



# Annual Report

2024 – 25



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# Foreword

The past year marked a watershed moment in India's waste governance landscape—and in the long arc of organising by waste pickers. For decades, waste pickers have fought for recognition, dignity, and the right to be included in how cities are imagined, cleaned, and governed. In 2024–25, these efforts bore fruit.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the NAMASTE scheme—a first-of-its-kind national initiative for identifying, integrating, and providing social protection to waste pickers. Pune became the first city to implement it, with Kashtakari Panchayat (KP) among the earliest organisations empanelled as a Resource Organisation. At the same time, the Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers came together to propose national model guidelines to institutionalise enumeration and welfare linkages across states. These milestones were not sudden developments; they were built on years of advocacy, experimentation, and grassroots leadership by waste picker movements.

More locally, an institutional achievement also marked the year: SWaCH extended its contract with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), securing another five years of efficient, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective door-to-door waste collection. A major victory for Pune's waste pickers, it reinforced a crucial model of decentralised, worker-led solid waste management built on mutual accountability.

As this report details, KP's work over the last year has spanned a wide range—from public infrastructure design and decentralised recycling to disaster response and national policy engagement. At its core, it affirms a simple, powerful truth: that those who clean our cities must be at the centre of how we build a more just, climate-resilient future.



# Introduction

The year 2024–25 marked a period of significant transformation and consolidation for Kashtakari Panchayat (KP), as it deepened its commitment to recognising, supporting, and empowering waste picker communities across Pune. This annual report chronicles a wide spectrum of initiatives that collectively advanced worker rights, urban sustainability, and inclusive governance.

KP's work this year was anchored in five strategic pillars.

First, the organisation strengthened public infrastructure and operational conditions for waste pickers through design-led, community-driven solutions. **62 modular “pinjra” storage units** were installed citywide, and new design prototypes were developed to address the constraints of dense, hard-to-reach urban areas. These co-created units improved workplace safety, increased material recovery, and enhanced the earnings and dignity of over **120 waste pickers**. In parallel, **38 chronic** dumping spots were reclaimed through beautification efforts led by waste pickers in collaboration with citizen groups and city officials—transforming sites of neglect into clean, functional public spaces and reducing operational inefficiencies.

Second, KP scaled up livelihood security through integrated, climate-aligned recycling systems. Two flagship initiatives—the KP–ITC MLP Recycling Project and Project Protoprint—processed over **1,400 metric tonnes of plastic waste** while generating 27 formal green jobs for informal workers. These systems not only stabilised earnings but also embedded waste pickers within formal value chains of the circular economy. Concurrently, a pilot to **electrify 150 pushcarts** was launched to reduce the ergonomic strain of manual collection. Through co-design and planned municipal integration, the initiative aims to redefine occupational safety standards in informal sanitation work.

Third, KP's policy work reached new milestones in securing statutory recognition and welfare access. KP hosted the Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers (AIW) in Pune for a national consultation and anchored a working group to jointly develop model guidelines for the enumeration, integration, and protection of waste pickers nationwide. After years of organising waste pickers and sustained advocacy by KP, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the **NAMASTE Scheme**—a landmark in India's waste sector policy. **KP was empanelled as a Resource Organisation** and implemented the scheme's first citywide rollout. Through extensive field outreach, **1,230 itinerant workers were registered** and formally linked to health, education, and livelihood entitlements.

Fourth, KP's social welfare ecosystem provided **critical support to over 8,000 workers** and their families. The central **help desk resolved over 3,100 cases** across domains, including healthcare, documentation, education, and domestic violence. More than **₹80 lakh** was mobilised through four major public health schemes, and nearly **400 children received**



**targeted academic and vocational support**—advancing educational continuity and intergenerational mobility. These interventions reflected KP’s holistic approach to worker well-being, combining field presence with systemic facilitation.

Fifth, KP responded swiftly to climate-induced displacement. In August 2024, heavy flooding devastated waste picker settlements in Patil Estate and other riverbank areas. KP’s emergency response, supported by institutional partners, delivered food security and recovery assistance to 300 affected families. The experience reinforced the urgent need for resilient infrastructure and inclusive disaster governance that centers informal urban communities.

Finally, training and convenings played a vital role in shaping collective identity, political awareness, and technical capability among waste pickers. Close to **700 waste pickers benefited from a wide range of capacity-building initiatives** organised by KP—from leadership workshops for KKP representative to thematic training on health, entitlements, and grievance redressal. Climate leadership programs equipped participants to frame their work within broader environmental justice narratives, while hands-on recycling training strengthened workers’ understanding of material value chains. The *SWaCH chi Jatra* brought together nearly 2,000 waste pickers in a powerful affirmation of solidarity and public recognition. Through these events, KP not only built individual capacity but also reinforced collective voice, preparing waste pickers to be advocates, educators, and co-designers of more inclusive urban systems.

This year’s work reaffirms a core principle: that those who clean our cities must be at the centre of how we imagine and build sustainable futures.



# Enhancing Livelihoods

## Increasing recycling through micro-Storage Units (Pinjras)

Pinjras — modular, portable micro-storage units — have emerged as a transformative micro-infrastructure for waste pickers across Pune. They provide secure, weather-protected spaces for sorting and temporarily storing recyclables, significantly reducing material losses due to theft or damage and improving occupational safety. Particularly for women waste pickers, these units offer a dignified, harassment-free workspace and a visible anchor within the urban waste management landscape.

Under *Project Protoprint*, **62 pinjras** were installed across the city, directly benefiting **over 120 waste pickers**. Impact assessments show:

- An average **increase of 42.95 kg** in recyclables collected by an individual waste picker per month
- A **62.5% increase in monthly income** (from ₹3,965 to ₹6,444).
- A shift from daily to **9-day collection cycles**, enabling bulk sales and better price realisation.
- **Improved recovery of niche materials** such as *bhakri*, *kad dhanya*, and old clothes—typically excluded due to storage constraints—was observed among waste pickers using pinjras. Most had not previously collected these materials, but with access to secure storage, they have now begun doing so, demonstrating how infrastructure can directly expand the scope of material recovery.

