Many of the waste pickers fall within the ambit of this scheme. Unfortunately, the documentation process is tedious and requires an extensive number of documents, many of which are not easily issuable. Ironically, waste pickers end up spending more on issuing the documents than they receive as a pension in a month.
Documentation: One of the biggest barriers to inaccessibility to social protection and welfare has been the lack of documents. This has affected the members to receive ration, to apply for pension and when receiving medical care. This dearth of documents has pushed them to fall off the gaps even when they have been most eligible to receive these benefits. There are often social biases at play when waste pickers approach institutions that can help them issue required documents. This is all the more visible in banking and financial institutions which find it more profitable to cater to the rich. Waste pickers are often denied entry into these spaces, let alone be served.

Addressing gender-based violence

Chaya Ghule, one of the waste pickers, is a widow. She is a mother and her daughter is living with a cognitive disability, making her dependent on her mother. This pension scheme is her only chance to have access to a form of financial protection. Chaya tai, is willing to go through the cumbersome process if it means that she can continue to provide for her daughter. She shared that she spent close to Rs 2000 to acquire the documents which is double the cost of what she would receive when her application is finally approved. This has been the case for all the waste pickers who have attempted to apply for this scheme. With ample data to prove the helplessness faced by the waste pickers, there has been focused advocacy with local authorities to set up documentation camps which will reduce the opportunity as well as the actual cost of issuing documents. These concerted efforts are informed by the direct intervention in the field which is in turn dependent on the waste pickers reaching out via the helpdesk mechanism.

During and after COVID, as community meetings became more difficult, organizing systematic training, support groups, and encouraging visits to police stations were increasingly more challenging. The helpdesk saw a steady number of cases reported, and the need to redress them using more sustainable, community-based approaches was felt. Towards this end training sessions were organised in 2022 across slum pockets in Pune, to discuss child marriage, education, domestic violence, and work towards a waste picker led strategy to address these issues. The training has generated considerable interest, enthusiasm and a willingness to stand in solidarity against victims of violence, keeping aside other differences. Spontaneous support for
neighbours, fellow workers, pushing and accompanying them to police stations if required, acting against the perpetrators, have all seen an uptake. Social media has been used effectively to share these incidents and encourage others to bond together for similar action. The support groups (Aadhar gats) underwent a series of trainings and meetings over the course of the year.

Some learnings from the process of engaging with Aadhar gats:

- Waste pickers are able to acknowledge the need to address violence not only for themselves but extending this understanding to the community members
- By handling cases in the community, visits to police stations, and other forums like counselling centres, they have grown confident in handling various stakeholders
- Waste pickers have understood the functioning of Bharosa cell, the process of calling the number 112, the offices and locations along with the different strategies of involving them.
- There have been instances where women in the communities have directly sought assistance from the Aadhar gat members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aadhar gat meetings conducted</td>
<td>90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings on topics related to violence and its redressal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with men: trainings conducted with male members of the families</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions conducted with youths</td>
<td>2</td>
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*Bimonthly trainings in each ward, there are 15 wards so 15 x 6 which equals 90 meetings in a year*
One of the cases which is a testament to the power of this support is that of Mangal Gaikwad. Mangal Gaikwad’s son was a drunkard, who abused her and her daughter-in-law. He was taken to the police station many times and asked to sign a declaration that he would change his ways, unfortunately, once they were out of the police station he went back to his old habits. The police were unbothered after a while. They would label it a personal issue and become indifferent. The women in the community who are members of the Aadhar gat intervened. They began to consistently call him up on his actions and made it a point to show up for Mangal tai every time there was an incident of conflict let alone violence. Through regular counselling and follow-up, he realized that they were not alone and he was persuaded to change his ways, give up alcohol, and be a better son and a husband.

While the group is aware of basic knowledge, there is a huge potential in bringing more vibrancy in the groups. Acquainting the community with the current legal framework and the demands for change therein, rekindling discussions on the role of the police versus the community in addressing issues such as domestic violence, and framing the discussion within the larger context of gender, will need to be undertaken as structured training and capacity building activities focussing on changing skills, knowledge and attitude. Encouraging discussion among young and older males to challenge the underpinnings of such violence, encouraging them to speak out, take public stands and come together for action; experimenting with shaming perpetrators if no other strategy works, will have to be strategically taken forward.

