



Annual Report

2023 – 24



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Foreword

As India continues to attempt to recover its economies from COVID-19 nearly 3 years after the pandemic hit us, we have maintained the need to address the chronic inequities within waste work in Pune, as alternative systems have manifested within the informal economy to sustain work. Having focused significantly more on improving livelihood and increasing access to social welfare, KP has introduced a handful of new initiatives and resources for waste pickers and their families. Though this year has seen us through many ups and downs, it is the spirit of waste pickers that keep us going, with their persistence, courage, and hope, striving to pursue the best opportunities and safety security measures possible.

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 stakeholder management 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 organisations and stakeholders, and solicits 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.

Enabling Livelihoods:

The Waste Matters Movement

Waste Matters presents an **inclusive in-situ wet waste management model**, which is supported by the Oak Foundation and the Plastic Solution Fund. This model aims to address the growing concern of waste management in urban areas, particularly focusing on wet waste generated by households and commercial entities.



In Pune, 76% of the waste generated by households, regardless of income groups, is wet waste. This type of waste is a leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, making its proper management crucial for environmental sustainability. Decentralized waste management, particularly at the source, can significantly reduce the burden on municipal systems. By implementing this approach, there is potential to create 30 times more employment opportunities than in a centralized system. Additionally, for every tonne of waste processed, at least three minimum-wage equivalent jobs can be generated, further emphasizing the need for efficient waste management strategies.

Policy Framework and Challenges

India's Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules of 2016 mandate Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs) – which include both residential and commercial complexes producing more than 100kg of waste daily – to manage wet waste at the source. In Pune, BWGs are defined as entities of more than 50 housing units (roughly 50kgs per day), a step further than India's SWM, wherein the threshold is 100kgs of waste per day. As outlined in the Pune Municipal Corporation's (PMC) SWM Bye-laws (2017), BWGs are subject to incentives or penalties based on their adherence to the rules, however implementation is currently weak due to the challenges outlined below.

Despite the existing policy framework, many bulk waste-generating sites lack the necessary space to manage their waste on-site. The city's policy aimed to encourage in-situ composting by offering subsidies and tax rebates. For individual households, a subsidy of INR 1200 was offered, while Bulk Waste Generators were eligible for up to INR 120,000 (or 25% of the cost, whichever was lower). However, challenges have emerged in the implementation of this policy. There is a lack of reliable databases to track BWG compliance and insufficient property tax data to monitor and incentivize waste management. Moreover, the subsidy program only addressed capital expenditures, while in-situ management requires continuous operational oversight and reliable vendors for setup and operational services. To tackle this, Kashtakari Panchayat set up a successful system which surveyed, verified and monitored 2100 bulk generators leading to 15 bulk generators who were previously not complying with the laws to begin in-situ waste management.

People have deep rooted misconceptions about foul odors and undesirability of compost pits in their homes. High-tech but provenly false solutions like OWC machines and overnight composters, have a long history of failure, after which people are further convinced against in-situ wet waste management.

Our Intervention

The Waste Matters program set out to demonstrate inclusive and hyper-decentralized wet waste management. To overcome the initial hesitation, and modeled after the city's subsidy policy – we created an **incentive mechanism** to cover part of the capital cost of setting up the compost pit. Bulk Generators like residential communities applied to be considered as 'Zero Waste Partners', committing to cover the remuneration to their waste picker for a period of 3 years, and to participate in activities such as the reuse and thrift initiative (V-Collect). The maximum amount was INR 500 per household, with a strict eligibility and priority order. Based on this an average of INR 300 per household was finally disbursed.

Working closely with the municipality, we deployed a team of surveyors and surveyed Bulk Waste Generators in the city, and connected this to the city's property database. We developed and piloted a monitoring mechanism to periodically check compliance with the city's BWG policy. We also proposed that the city evaluate wet waste service providers (vendors) and publish a list of verified vendors in order to

enable citizens to make the switch to zero waste. A composting manual was developed in partnership with the Pune Municipal Corporation and published.

We also developed an online platform called *aawra* (a cheeky way of saying ‘clean up’ in the local language) where citizens can look up items to understand the best way they should dispose of them. This included information on pre-disposal handling and what happens to those items after they are discarded.