These outcomes not only improved waste picker earnings but also incentivised the collection of low-value materials such as MLPs and flexible plastics—materials typically excluded due to lack of storage space —thus advancing both economic and environmental goals.

Complementing the deployment efforts, the *Avient CSR initiative* focused on infrastructure and design innovation. Following a **citywide audit**, 59 pinjras were found to be in need of major repairs that could extend their life, so we began the process of repairing these units. We also developed new designs for these units in collaboration with Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture (BNCA) and MIT Institute of Design, and with inputs from waste pickers.





These prototypes addressed critical issues in the legacy designs—such as rusting, poor door mechanisms, and size. We zeroed in on a new modular design, a smaller unit, designed for long-term use and suitable for harder-to-reach spaces. The exterior design, too, **was reimagined**. The new design reinforced the need for segregation and highlighted the role waste pickers play in recycling.

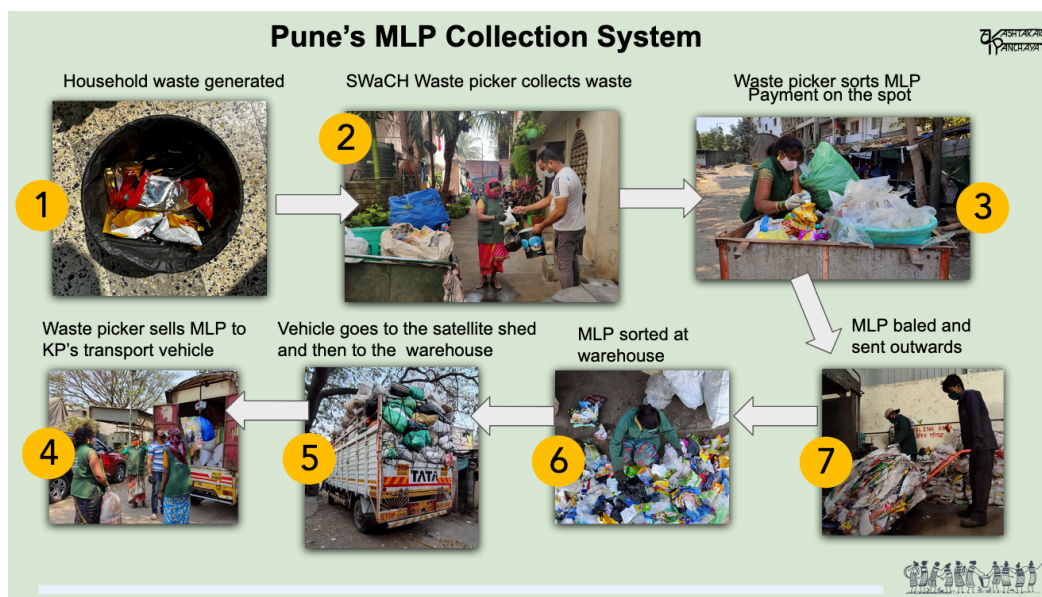


## KP-ITC MLP Recycling Project

Our groundbreaking Multi-Layered Plastic (MLP) recycling program, implemented in partnership with ITC Limited and the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), has continued its mission to create environmental impact while supporting informal waste workers' livelihoods. This year, we sent **1,313 metric tonnes** of MLP for mechanical recycling. The program's impact extends beyond environmental benefits, reaching more than **750 waste pickers** across Pune. This year, the **purchase rate was raised to ₹5 per kilogram** during the year. The sale of MLP now contributes about Rs. 700 to a waste picker's monthly income.

### Operations at a glance:

- **12 trucks** collect MLP directly from 750+ waste pickers at ₹5/kg
- Material is transported to the Sorting Baling Centre
- 29 staff members sort the material into 7-8 types, before baling it and sending it to recyclers.



MLP, by its nature, is difficult to recycle, and the recyclers who do accept MLP purchase it at very low rates (around 4 Rs per kilogram). The cost of purchasing, segregating, transporting, aggregating, baling, and getting MLP to the doorstep of a recycler costs far more than that - Rs. 19 per kilogram. By itself, it means a loss of Rs. 15 per kilogram. To make MLP recycling possible, ITC intervenes to support the viability gap.

In 2024–25, **changes in the EPR regulation** weakened incentives to recycle MLP by reclassifying it under Category II, the flexible plastic category, effectively allowing producers to meet obligations without engaging in actual MLP recovery. This had direct impacts on our work, and we undertook a study to understand the MLP recycling landscape in the country. We contacted 170 registered Category II and III recyclers, interviewed waste picker organisations and recyclers across the country and published a report: *“What Waste Pickers (Have to) Waste”* with our insights and recommendations.



## Project Protoprint

*Project Protoprint*, supported by the **European Union’s SWITCH-Asia program**, is a flagship initiative that integrates informal waste pickers into the plastic recycling value chain—moving them from the margins of collection to central roles in material processing and value creation. Implemented in partnership with **SWaCH, SWaCH Plus, Adelphi, and Social Seva**, the project has established waste picker-operated recycling units that convert HDPE and PP plastic waste into high-quality recycled granules and 3D printing filament.

Between April 2023 and March 2024:

- **Plastic purchased:** 125.6 metric tonnes (MT)
- **Material extruded:** 62.7 MT
- **Granules sold:** 57.6 MT

The plastic waste is sourced from SWaCH waste pickers and their cooperative scrap shops before being processed at the Protoprint unit. The process includes flaking, caustic washing, drying, extrusion, and granulation. The resulting product is a high-quality, traceable recycled raw material that meets the needs of downstream manufacturers. All this, while creating 22 formalised waste picker jobs—across sorting, extrusion, and supervision—with minimum wages, social security, and work flexibility—facilitating informal-to-formal transitions.

Efforts were also made to connect with major brands seeking traceable, fair-trade recycled materials. However, issues of **scale, consistency, and certification** continue to be barriers in mainstream procurement partnerships. While the unit met operational safety standards, and the product itself met technical standards, our inability to process the large quantity requirements of the big players has been an issue.