The next generation of waste pickers

Government scholarships

Ensuring government scholarships for the children of waste pickers has been one of the most prominent initiatives undertaken by Kashtakari Panchayat. The waste picker’s children experience a high dropout rate due 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 Ghanbhatta Shishyavrutti awarded by the Pune Municipal corporation. There is also the Pre matric scholarship for children of those engaged in cleaning occupation which is awarded by the Zilla Parishad.

The application process saw delays this year as well due to changing nature of the education landscape, however, 1045 applications have been approved across the different scholarships, benefitting many children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Scholarship</th>
<th>By Whom</th>
<th>Who is eligible</th>
<th>Scholarship (yearly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-matric (Cleaning occupation)</td>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>Children of Waste pickers (Std 1st to 10th)</td>
<td>₹3000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanbhatta</td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>Children of Waste pickers studying in 8th to 10th Std</td>
<td>₹5000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Abul Kalam Azad</td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>10th Std Students with 65%</td>
<td>₹15000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabhau Sathe</td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>12th Std Students with 65%</td>
<td>₹25000/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of Scholarships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Scholarship</th>
<th>Applications Submitted</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre matric scholarship</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>Money due from government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanbhatta</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>Money received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulana Abul Kalam Azad</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Money received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabhau Sathe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Money received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education Sponsorships to vulnerable children:**

Moreover, the sponsorship program under KP, too, has benefitted 351 children this year. Sponsorship is awarded to children identified under the vulnerability criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBS</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCCI</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yardi</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scholarships offered by different organizations**
The aim is to reach out to the most vulnerable children, so they are not left behind. The criteria include:

- children who are orphaned or abandoned
- children being taken care single parents (widow/separated parents),
- children facing health issues or living with a disability,
- children of parents who have critical health issues due to a child may get drop out of the mainstream

The amount is directly transferred to the child’s bank account after verification of required documents. The team conducts short surveys and discussions with waste pickers which give us continuous insights. For example, we carried out a survey to capture educational expenses carried out by waste pickers to understand the major expense heads (textbooks, uniforms etc.). It also further helped them to arrive at the three slabs of offered scholarship amount, i.e.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Grades</th>
<th>Scholarship in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st to 7th</td>
<td>INR 3000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th to 10th</td>
<td>INR 5000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th &amp; 12th</td>
<td>INR 7000/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Academic grade wise scholarships*

**Impact of this intervention**

*Higher enumeration: government scholarships*

*Improved database management systems and efficient storage of child documents*

*More vulnerable children identified and sponsored*

*Children eligible for sponsorship has gone up from 293 in 2021 to 340 in 2022*
Highlights from external evaluation by Swedish Chamber of Coerce India:

The scholarship programme has attempted to improve its efficiency through various strategies. The first one is related to beneficiary identification, which is the programme’s core. In order to improve efficiencies, the team followed a structured approach to beneficiary selection, including the following:

1. Spread awareness of the scholarship programme via community meetings and outreach with targeted households. By doing so, the scholarship application pool could be enhanced, increasing the possibility that the most vulnerable families were aware of the programme and the eligibility criteria. As a simple IEC material, KP team has made an educational calendar where important dates for application to scholarship schemes are highlighted.

2. Helpline where questions from interested households could be answered. By doing so, the team provided a human touch to the process, ensuring that the probability of incorrect or non-eligible applications is reduced by providing the opportunity for a pre-application Q&A. This further improves the efficiency of the application and screening process. It also reduced the time for the beneficiary selection and secondary criteria matching round, improving the project timelines.

60 per cent of the girls surveyed felt that the scholarship received was instrumental in continuing their education, and 50 per cent connected the support to their right to education. Half of the girls interviewed linked the scholarship to improvement in their confidence levels with respect to moving ahead in life. Half of the girls interviewed connected the scholarship support to a reduction in families’ financial pressure.

While school was closed due to lockdown, Lakhan, a waste pickers son at Ambedkar Vasahat in Chandan Nagar, lost interest. After the lockdown ended, he began making up reasons to skip class.

His teacher called his parents several times to ask them to take Lakhan to school, but they were unable to do so because of work. After numerous tries, school authorities stopped asking. One day, his mother called the coordinator and requested assistance re-enrolling him in school after finding that the school was unable to accept him. For some reason it didn’t happen as Lakhan remained silent.