Our team of wet waste experts worked directly with citizens to encourage them to make the shift to at-source composting, inform them of the incentive mechanism and support them with troubleshooting and managing their wet waste. The team also identified and trained waste pickers in managing wet waste through the method identified. Low-technology, user-friendly, and sustainable solutions such as biomethanation and composting are being promoted as viable alternatives to high-cost complex technology. These systems are easy to use and maintain, and they offer long-term sustainability, making them an ideal solution for in-situ waste management.

So far, 82 sites or over 8,600 families have made the switch to in-situ wet waste management. 60 waste pickers have been trained and engaged for wet waste processing and are earning additional income for their work. This initiative will continue into the first quarter of next year. We aim to reach 100 Bulk Waste Generators.

OWC Machine Method:



Modular biomethanation:



Pit Composting:



Tray System Biogas Method:



Testimonials



Pallavi Kadam,
(Waste picker)

Pallavi Kadam is now an organic waste service provider. Pallavi says, "So far, was only working with dry waste. This year, I have learned to work with wet waste too. This has been an economic benefit to me, as I have been able to increase my work. I am also contributing to environmental protection the work I do reduces pollution and emissions and I am proud of the contribution I am making to the city. It is also a joy to learn new things!"

Arvinda Naik, Spring Hills society committee member, credits Santosh Salunkhe (project team member) for reviving in-situ composting. "I myself have advocated to the society committee to move to in-situ wet waste management. We rebuilt our composting pits, and it is working well. We had a function and felicitated our workers as well." Residents now segregate waste, and non-compliance results in action.

Arvinda Naik,
(Society Committee member)



Arvinda Naik,
(Society Committee member)

Through the dedication of waste pickers like Pallavi and communities like Spring Hills, vehicular transportation emissions of wet waste have been eliminated. This reduces pollution, CO₂, CO, and mitigates methane emissions.

Multi-Layered Plastic Initiative

Creating Value Through Inclusive Waste Management



A biscuit packet pulled apart to reveal the different layers of plastic and metal

Our groundbreaking Multi-Layered Plastic (MLP) recycling program, implemented in partnership with ITC Limited and the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), focusses on the hard to recycle packaging material that has profligated markets in recent years. Our initiative has demonstrated remarkable success in its mission to create environmental impact while supporting informal waste workers' livelihoods. The initiative has successfully collected and diverted **3,100+ metric tonnes of MLP from landfills and cement plants**.

The program's impact extends beyond environmental benefits, reaching more than

1,000 waste pickers across Pune. These workers have seen their monthly incomes increase by an average of **₹500+**, creating sustainable economic opportunities within the community. Our current operations process over **100 tonnes** of flexible plastics monthly, showcasing the initiative's significant scale and efficiency.

The operational framework consists of **12 tempo trucks** that traverse different areas of Pune, purchasing MLP directly from waste pickers at **₹4** per kilogram. The collected material is processed at our sorting and baling centers, where **25** full-time workers, all employed at minimum wage with full benefits, sort the material into **7-8** distinct categories for recycling into pellets and boards.

Our financial model demonstrates transparency and sustainability, though it requires ongoing support to remain viable. The total system cost amounts to **₹19.36** per kilogram of recycled MLP, while the revenue generated from recycling stands at **₹4** per kilogram. This creates a viability gap of **₹15.37** per



In most places, MLP lands up in landfills or cement plants, but not in Pune !

MLP reaching MRFs (Material recovery facilities) are usually contaminated by organic waste. The unique MLP model in Pune with on-spot segregation and quality control in the warehouse yields high quality, recyclable MLP. The project has diverted 3100+ tonnes of MLP from landfills and cement plants.



kilogram, which ITC Limited bridges through their extended producer responsibility commitment.



The initiative has created a robust social impact framework by integrating informal sector workers into the formal recycling system. Our full-time facility workers receive statutory minimum wages and social security benefits, while waste pickers gain access to stable income opportunities. Through cooperation with waste picker unions, many workers have accessed formal financial services for the first time, enabling savings and legitimate credit facilities instead of high-interest informal loans.