## Engagement, Events, and Trainings

In 2023–24, Protoprint participated in several key convenings to advocate for circular models grounded in equity:

- **Plastic Recycling Show India:** The Protoprint team showcased the end-to-end recycling value chain—from waste picker-sourced plastic to final recycled granules and filament.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy in Plastics:** At a high-level panel on plastic circularity, Protoprint presented its model as a replicable example of embedding informal workers into the core of plastic recycling infrastructure. The approach was framed as a just transition strategy—ensuring that value creation in circular economies does not exclude the workers most vital to waste recovery.
- **CIPET Training:** Three staff members attended a seven-day residential course at CIPET (Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology). The training covered advanced recycling processes, plastic testing, and exposure to a variety of polymer-specific operations across formal and informal recycling units. Site visits to small- and large-scale processors expanded their understanding of the broader landscape and built technical confidence in reprocessing and quality control.



## Organic Waste Management

Organic waste constitutes an estimated 76% of household waste in Pune. Mismanagement of this wet waste is one of the top three anthropogenic contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. Centralised organics processing systems remain expensive, inconsistent, and vulnerable to inefficiencies—prompting a shift toward decentralised, at-source solutions that reduce waste transportation, enhance energy security, and curb emissions. Under the *Commit to Zero* campaign supported under the Oak Foundation grant, which helped over 43,000 citizens shift to at-source composting.

This decentralised composting initiative supported residential communities in establishing in-situ systems for organic waste processing run by waste pickers. The program targeted bulk waste generators to maximise waste diversion from landfills while promoting behavioural change at the household level. This initiative has covered 13,692 households across 121 societies (with 25 having been added over this financial year), diverting close to 9 tonnes of organic waste daily and securing stable livelihoods for 125 waste pickers. It has increased waste picker earnings by ₹3,630/- per month on average, while saving the municipality ₹0.55 Cr in transport costs.



*Biogas installation at the Savitri Bai Phule Pune University*

In addition to this, **50 modular biogas units** were installed in the homes of waste pickers across slum settlements in Pune. Each **2 kg/day digester** converts household organic waste into cooking gas, offsetting up to **50% of LPG use** per family. This intervention directly contributes to **climate mitigation**, improves household energy access, and strengthens the role of waste pickers in the city's circular economy.





### Key Metrics and Outcomes

Indicator	Value
Total units installed	50 units
Annual organic waste processed	36,500 kg
Annual biogas generated	36,50,000 litres
Annual savings per family	₹7,200

Through the biogas initiative, each unit generates ~40 minutes of cooking gas, significantly reducing fuel costs in low-income areas. Community engagement overcame initial resistance through field demos and user testimonials, while municipal adoption of monitoring tools and vendor listings enhanced regulatory alignment. However, **scalability is constrained**—biogas units require concrete bases, limiting viability in *vasti* (slum) housing. Additionally, **maintenance burdens** have led some waste pickers to discontinue usage. Despite these constraints, when implemented, the model has delivered strong feedback and tangible economic and environmental benefits.



## Chronic Spot Beautification: Eliminating Waste Dumping through Community-Led Urban Interventions

Across Pune city, over 500 locations—commonly referred to as *chronic spots* or *garbage vulnerable points*—serve as persistent sites of illegal dumping. These areas undermine public health, overburden waste management systems, and reinforce negative stereotypes against waste pickers, who are often incorrectly blamed for the lack of cleanliness.

To address this, Kashtakari Panchayat, in collaboration with SWaCH and the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), launched a citywide intervention to eliminate **38 chronic dumping spots** across the city. The approach combined sanitation infrastructure, visual redesign, community engagement, and operational coordination to reclaim these spaces and restore urban dignity.



### Intervention Summary

Each site was addressed through a mix of context-specific interventions, including:

- Wall painting with social and environmental messages
- Installation of potted plants, reused tyres, and rangoli designs to beautify and repurpose the space
- Deployment of tarpaulins (tadpatris) at feeder points to reduce the visual impact of temporarily stored waste
- In select areas, benches and footpath repainting to restore functionality and deter misuse





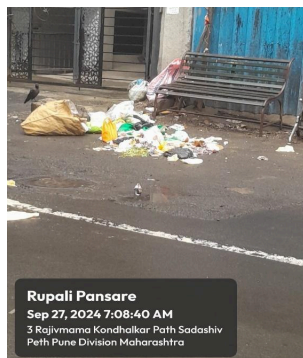
**Ashwini Gawkwad**  
 Sep 25, 2024 07:57:30  
 Shiv Darshan Road Swargate Pune  
 Division Maharashtra



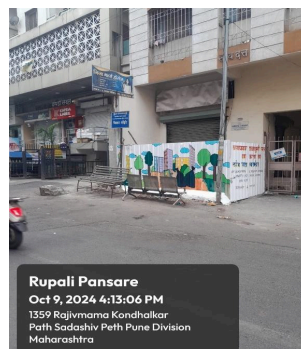
Citizen groups, including **Ganesh mandals, senior citizens, local youth, and college students**, were mobilised to participate in the transformation drives, reinforcing a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for public cleanliness.

**Community Outcomes**

- **Cleaner Public Spaces:**  
 All 38 sites are visibly transformed, reducing fly-tipping and restoring functional public space. Citizens now use these spaces more actively, especially footpaths and community gathering points.
- **Improved Public Health:**  
 Reduced garbage heaps lower the risk of pest infestations, stagnant water, and disease transmission in dense urban areas.
- **Operational Efficiency:**  
 30+ drives involved PMC officials directly. Feeder point improvements led to a reduction in 1,800–2,700 hours of unpaid waiting time daily for 900+ waste pickers, improving their work conditions and time management.
- **Cost Savings for PMC:**  
 By removing the need for recurring cleanup at chronic spots, the initiative supports long-term reduction in waste management costs and resource deployment.
- **Behavioural Change:**  
 Positive feedback from citizens and reduced complaints reflect a shift in public perception—both toward city sanitation and toward the role of waste pickers. The initiative fostered a sense of shared ownership in maintaining urban cleanliness.