Lakhan attended a meeting when we organised a trip for drop-out students, and he was motivated by the information he had received. He only expressed interest in returning to school the next day. The day after, his
mother, Sunbai, and a social worker from our organisation went to the school. His teacher described their efforts to reintegrate Lakhan into the classroom. However, his parents remained silent. School was no longer ready to accept him back. Our social worker explained how Lakhan will experience loss in his life with this decision. After that, they agreed to take him, but only on condition that he continued to attend class and act correctly before they would seriously consider enrolling him. Therefore, they obtained a written promise from Lakhan’s parents to let him attend school. Lakhan has been routinely attending school since last month and enjoys his academic journey, too.

Engaging with students who dropped out of school:

A day-long workshop was held where we led the group of 42 children on a trek to Hanuman Hill. All of the students then visited the Babasaheb Ambedkar Museum and Memorial after spending time on the hill. We discussed the work of Dr Ambedkar in the field of education. We collectively investigated the following questions: Why don’t students attend classes? What are the challenges and other areas of interest? How should parents be involved?

As a result, three students—one from Ambedkar Vasahat and two from Taljai—came forward after a week to seek assistance in returning to school and their admission was facilitated.

- After the first intervention with the drop out children and the admissions for the rest are scheduled in the next academic year. The science exposure trip to Vigyan Ashram will further ensure the interest in either formal or vocational education.

- It was realized that around 16-20% of the children drop out after standard 8th and 9th each year and the number is estimated to be higher from 7th to 8th and this needs further investigation and support

Relief to waste picker families:

The Janashree Bima Yojana, a life and disability insurance scheme under which the PMC paid the premium (as per a general body resolution) for waste pickers was withdrawn by the central government and the scheme has been merged into the PMJJBY and PMSBY, with a hike in benefits and premium. From the period of 2018-2022 waste pickers were not insured by the government and KP raised funds to cover the deaths. Nominees of waste pickers were paid a sum of 20,000 or 30,000 and a total of 131 such families received the support across the city.
Glimpses of engagement with waste pickers and youth
The supportive functions played by Kashtakari Panchayat for the waste picker collectives, with increased, direct formal and organic participation of waste pickers ensured more consultative processes for these roles as well. The effort was to ensure the functions could later be played by the collectives directly over time.

Waste Characterization Study

A waste characterization study was carried out with the close involvement of waste pickers to study the quantum, composition and variation in Pune’s waste. For the study, waste from nearly 10,000 individuals in Pune (across income groups) over a one-week period was studied by sorting into 75 categories, totaling 16,000 kg of household waste. For each of the 75 categories, the quantum reclaimed by waste pickers was recorded to determine the effective recycling rates.

The report - ‘What We Waste’ details the results, and includes pathways for further study, and recommendations for improving waste management. Waste pickers were engaged not just in the segregation of the waste materials during characterization but also in the analysis and dissemination of the report and findings. They were also involved in visiting recyclers and understanding the entire value chain and interacting with the players within. “What We Waste” was launched in February 2023, and involved waste pickers as panelists for the session. The study (the sample size and rigorous methodology) and its results have been hailed as critically invaluable primary data that can inform national samples, and help draw blueprints for waste processing and in-situ composting. The key findings of the study are summaries here:

Waste generation:

- Pune’s average per capita household waste generation is 0.238 kilograms per day (0.953 kg per household).
- Wet waste constitutes 76% of household waste.
- Paper (7.9%) and plastic (7.5%) are the most abundant dry waste materials.
• Quantum of waste increases significantly with increase in income. Middle-income and high-income individuals generate twice and thrice respectively, as much as slum dwellers.
• Characterization remains similar across income groups. The proportion of Wet waste ranges between 76-77%. Paper (25-35%) and Plastic (30-32%) are consistently the most abundant types of in Wet waste across income groups, followed by sanitary waste (11-14%).