Our commitment to environmental sustainability has yielded significant results. By diverting MLP from harmful end-of-life processes like cement plant co-processing, we've created a more sustainable waste management

solution. The system processes well-segregated waste collected directly from citizens, ensuring higher quality MLP that's suitable for recycling rather than destructive disposal methods.

The program has gained recognition from key stakeholders in the waste management sector. The Global Alliance of Waste Pickers has featured our initiative as a model implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility with informal sector integration. Additionally, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board selected our program for their Digital Technology Platform pilot, acknowledging our adherence to CPCB Standard Operating Procedures and MPCB authorization requirements.

The success of this initiative demonstrates the viability of inclusive waste management systems that create value for all stakeholders. We've shown that environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability can coexist within a single framework. As we look to the future, we remain committed to scaling this model to other regions, improving operational efficiency, enhancing economic benefits for waste pickers, and strengthening our circular economy approach to MLP management.

This model serves as a blueprint for sustainable waste management initiatives worldwide, proving that with proper support and system design, challenging

materials like MLP can be managed responsibly while creating positive social impact. The initiative continues to evolve, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and adapting to changing market conditions, ensuring its long-term sustainability and impact.

Testimonial

"I have been working with SWaCH Pune for the past 10 years. I was one of the first waste pickers to benefit from the ongoing ITC low-value plastic collection initiative. For the last 5 years, I've been collecting Mix Men, (a mixture of low-value plastics, mainly MLP). I collect and sell around 60-70 kg of Mix Men plastic per week, earning an additional income of approximately Rs. 1000 per month. I save this extra income in a community savings scheme (Bhishi). I've used these savings for my children's marriage and to build a new house. This additional income also helps me buy daily household groceries like cooking oil and food grains, as well as meet my immediate medical needs."



**Sangita Lal Singh
Jadhav (Waste picker)**

Project Protoprint

Project Protoprint is an initiative supported by the European Union's SWITCH-Asia program, aiming to transform the informal recycling sector in Pune. Kashtakari Panchayat is leading a consortium of SWaCH, SWaCH Plus, Adelphi, and Social Seva for the implementation of the project. Through a hub-and-spoke model, the program was designed to source rigid plastic waste from waste pickers and process these into high value outputs – recycler pellets and 3D print filament. It was envisioned that the value created for these products would be channeled back to waste pickers from whom the waste was sourced. Once the model was set up and sustainable, it was to be handed over to a collective of waste pickers to manage in the long run.

The initiative began in 2020, and it is only in the last year that we have been able to get both our recycling units set up. Implementation delays have been caused due to the impact of the pandemic up to 2022, and subsequently through the steep learning curve we faced and the administrative delays in securing permissions.



Recycling Units

This year, we set up 2 recycling units – 1 for recycling plastic waste into granules, and another for recycling plastic waste into 3D print filament. The 3D print recycling unit has only just been set up and is in its nascency. The recycling unit sourced plastic waste from cooperative scrap shops, which have been supported with training and capacity building by the initiative. Waste from 250-300 waste pickers is processed

through the Protoprint recycling units. A total of 75 metric tons (MT) of material were collected from the waste pickers-led cooperative scrap shop and processed at our recycling unit. These units have created 20 formal jobs, giving waste pickers and their families a more stable and structured income.



So far, the recycling units are far from self-sustainable. We are working on increasing scale, improving the quality of input materials, organizing technical trainings for our team and supporting the unit with searching for market linkages. In the next year, we aim to achieve financial self-sustainability which can deliver increased incomes for waste pickers in the long run.

Training and capacity building

We have supported the waste picker-managed scrap shops with technical training and handholding support. We have also brought groups of waste pickers to the recycling unit to give them first-hand exposure to the recycling process. This is a first for many waste pickers – who form an integral part of the recycling value chain, but have not had any exposure to the recycling process itself. This exposure helps waste pickers understand what happens to waste they handle, and what types of materials are



suitable and unsuitable for the recycling process. We also discuss the other aspects of running recycling units including environmental compliances, and worker safety measures. A training module has been developed and 219 waste pickers have been trained.

Enabling Entitlements:

Facilitating access to government schemes

KP works with about 8,000 waste pickers and their families spread across 215 slums in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad (& surrounding peri-urban areas) who are associated with all or some of the above-mentioned organizations.