**Rupali Pansare**  
 Sep 27, 2024 7:08:40 AM  
 3 Rajivmama Kondhalkar Path Sadashiv  
 Peth Pune Division Maharashtra



**Rupali Pansare**  
 Oct 9, 2024 4:13:06 PM  
 1359 Rajivmama Kondhalkar  
 Path Sadashiv Peth Pune Division  
 Maharashtra



# Enabling Entitlements

## NAMASTE Scheme

The National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) is a central government initiative aimed at formally recognising waste pickers as part of India's sanitation workforce. The scheme's core objectives include the identification and digital profiling of waste pickers, registration on a national portal, and automatic linkage to welfare schemes based on that registration. It also seeks to ensure their integration into formal sanitation infrastructure, such as Dry Waste Collection Centres (DWCCs), thus establishing a pathway to dignified, secure work.

Jointly administered by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), and Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DoDWS)—and implemented via the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)—the scheme represents a historic step in institutionalising waste picker inclusion at a national level. In March 2025, Pune became the first city to implement the scheme, with Kashtakari Panchayat being among the first organisations to be officially empanelled as a Resource Organisation, tasked with outreach, mobilisation, registration support, and coordination with municipal and national agencies.

## Objectives and Scope of the Scheme

The NAMASTE Scheme aims to extend long-overdue social protection to waste pickers by:

- Conducting a nationwide digital **profiling and registration** process via a government-deployed mobile application
- Issuing **official occupation-based ID cards**
- Linking registered workers to key welfare schemes, including:
  - *Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY* (health insurance)
  - *Pre-matric scholarships* for children of waste pickers
  - *e-Shram portal* registration for informal sector entitlements





*Additional Commissioner, PMC, Mr Prithviraj BP, interacting with waste pickers at the camp*

### **Pune Roll-Out and KP's Implementation Work**

The scheme was launched in Pune on 26 March 2025 at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Hall, in the presence of senior officials from the PMC's Solid Waste Management Department.



#### **Implementation:**

- Registration of over 8,000 SWaCH waste pickers was initiated and will be completed in the coming months.
- Additionally, using a dedicated team of field coordinators trained to conduct early morning and late-night surveys across the city to identify and engage with itinerant waste pickers—an often invisible and underserved group within the informal waste economy—KP identified and enrolled 1,230 itinerant waste pickers, with 787 of them successfully linked to the Urban Health Insurance Scheme (UHS).





- Outreach was extended to over 40 scrap shops, serving as contact points for information and mobilisation.
- In Patil Estate vasti, where documentation gaps prevented access to schemes, KP worked with PCMC to facilitate medical certification camps, successfully obtaining age documents for 9 children and 2 adults, thus enabling their enrolment in schools and welfare programs.

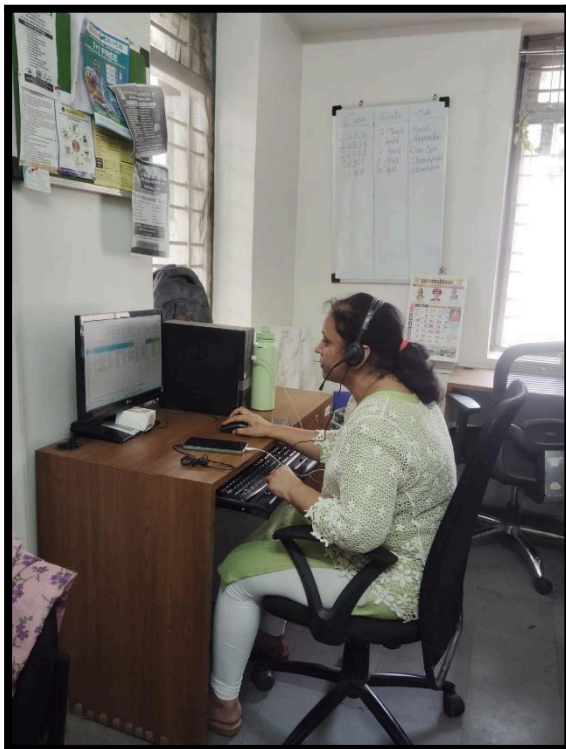
#### Significance and National Relevance:

The inclusion of waste pickers under the NAMASTE Scheme marks a landmark national shift—moving from informal recognition to formal entitlements for India’s sanitation workforce. Anchored in years of advocacy by the Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers, this rollout fulfils a long-standing policy demand. In Pune, the scheme builds on a legacy of integration and demonstrates the value of community-led implementation. KP’s role as a Resource Organisation shows how trusted local actors can bridge policy and practice. The Pune model offers a scalable template for inclusive urban governance nationwide.



## Helpdesk

KP works with about 8,000 waste pickers and their families spread across 215 slums in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. 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.



In 2024–25, the helpdesk received 2,577 calls regarding various queries, grievances, and support required, of which 1,314 were completely resolved. On closer examination, 977 cases related to health, 710 to education, and 405 to documentation — highlighting these as areas of greatest need. Only 2,066 cases required any external coordination for the resolution of actual issues. Some highlights below



<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Health</b>	977	Insurance claims, scheme applications, emergency hospital support; some required physical intervention
<b>Education</b>	710	School admissions, hostel access, and fee support
<b>Documentation</b>	405	ID cards, certificates, bank accounts, and other documentation issues
<b>Legal</b>	143	Divorce filings, land disputes, and other legal matters are resolved via a legal network.
<b>Family</b>	86	Family-related issues, potentially including domestic violence and disputes
<b>Pension</b>	104	Pension-related queries and access support
<b>Other</b>	74	Miscellaneous issues not classified under other categories
<b>Ration</b>	68	Ration card access and entitlements
<b>Housing</b>	10	Housing access or dispute-related issues
<b>Total</b>	2,577	Total cases received



## Access to Healthcare Schemes

Healthcare remains one of the most pressing and recurring concerns for waste pickers. Frequent injuries, chronic occupational health issues, and poor baseline access to preventive care make this population particularly vulnerable. When a serious illness or accident occurs, the cost of treatment can trigger severe financial shocks for entire families.