Recovery by waste pickers:

• 35% of the city’s household dry waste is recovered by waste pickers for recycling.
• Paper waste (48 TPD) Plastic waste (37 TPD) Glass (12TPD) together account for 87% of all waste recovered for recycling.
• 37% of plastics are recovered by waste pickers for recycling.
  o Mono-material rigid plastics (PET, HDPE and PP), are the most highly recycled plastics.
  o Within flexible plastics, transparent, monolayered flexible plastics are more highly recycled than their coloured counterparts. Multi-layered plastics have the lowest recovery rates.
  o 68% of compostable plastics ends up in the flexible plastic stream instead of the Wet waste stream.
  o the current recovery rate for rigid plastics in 2022 (69%) is far higher than the recycling target for 2024-25 (50%) prescribed by the recently notified guidelines for Extended Producers’ Responsibility (EPR).
• 32% of cloth waste is synthetic cloth (including polyester); and less than 6% of cloth waste is reclaimed by waste pickers.
• The most abundantly retrieved waste material by waste pickers in Pune, is paper. Recycling rates of different types of paper wastes vary significantly. Corrugated paper has a recycling rate of 85%. Road Scrap (mixed low value paper waste), accounting for over 70% of all paper waste, has a recycling rate of less than 20%.

Brand Audit

The annual Brand Audit, kicked off by the BreakFreeFromPlastics movement, that highlights the key plastic polluters was conducted this year too, and revealed similar mega players who have continued to contaminate the planet with their waste. This edition of Pune Brand Audit took place at ARAI hills with 25 volunteers. Volunteers from Viride group of St. Mira’s college participated in the clean-up drive and the audit. The Brand Audit encouraged youth to participate in the movement and celebrated Indian Swachhata League by taking real action to
curb plastic pollution. As always - multi-layered plastics (the type of plastic targeted by the ITC initiative) was found to be a largest contributor to plastic waste. The event received significant press and national and international acknowledgement. Kashtakari Panchayat participated in an online dissemination panel focusing on the outcomes, learnings, strategies and lessons from the Brand Audit for both environmental and worker groups and polluting corporates.

| Top 5 Polluters |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Pune            | International   |
| Balaji Wafers   | Coca-Cola       |
| Parle           | PepsiCo         |
| Mondelez        | Nestle          |
| Britannia       | Unilever        |
| Bisleri         | Mondelez        |

**Short films**

As a powerful outreach tool, 2 films on the waste pickers cooperative SWaCH and its imminent and ongoing struggles were made in the waste pickers’ voice. As always - they were excellent protagonists of the entire history, process, systems and achievements hitherto realised and the long struggle ahead towards their dreams.

‘Mol’, presents an ethnographic history of the waste picker movement in Pune, told through individual stories of empowerment, transformation and resilience. The film was made through a collaborative process with leaders from the waste picker community in Pune, and is dedicated to informal workers across the world. Mol was screened at the National Film Archives twice and received wide acclaim.

‘The Story of SWaCH’ film captures the journey of India’s largest wholly-owned waste picker cooperative, follows its struggles and successes, and presents a nuanced perspective on the integration of informal waste pickers. Excerpts from Story of Swach were screened in a public programme attended by the Honorable Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Several waste picker groups outside of India commended the rich story-telling narratives of both the films.
Waste pickers as Climate Champions

To shift the perspective on and of waste pickers from waste managers, as they are fairly well recognised, to climate warriors, an intensive, in-depth training programme was conducted with 59 selected leaders among them.

The sessions were conducted over September and October and included a baselines assessment to capture waste-pickers' understanding of various issues which was then shared with resource persons for modification of their sessions. The following topics were covered in the trainings:

- Waste-picker Trade Union Mobilizing and Organizing in Pune (30 Year history and recap)
- Waste-pickers organizing in Pimpri Chinchwad (neighboring city) — their struggles in setting up self-owned sustainable enterprises - In Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad; Status of contractualised waste-pickers and struggles with private operators
- Informality & Informal waste-pickers, Waste-pickers Demands for integration, social welfare, social security
- Waste-pickers Cooperative, its impact, status, challenges, contribution of waste-pickers to SWM, linkage to reduction in pollution and sustainable SWM, right to waste for waste-pickers
- River-walk along Muthai River, Water Pollution, Sources, Impact on Health, Link with plastics and presence of Micro-plastics
- Climate Change - Introduction, Sources, Impacts, methods of mitigation, Link to SWM and waste-pickers Contribution
- Air Pollution - Sources, Impacts, ways to reduce air pollution, Link to SWM and waste-picker contribution in reduction and mitigation
- Organic Waste Management - Biomethanation, Basic Science, Impact on Climate Change, Modular Biogas, Scope for generating green livelihoods
- Field Visit - PMC’s Centralized Material Recovery Facility, its operations, limitations, lack of recycling, RDF production, Air Pollution Impact.
- Plastic waste management, Multi-Layered Plastics, EPR
They ended with a recap of all sessions and presentations of waste-pickers on Climate Change and Plastics. The entire training methodology and content were very well received and other waste pickers shared their intention and commitment to participate in such sessions. All the participants expressed keen interest in repeat sessions on similar themes to ensure structured learnings and articulation as well as positioning around key issues impacting them. Given the impact of this process, we hope to take this to more waste pickers in the future.