We operate using a hub-and-spoke model, with a ‘Kashtakari Helpdesk’ at the centre, and community leaders including ‘Sunbais’ (Community Mobilisers), Waste Picker ‘Pratinidhis’ (Community Leaders) and waste pickers within communities. This core model is complemented by thematic leads for key areas of health, education, domestic violence, legal cases & social welfare enrolment; a data & helpdesk (call) operator team and a program lead who monitors and governs the work and is accountable to the waste picker body. This structure ensures waste pickers are enrolled and get access to various social welfare schemes, resolve queries and grievances of waste pickers and work with the community to empower individuals and groups.

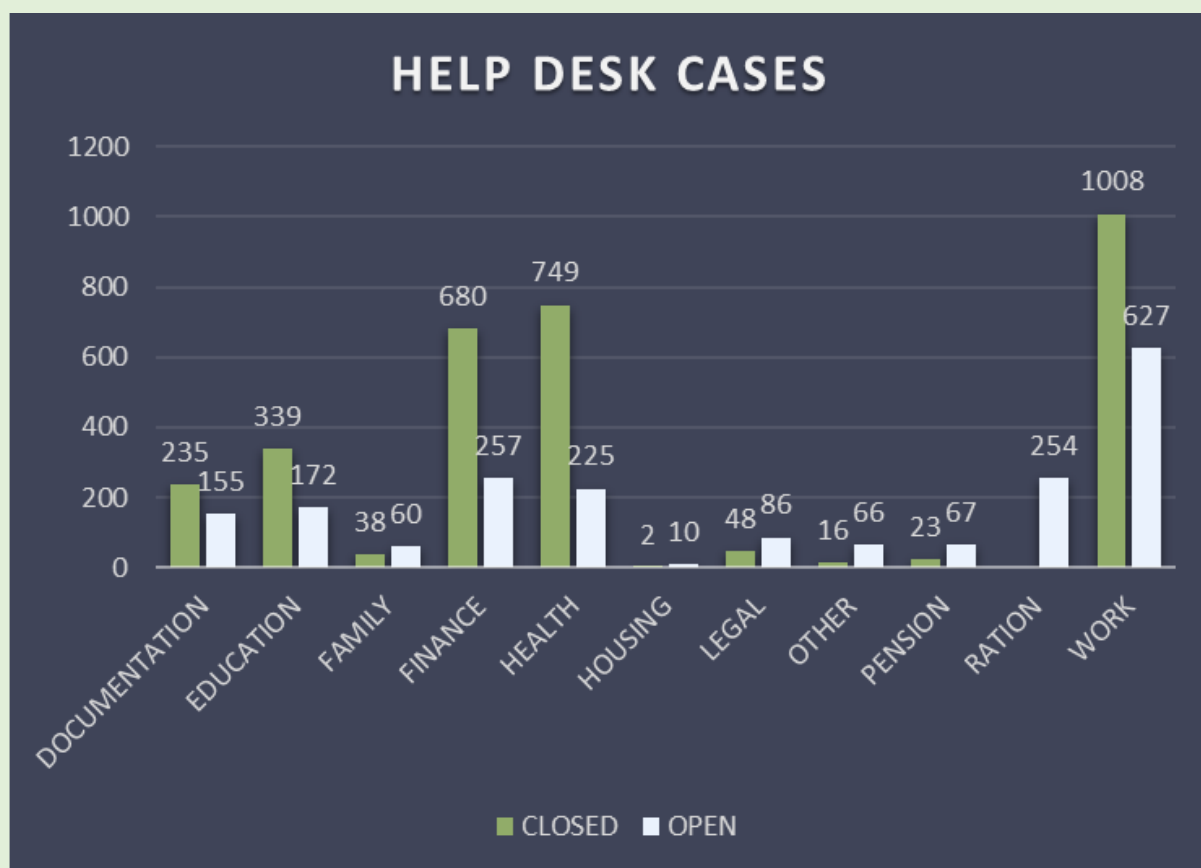
The Helpdesk

The Helpdesk, centrally operated by our organization, has become a trusted resource for waste pickers, built on empathy, creative solutions, and consistent support. It primarily addresses cases related to rights violations and access to government schemes, while also helping with the personal and professional challenges waste pickers face daily.