Yet, there are multiple support mechanisms available—ranging from government schemes, charitable hospitals, and cashless insurance networks, to municipal entitlements and scheme-linked reimbursements. The key challenge is navigating this fragmented landscape and accessing the right support at the right time.

To address this, we urge waste pickers to reach out to KP's community mobilisers or the helpline in times of health crises. We can assist in:

- Identifying which hospitals are scheme-linked or offer free/subsidised care
- Determining what kind of support (cashless, reimbursement, charitable aid) is applicable
- Providing claim documentation assistance
- Liaising with hospital social workers and scheme nodal officers for faster processing

Scheme	Description	No. of waste pickers benefited
<b>Indigent Patient Fund (IPF)</b>	Charitable hospital subsidy (2% of their gross billing) mandated by the Bombay High Court for free or reduced-cost treatment to indigent and weaker section patients.	66
<b>Vaidyakiya Sahayya Yojana (VSY)</b>	PMC scheme offering 50% cost reduction for treatment in private hospitals (up to ₹1 lakh/year) to urban poor families.	24
<b>Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MPJAY)</b>	State insurance scheme offering cashless treatment at empanelled hospitals for serious illnesses.	17
<b>Support from other sources</b>	Aid was mobilised through NGOs, trusts, elected officials, and community donors for emergency care.	54
<b>Universal Health Insurance Scheme (UHS)</b>	Government-backed insurance with PMC-paid premiums, covering hospitalisation and surgeries for 5,634 waste pickers.	70



In some instances, more than one scheme can be applicable, and there were 5 such cases where a combination of schemes was applicable. Lalita Rahul Pawar, a waste picker based in Pimpri Chinchwad, was admitted to the DY Patil Hospital due to cardiovascular distress. She had to undergo an angioplasty procedure, for which the help desk helped her secure ₹1.5 lakhs through the MPJAY policy. She received a further discount of ₹24,000 from the IPF, leaving her with a bill of only ₹7,000 for medicines.



## 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 government machinery, as well as with banks and e-seva kendras. We enable access to the following educational schemes:

- Ghanbhatta Scholarship:

Ghanbhatta is a PMC scholarship for children of waste pickers studying in grades 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. This year, a total of 411 students from classes 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> received the Ghanbhatta scholarship of Rs. 5000 per head per annum.

- Cleaning Occupation Scholarship:

The cleaning occupation scholarship, also known as Pre matric scholarship, is a centrally sponsored scheme in which the centre and state contribute the funds. Children of waste pickers studying in grades 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> are eligible. Applications for 417 children have been filled out online, but due to some technical and administrative delays from schools, the remaining 400 forms are being submitted offline. The children will receive a scholarship of Rs 3500 each per annum.

- Maulana Azad Scholarship

This is a scholarship of the PMC, for children of waste pickers who clear std 10<sup>th</sup> with 65% and above. 21 children received the benefit of this scholarship of Rs 15,000 each.

- Annabhau Sathe Scholarship

This is also a scholarship of the PMC, for children of waste pickers who clear std 12<sup>th</sup> with 65% and above. 5 children received the benefit of this scholarship of Rs 25,000 each.

## Direct sponsorship support to vulnerable children:



Vulnerability	Count
Abandoned, Orphaned	71
Children/Parents critically ill	14
Differently abled	4
Single Parent, Widow	276
Grand Total	365

Sex	Count
Female	192
Male	173
Grand Total	365

### Access to school supplies- Notebook Distribution:



We distributed a total of 16475 notebooks to 1254 children studying in schools and colleges. The process allowed us to engage with children, their parents and also collect their marksheets and other relevant documents that are useful for scholarship applications.



## Student Guidance, Reintegration, and Learning Support

In the past year, a series of structured interventions was undertaken to support adolescents navigating critical academic transitions and dropout-related challenges.



Two dedicated group counselling sessions were held—one with 43 students in the 10th standard and another with 35 students in the 12th standard. These sessions were facilitated by Prof. Memane, a senior academic with years of experience in evaluating board exam papers. His contextual understanding of both the academic demands and the socio-economic barriers students face enabled an empathetic yet pragmatic engagement with the students. These sessions helped clarify exam-related anxieties, addressed motivation, and discussed career and higher education pathways.



In addition to these group efforts, one-on-one counselling was conducted with 35 students who had dropped out in the previous academic year. These were intensive sessions aimed at understanding personal, familial, and structural reasons behind school discontinuation. As a result, three students applied for readmission into formal schooling, while the remaining were noted for re-engagement during the next admission cycle. An exposure visit to the PCMC Science Park was also organised, offering an experiential learning opportunity to children from the PCMC region. This trip aimed to inspire curiosity and foster aspirations in science and technology among urban marginalised students.



### Targeted interventions for students in higher education:

Recognising the multi-dimensional challenges faced by students in secondary and post-secondary education, a suite of targeted interventions was implemented:

Sr no	Indicators	Beneficiaries
1	Support for form filling for 10 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> students reappearing in exams.	25
2	Providing direct support to identified 10th & 12th children (21 expected booklets, textbooks, stationary etc.)	184
3	Connecting STD 8+ students to bridge classes and private tuitions	191
4	Youth skill-building classes, vocational training	91



*Children with their copies of 21 expected (left) and studying in a tuition class (right)*

A total of **388 children** from **299 waste picker families** received targeted educational support, with a gender distribution of **219 girls** and **169 boys**. These efforts directly addressed school re-engagement, academic reinforcement, and livelihood-linked skill-building, thereby advancing both right-to-education outcomes and long-term economic empowerment.