Waste picker trainings

Waste picker meetings have been an important and integral part of our work. Over the years, several meetings have been held to discuss the history of the organization and its core work with the new coming waste pickers. This year, waste picker sessions across all the wards of the city were conducted on the values of the Indian Constitution and how the history of the waste pickers is linked to it. The meeting on the history of the organization was conducted by Surekha Gade. As someone who has been part of the waste picker collective since the very beginning, she has seen the organization evolve to become what it has today. With the organization expanding and increasing waste pickers becoming a part of it, it is necessary that waste pickers are aware of the legacy of the collective, one that they must continue to take forward.

Similarly, the trainings on understanding the values of the constitution were conducted by Subhash Vare. With tremendous experience and expertise, he provided waste pickers with profound insights and encouraged them to critically examine the social injustices they have faced, empowering them to emerge stronger as an occupationally vulnerable group.

Capacity building of staff

Excel Training Program

Working with data is an integral part of our work. Working with 7000 waste pickers and ensuring that their data is timely maintained, and updated requires suitable skills. This has been made possible with the excel training that is being conducted for all team members. This has helped with increased efficiency, and has brought uniformity to the data maintained. Moreover, in a
general sense it has enhanced the ability to process and visualise the data that the organisation has to handle on a daily basis.

**Outbound workshop and training**

The outbound training workshop, held at Velhe, was an experience that bought the entire team together. Nestled among the hills, this was training that provided respite from the daily stresses but it also provided an opportunity to realign ourselves to the vision of the organisation and feel connected to the larger movement. There were three significant activities that were conducted at the workshop. Each of the three activities were conducted with specific objectives to help the participant zoom out and align oneself to the macro picture by reflecting on the micro context.

Under the wellness funds for contemplative practices, training was organised with an aim to help the staff members and employees of Kashtakari Panchayat identify certain physical and mental well-being practices that encourage a better work-life balance. In the aftermath of the pandemic, these training proved to be essential as physical and mental health of workers gained rightful priority. Leading experts and specialists were invited to facilitate the workshops.

One of the trainings that was conducted on inculcating healthier food habits and ensuring a balanced diet. In the session, the staff members learnt about the essential food items to be included in their daily diet, and patterns of ideal food consumption. The session ended with information on alternative foods to ensure sustained nutrition.

**Global participation**

The 4th UN South Asia Forum on Business and Human Rights

The 4th UN South Asia Forum on Business and Human Rights was held on 20 to 22 March 2023 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The forum aimed to draw attention to the workers’ development in the region with the theme “Workers and Business in a Changing World” alongside other important topics. Over three days, it facilitated a robust, multi-stakeholder dialogue to prevent, mitigate and remediate business-related human rights abuses and advance decent work in South Asia.
Waste picker leader Suman More highlighted the role of waste pickers in mitigating climate change. Sharply delving into the policies like EPR, she explained the reasons for high recovery rates of plastic in Pune which is a result of the unique model of SWaCH. Suman concluded that it is waste pickers who handle the different types of plastics every day and must be included in policy framing discussions, where they can not only engage with the companies and the governments but also with the environmental groups.

The International Zero Waste Cities Conference

The International Zero Waste Cities Conference which was held during 26-27 January 2023 in Quezon City, Philippines, was attended by government officials, civil society organizations and Zero Waste communities and practitioners. The event featured Zero Waste champions from cities in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, the United States, Europe and Africa.

Pune City invited to showcase its model as a best practice for informal waste picker integration within a Zero Waste system. The conference served as a successful platform to spotlight Pune's innovative waste management initiatives. SwaCH, Pune's waste picker inclusive model, supported jointly by KP and PMC, took center stage, showcasing a remarkable example of inclusivity and sustainability. Additionally, the in-situ wet waste management model, also backed by KP, underscored Pune's steadfast commitment to achieving zero waste goals. As a notable highlight of the conference, Pune signed the Methane pledge, to commit to reducing 70% of methane emissions by 2030.
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