Intervention areas are chosen in consultation with waste picker representatives, focusing on health, financial security, livelihood, education, legal aid, documentation, pension, ration, housing, and violence. These themes support waste pickers' fundamental rights, socio-economic welfare, and social justice needs.

In 2023-24, the help desk received 5117 cases, out of which it closed 3138 cases. The graph below shows the number of closed and open (ongoing) cases in different areas such as documentation, education, work, health and so on.



Access to healthcare schemes:



Health is one of the most recurring and urgent concerns for waste pickers, as they often face significant barriers in accessing healthcare. This community is highly vulnerable to health risks but struggles with a lack of awareness regarding available healthcare schemes. Additionally, access to tertiary care is often out of reach due to the high costs involved. The helpline plays a critical role in informing waste pickers about relevant health schemes and

facilitating access to necessary healthcare services, ensuring they receive the medical attention they deserve. We support waste pickers in accessing the following schemes. All amounts are in INR.

- JAP: The **Jan Arogya Policy** is a government-backed health insurance plan aimed at providing affordable healthcare to low-income families. It helps

cover the costs of hospitalization, surgeries, and treatments, making healthcare more accessible without the financial strain.

No of waste pickers enrolled in the scheme	Total premium amount paid by PMC	Claims filed	Claims approved	Total claim amount
5935	5,57,037	106	97	4,57,667

- IPF: The "**Indigent Patient Fund**" (IPF), established by the Bombay High Court and the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, is a scheme for charitable hospitals in Maharashtra to allocate 2% of their gross billing to provide free or subsidized medical treatment to indigent and weaker section patients. The help desk writes letters to the relevant hospitals and community workers aid in the application process for subsidies and reduction in hospital fees for the waste picker community.

No of waste pickers enrolled in the scheme	Total cost of treatment	Total amount supported by scheme	Total amount paid by waste pickers
76	62,12,796	35,01,996	27,10,800

- VSY: **Vaidyakiya Sahayya Yojana** or Shahari Garib Yojana (Urban Poor Policy), is a health scheme of the Pune Municipal Corporation that provides financial assistance for medical treatment to the urban poor families. The helpdesk assists with the process of availing the VSY card. It provides 50% discount on the cost of treatment in private hospitals up to a maximum of INR 1 lakh per year per family.

No of waste pickers enrolled in the scheme	Total cost of treatment	Total amount supported by scheme	Total amount paid by waste pickers
25	30,54,000	16,99,500	13,54,500

- MPJAY: The **Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana** is a health insurance scheme specifically for poor families in Maharashtra. Named after social reformer Jyotirao Phule, it offers cashless treatment at empaneled hospitals, covering medical expenses for serious illnesses and surgeries, ensuring that financial barriers don't prevent people from getting the healthcare they need.

No of waste pickers enrolled in the scheme	Total cost of treatment	Total amount supported by scheme	Total amount paid by waste pickers
11	15,34,000	12,65,000	2,69,000

- Other: Other funding in the area of health and medical assistance is received from Mukul Madhav Foundation, Venkies, Shrimant Dagduseth Halwai Ganpati Trust, Support from Corporaters, MLAs, Local leaders and citizens.

No of waste pickers enrolled in the scheme	Total cost of treatment	Total amount supported by scheme	Total amount paid by waste pickers
50	34,84,904	24,39,140	10,45,764

Note: The figures entered are as reported by waste pickers and indicate an estimated amount.

Access to education schemes:

Education is a key tool for breaking the cycle of poverty among waste pickers. However, their children often face high dropout rates due to income insecurity, lack of resources, and limited opportunities and barriers in accessing government schemes. The government schemes require coordination with various stakeholders across the govt machinery as well as with banks and e seva kendras. We enable access to following educational schemes:

- Ghanbhatta Scholarship:

Ghanbhatta is a PMC scholarship for children of waste pickers studying in grade 8th to 10th. This year, **463 students** from classes 8 to 10 received the Ghanbhatta scholarship of ₹5,000 each, disbursing a total of **₹23,15,300**.