### Bridge Classes

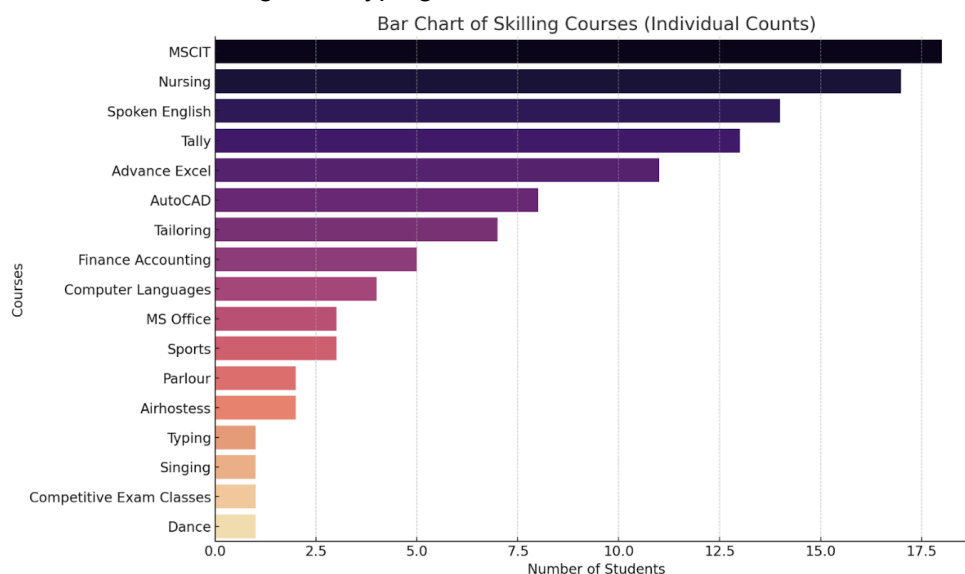
Bridge classes were conducted to support students lagging in academic performance or transitioning back to school. These classes focused on a broad curriculum—**70% across general subjects**, and **30% with emphasis on key areas such as Math, English, Science, and Accounting**. These interventions helped address foundational learning gaps and prepared students for mainstream reintegration.



### Vocational Skilling Courses

Parallely, skill development initiatives were implemented to enhance youth employability. The top vocational courses included:

- **MS-CIT (23%)**
- **Spoken English (11%)**
- **Tally (11%)**
- Other courses: Advanced Excel, AutoCAD, Nursing, Tailoring, Computer Languages, Finance & Accounting, and Typing.



A total of **146 waste pickers** paid course fees themselves, reflecting meaningful co-investment in their childrens' education. The **total fee amount was ₹3,12,648**, of which **waste pickers contributed ₹1,30,168**, and the **organisation subsidised ₹1,82,479**, underlining a blended financing model that strengthens financial sustainability.

This dual focus—academic catch-up through bridge classes and parallel vocational skilling—demonstrates a comprehensive approach to breaking intergenerational cycles of educational disadvantage and informal labour dependency.



## Jyoti Savitri Prize:



Like every year, we came together to celebrate the grit, resilience and success of waste pickers' children who cleared 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and graduation/post-graduation levels. These mark significant milestones in their lives, and a formal program was organised for all these children and their families to appreciate them, to invite speeches from parents and children. 227 such achievers were felicitated in this year's program. Filmmaker Hridaymanav Ashok graced the event and inspired children through his journey.

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## Access to Social welfare schemes:

- 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, 5 waste pickers received the benefit of Rs 15,000 each under this scheme.

- PMJJBY and PMSBY schemes

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. During this financial year, there was 1 case of natural death, where the member's family received a claim of Rs 2 lakh. Waste pickers in the age group of 51 to 70 are eligible only for the PMSBY scheme, and 1,651 such workers were enrolled under the scheme.



To strengthen the social protection ecosystem for waste pickers, a range of enabling initiatives were implemented by the social welfare coordination team:

- **Bank Account Facilitation:**

A total of **21 camps** were organised across the city, resulting in the successful opening of **over 90 new bank accounts**. These accounts are critical for enabling direct benefit transfers and enhancing financial inclusion.

- **Document Security and Accessibility:**

Recognising the frequent loss or damage of important documents among waste picker families, **document storage and carry bags** were distributed to support the safekeeping of essential identity and welfare papers.

- **Health Insurance Access:**

**1,150 Ayushman Bharat cards** were distributed, providing access to secondary and tertiary healthcare services under the Government of India's flagship health protection scheme.

- **Community Awareness and Outreach:**

Awareness sessions were conducted through **50 decentralised meetings**, allowing for targeted engagement with waste picker communities on entitlements, schemes,



and documentation requirements.

- **Institutional Engagement:**

The team visited **40 hospitals** to gather comprehensive information on scheme eligibility, documentation processes, and access protocols. This knowledge has been instrumental in guiding waste pickers through complex institutional systems and increasing uptake of health-related benefits.

### Supporting elderly waste pickers:



Recognising the acute vulnerabilities faced by elderly waste pickers—many of whom lack access to pensions, social security, or familial care—a targeted intervention was undertaken to provide immediate financial relief.

Through this effort, **958 elderly waste pickers aged 65 and above** were identified and supported through a **one-time direct financial transfer of ₹6,000 per person**. These individuals represent a segment of the informal workforce often excluded from formal welfare schemes due to the absence of documentation or sustained engagement with state systems.

This initiative served as a compensatory mechanism to mitigate income insecurity among elderly waste pickers, while also highlighting the urgent need for inclusive and accessible social protection frameworks tailored to informal workers in old age.



## Occupational Health and Safety:



To reduce the physical strain and occupational risks associated with manual waste collection, a pilot initiative to **electrify pushcarts** is currently underway. A total of **150 electrification kits** are being installed on manual pushcarts, including **135 standard models** and **15 high-powered variants** specifically designed to address the challenges posed by steep inclines and heavier loads.

As part of the trial design, **10 carts will be held in reserve** as a contingency buffer against potential theft, damage, or mechanical failure. Waste pickers are being systematically identified across **age groups, geographic zones, and work capacities** to ensure a representative and comprehensive trial that captures the diverse operational contexts of cart usage across the city.