- Cleaning Occupation Scholarship:

Cleaning occupation scholarship, also known as Pre matric scholarship, is a centrally sponsored scheme in which centre and state contribute the funds in the ratio of 60:40. Children of waste pickers studying in stds 1st to 10th are eligible. This year, **812 students** received the Cleaning Occupation scholarship of ₹3,500 each, disbursing a total of **₹11,36,800**.

- Maulana Azad Scholarship

This is a scholarship of the PMC, for children of waste pickers who clear std 10th with 65% and above. This year, **15 students** qualified for the scholarship receiving **₹15,000 each**, for a total of **₹2,25,000**.

Access to other social welfare schemes:



A significant barrier to accessing social protection and welfare programs is the lack of essential documentation. This issue affects waste pickers' ability to receive ration, enroll in pension schemes, or even access medical care. In many cases, waste pickers face social biases when trying to obtain documents, especially in institutions like banks and government offices, where they are often denied service. The helpline works to bridge this gap by providing guidance on how to obtain the necessary documentation and advocating for better inclusion of waste pickers in formal systems.



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- PMC Widow pension scheme

This is a one-time support to widows residing under the jurisdiction of PMC. The application can be made up to 2 years after the death of the husband. This year, **4 waste pickers received the PMC widow pension of ₹15,000 each**, disbursing a total of **₹60,000**.

- PMC Disability scheme

This is an annual support provided to disabled individuals who have 60% or more disability as per the certificate. The application form can be made anytime during the year. This year, **5 waste pickers received the PMC disability support of ₹24,000 each**, disbursing a total of **₹1,20,000**.

- Shravanbal pension

The "Shravanbal Seva State Pension Scheme" is a Pension Scheme by the Department of Social Justice & Special Assistance, Govt. of Maharashtra. In this scheme, a monthly pension of ₹ 1500/- is provided to destitute persons in the state of Maharashtra. This year, **8 waste pickers received the Shravanbal pension of ₹1,500 per month**, amounting to a total of **₹1,44,000** over the year.

- PMJJBY and PMSBY

PMJJBY (Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana) is a life insurance scheme offering a ₹2 lakh death benefit for any reason, while PMSBY (Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana) is an accident insurance scheme providing ₹2 lakhs for accidental death or disability. **2,843 waste pickers** were enrolled into these policies with the PMC paying ₹12,96,408 in premiums. Two claims were filed and approved, disbursing ₹4,00,000 in total.

Building Bridges to Challenge Inequities:

The Education Project: Ensuring children continue in formal education

During the 2023-24 academic year, the education support program significantly expanded its reach and impact in supporting waste pickers' children through comprehensive interventions. The program successfully combined direct financial assistance, community engagement, and stakeholder engagement to create sustainable educational support mechanisms. This multifaceted approach has demonstrated notable success in addressing both immediate educational needs and long-term community development goals.

Notebook Distribution:



Through the notebook distribution initiative, a total of **1,312 children received 17,354 notebooks.**

Direct sponsorship support to vulnerable children:

Our sponsorship program has made significant strides in reaching vulnerable communities. The program particularly focuses on supporting the most vulnerable, with 253 children from single-parent households or widowed families, 61 abandoned or orphaned children, 12 cases where children or parents face critical illness, and 4 differently-abled beneficiaries. This targeted approach ensures support reaches those most in need.

Vulnerability	Count
Abandoned, Orphaned	61
Children/Parents critically ill	12
Differently abled	4
Single Parent, Widow	253
Grand Total	329

Sex	Count
Female	169
Male	160
Grand Total	329

Jyoti Savitri Prize:



Like every year, we came together to celebrate the grit, resilience and success of waste pickers children who cleared 10th, 12th and graduation/post-graduation levels. These mark significant milestones in their lives and a formal program was organized for all these children and their families to appreciate them, to invite speeches from parents and children and to listen to the government officials who also graced the event.

Senior veteran labour leader Dr Baba Adhav and Editor of Lokmat Sanjay Awate appreciated the waste pickers efforts in educating children despite the struggles they face every day. Given below is a summary of the children who were supported.