To ensure safe and consistent usage, a **training module and user manual** are being developed. Waste pickers will be **formally trained and certified** before deployment of the electrified carts. The trial, involving **140+ carts**, is scheduled to run over a **three-month period**, during which field performance will be monitored collaboratively by the developer, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), and the waste picker community.

On 6th May, the project was flagged off by Mr Prithviraj B. P., IAS, Additional Municipal Commissioner (PMC) and Mr Sandip Kadam, Deputy Commissioner, Solid Waste Management (PMC) at the Pune Municipal Corporation. If successful, this innovation can be applied to manual pushcarts used by sweepers and other waste workers across the country. The pilot assessment will be conducted in close coordination with the waste pickers and the municipality, with the aim of taking this innovation to scale.



## Relief Work:

### Repair and Recovery: Ramtekdi Cooperative Scrap Shop

On March 25, 2024, during the Holi festival, a fire broke out at the Ramtekdi cooperative scrap shop in Hadapsar, Pune. While no one was injured, the fire resulted in the loss of over 720 kg of sorted recyclables stored by waste pickers and significant damage to the physical infrastructure of the shop. The materials lost—plastic, metal, and paper—represented critical income for nearly 178 waste pickers who rely on the shop to sell their segregated waste at fair and transparent rates.

The fire is believed to have originated in an adjoining open space where legacy waste and dry vegetation had accumulated. The presence of combustible materials in the surrounding area, combined with seasonal heat, created a high-risk environment that exacerbated the spread of the fire. The incident highlighted the urgent need for both infrastructure reinforcement and fire safety protocols in decentralised waste management facilities operated by informal workers.



The Ramtekdi shop plays a vital role in strengthening waste pickers' economic position by offering a cooperative, transparent alternative to conventional scrap trading. Ensuring its recovery was not only a matter of physical repair but also one of safeguarding livelihoods, equity, and collective ownership in waste economies. Kashtakari Panchayat supported the cooperative in mobilising and coordinating repair and recovery efforts. This included helping document the loss, drafting an appeal for support, and facilitating repair work. The following repairs and safety upgrades were carried out over the following months:



- Reinforcement and fabrication work to repair fire-damaged walls, partitions, and structural elements of the shed;
- Installation of a CCTV system with 30-day backup and remote access, improving both accountability and emergency response capacity;
- Electrical repairs and rewiring, addressing fire-damaged wiring and improving safety standards;
- Procurement and installation of fire extinguishers and fire bucket stands for basic fire response.
- Deployment of an auto fire suppression system is an added precaution against similar future incidents.
- Material compensation for the waste pickers who lost stock during the fire, helping them absorb the immediate financial shock.



These efforts helped restore the shop's functionality, reinforced the physical safety of the premises, and enabled waste pickers to resume their operations without bearing the burden of infrastructure loss.

Importantly, this incident served as a wake-up call. In its aftermath, Kashtakari Panchayat undertook a comprehensive fire safety assessment across all its associated sheds, warehouses, and cooperative spaces. With support from technical experts and waste picker members, each site was evaluated for risk factors such as electrical vulnerabilities, combustible storage, and emergency access. Preventive measures—including installation of fire extinguishers, fireballs, and basic electrical corrections—were initiated where necessary. This exercise not only enhanced preparedness but also helped build awareness among waste pickers on fire risk, safety, and collective response—ensuring that such an incident does not recur without warning or capacity.

Kashtakari Panchayat remains committed to supporting such community-owned initiatives through facilitation, technical assistance, and resource mobilisation.



## Flood Relief

In August 2024, continuous heavy rainfall in Pune led to the release of excess water from city dams, triggering widespread flooding in low-lying areas. The disaster disproportionately impacted the city's most vulnerable populations—particularly waste pickers residing in informal settlements along riverbanks. Among the worst-hit areas was Patil Estate vasti, home to over 700 waste picker families, many of whom were forcibly evacuated as the Mula River breached its banks.

Most of the affected residents were women waste pickers, the primary earners in their families, who not only lost their homes and possessions, but also their livelihood—recyclables collected over days were washed away, and essential documents were destroyed. Waste pickers from Rajendranagar, Phulenagar, Baudh Nagar, and Thergaon also suffered severe losses, with an estimated 500 families displaced across the city.

With support from H&M, a rapid relief effort was initiated to provide immediate support to flood-affected households in Patil Estate. On 9th August 2024, 300 families were provided with emergency ration kits, containing essentials to support them during the recovery period.

The relief distribution was more than a logistical effort—it created space for solidarity. Citizens came out in support of waste pickers, many with generous donations to waste pickers directly or to support our relief work. Individual citizens, like Ms Indire Broker, directly contributed to the ration procurement and distribution as well.

### Community Impact

- Immediate food security for 300 displaced families
- Restoration of dignity and recognition for waste pickers through direct engagement and solidarity
- Strengthened institutional partnerships, setting the stage for longer-term collaboration on resilience and welfare initiatives



# Capacity Building

## National Consultation on Waste Picker Integration



On **4–5 July 2024**, Kashtakari Panchayat hosted a **National Consultation** in Pune, convened by the **Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers (AIW)**, to deliberate on a draft framework of guidelines for the enumeration, integration, and welfare of waste pickers in India. The event brought together representatives from membership-based organisations, cooperatives, unions, and NGOs across the country. It was built on decades of experience in organising informal waste workers and a growing consensus around the need for **nationally harmonised policy mechanisms**. Kashtakari Panchayat supported this process by coordinating logistics, preparing explainers on key policy provisions, and facilitating structured dialogue between participating organisations.

### Draft Guidelines and Deliberations

The consultation reviewed a draft of model guidelines proposed by AIW for notification by state governments and adoption at the national level, as directed under the SWM Rules, 2016. Key components included:

#### 1. Enumeration and Identification

The guidelines propose recurring enumeration of all waste pickers—including migrant workers and those operating across jurisdictions—through field-based surveys and a permanent registration mechanism. Participants stressed the need to:



- Enable portability of occupational identity cards across local bodies and states, with an option for waste pickers to proactively apply for portability online.
- Recognise workers who live and work across municipal boundaries, and issue ID cards to all those who either live or work within a ULB;
- Validate existing databases maintained by waste picker organisations;
- Involve ward-level officials in surveys, with an institutional role akin to town vending committees.