Type	No of children supported	Support per child	Total support
10 th	146	3000	4,38,000
12 th	83	5000	4,15,000
Graduation	15	7000	1,05,000
Post Graduation	3	9000	27,000

Climate Change Training Program

An intensive training program was conducted for 40 young waste pickers identified as potential community leaders. The program combined theoretical knowledge with practical exposure to create a comprehensive understanding of climate change and waste management. The sessions were conducted over a month and included a baseline assessment to capture waste-pickers' understanding of various issues which was then shared with resource persons for modification of their sessions



The training combined classroom sessions with field visits, allowing for hands-on learning experiences. An interactive learning methodology was employed throughout to encourage active participation and engagement.

Core Topics Covered

1. Legal Framework and Historical Context

The first topic focused on the constitutional right to life and its implications for waste workers, emphasizing the importance of protecting the rights of those working in the waste management sector. The history of waste management practices in Pune and the broader Indian context was also discussed to provide context. The training covered a comprehensive review of Solid Waste Management Laws and Legislation, helping participants understand the legal framework within which they operate. An analysis of the current status of waste pickers and the legal protections they are afforded was included, highlighting the rights and duties in the waste management sector.

2. Labour Organization and Rights

The training provided a detailed study of the history of waste pickers in Pune over the last 30 years. A case study was presented on the Pimpri Chinchwad waste-picker enterprises, exploring the challenges in establishing self-owned, sustainable businesses and the lessons learned from these organizational efforts. Participants examined the issues faced by contractualized waste pickers, focusing on interactions with private operators and employment security challenges. Additionally, the training addressed social welfare and security frameworks, particularly the integration challenges faced by informal waste pickers, current demands, future needs, and access to social protection schemes.

3. Climate Change and the Environment

External experts stepped in to speak to waste pickers about climate and environmental issues, and connect these issues to waste pickers and waste work. Parisar and Jeevit Nadi, local environmental organizations working in Pune, came onboard as trainers for these sessions.

Climate Change Education: The fundamentals of climate change were discussed, with an emphasis on its global impact and local manifestations. The training focused on mitigation strategies specific to waste management, highlighting the waste pickers' role in climate change mitigation. Participants also documented current contributions to environmental protection by waste pickers.

Air Pollution: The training included an exploration of pollution sources, along with their health and environmental impacts. Waste pickers were educated on strategies for reducing air pollution and the role of waste management in improving air quality. The session also discussed the contributions of waste pickers to pollution reduction efforts.

Water Pollution: Conducted entirely through a 'river walk', this section confronted waste pickers with the issue of water pollution, the intersection between waste manage and water, and the impacts of water pollution on health.



4. Wet Waste Processing

Participants learned about biomethanation principles and applications, including the basic scientific concepts behind this process. The implications for climate change were discussed, and modular biogas systems were introduced as potential solutions. Green livelihood opportunities related to organic waste processing were also explored. This was a first for many waste pickers, despite decades of working with waste!

1. Dry waste management

Waste pickers took a field trip to see how the city manages dry waste that waste pickers discard. They visited a Material Recovery Facility, and a biomining and Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) plant. Participants analyzed the operational efficiency of the facility and examined the limitations of recycling processes.

2. Plastic Waste :

To conclude the climate training, we did a deep dive on plastic waste. A comprehensive analysis of the lifecycle of plastics was presented, with a focus on the lifecycle environmental impacts, and the limitations of plastic recycling (including learnings from the Protoprint project). The concerns raised by environmental groups regarding plastics were openly discussed – including the call to ban plastic production, and the claims that recycling is a false solution and should be discouraged. We also discussed policy frameworks like Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). Waste pickers openly engaged on the subject and the conflict it presents them with. On one hand, plastics are critical to their livelihoods, contributing more than 50% of their income from scrap. On the other hand, as citizens and mothers, the environmental impacts and limits of recycling make the continued production of plastics undesirable. Through plenary discussion, group discussion, and even heated arguments, waste pickers arrived at a position, and proposed a pathway for a just transition away from single use plastics.

Path forward

Our long-term vision encompasses expanding the program's reach to more waste pickers, developing strong grassroots leaders, and fostering international representation opportunities, all while maintaining consistent educational support through regular meetings. Beyond environmental education, we're witnessing the emergence of community leaders capable of addressing broader social issues.