## 2. Social Welfare Linkages

The draft guidelines recommend linking registered waste pickers to relevant social security entitlements using occupational identity as the basis for eligibility. Deliberations prioritised:

- **Health access** through public insurance schemes (e.g., Ayushman Bharat), annual health check-ups, and health card issuance;
- **Education** for children, including scholarships, admission under RTE quotas, and school curricula that acknowledge waste picker contributions;
- **Other entitlements** include pensions, accident and life insurance, adult education, credit access, and maternity benefits.

Participants underscored the need for local and state governments to take financial responsibility for premium contributions and use **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** to streamline delivery. The guidelines propose a single-window mechanism for documentation and enrolment. While the draft mentioned community kitchens at landfills and MRFs, this was not a major point of discussion at the consultation.

## 3. Integration into Waste Management Systems

The guidelines centre on the integration of **individual registered waste pickers**—not organisations—into formal roles across the waste management chain. Key areas include:

- Door-to-door collection;
- Sorting and aggregation at DWCCs and MRFs;
- Composting and decentralised organic waste management;
- Material recovery under EPR-linked initiatives.

The draft mandates a **60% reservation for women** waste pickers in formalised SWM roles to address gender-based exclusion. Participants also highlighted the importance of safeguarding access to waste, ensuring provision of protective gear, sanitation and rest facilities, and enforcing labour protections in outsourced contracts.





### Field Engagement and Learning

Participants also joined **exposure visits** to view Pune's integration models in action—doorstep waste collection by SWaCH members, in-situ composting and biogas units, cooperative scrap shops, and decentralised MLP aggregation. Visits concluded with roundtable reflections on the **plastic recycling economy**, price volatility, and employment quality in the sector.



## Policy Engagement on National Waste Governance Reforms

In 2024–25, KP facilitated a broad-based consultation process to respond to two key national policy developments: the **Draft Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2024** and the **Draft Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Rules for Packaging, 2025**. Drawing on deep field experience and extensive engagement with waste picker communities, KP convened consultations with workers in Pune and other cities, civil society organisations, sector experts, and concerned citizens. This included a webinar, co-hosted with the Centre for Science and Environment, to explain draft provisions and gather feedback, ensuring that perspectives from the ground shaped our collective response.

The primary objective of these engagements was to support the government in **strengthening waste governance frameworks**, enhancing **recycling systems**, and ensuring that **informal waste workers are meaningfully integrated into formal systems** with dignity and security.

### Strengthening the Draft SWM Rules, 2024

Our collective submission to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) emphasised:

- The need for a **clear legislative mandate** to define “integration” of waste workers, including enumeration, ID cards, welfare access, and employment in formal systems such as DWCCs and in-situ composting units.
- Institutional support for **worker-owned cooperatives and SHGs** in municipal contracts.
- Inclusion of **waste worker representatives** in rule-drafting and implementation committees at all levels.
- Rationalisation of **tax structures and GST on scrap trading** to facilitate formalisation and compliance.
- A balanced position on Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR), supporting decentralised composting while cautioning against costly mandates for dry waste already efficiently handled by local systems.

### Input on Draft EPR Rules for Packaging, 2025

In our submission to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), prepared with allied organisations and waste worker networks, we:

- Called for **explicit recognition** of waste pickers’ role in collection, aggregation, and recovery within the EPR framework.



- Recommended the inclusion of **reuse targets**, in line with global waste hierarchy principles.
- Urged greater investment in environmentally sound material recovery systems over the **incentivisation of waste-to-energy and co-processing**.
- Advocated for a **fee-based compliance model**, where producers contribute to a public fund that supports ULBs and integrates informal workers transparently.



## “SWaCH chi Jatra”:



On March 9, 2025, nearly 2,000 waste pickers from across Pune gathered at Golibar Maidan for the 'SWaCH chi Jatra', a vibrant event organised by KP to commemorate Waste Pickers' Day and International Women's Day. This celebration served as a platform to honour the contributions of Pune's waste pickers, predominantly women, who play a crucial role in maintaining the city's cleanliness.

The Jatra featured a range of activities, including cultural performances, games, a rangoli competition, mehendi stalls, food stalls, and photo booths. Taal Inc facilitated a pop-up drum circle, exclusively using scrap cans and sticks sourced from our recycling units! Notably, some waste pickers set up their own food stalls, showcasing their entrepreneurial spirit and fostering a sense of community. Adding to the festive atmosphere were performances by Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (ANIS) and Pralay (the Ecological Society's music group).



The event was graced by Dr Baba Adhav, a revered leader of workers' movements, and Digvijay Singh, Joint CEO of the Pune Cantonment Board. Baba addressed the gathering, emphasising the need to overcome societal barriers: *“You all clean the city every day, but there is some inner dirt that is not seen by the eyes — the dirt of caste barriers. Through such programs, we come together to cleanse that too.”*



## Trainings on Recycling and Circularity

As part of Project Protoprint, a training program was designed to deepen waste pickers' understanding of material recovery and their critical role in the circular economy. Over the last financial year, **539 waste pickers** underwent this training.

In the program, participants learned how plastics are further sorted, which materials are rejected and why, the steps involved in the recycling process and workplace safety measures. As participants in this recycling process, the aim was for the training to encourage better material sorting and a more holistic understanding of materials recycling.




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### Climate Leadership Trainings: Waste Workers as Climate Champions

Continuing from last year, Kashtakari Panchayat conducted climate leadership training programs for waste pickers under the banner "**Waste Workers as Climate Champions in India**, with support from **AJWS** and **Urban Movement Innovation Fund (UMI)**. The objective was to build the capacity of waste pickers to understand environmental and climate challenges, link their daily work to broader climate action, and prepare them to advocate for a **just transition** in waste management systems.

The program trained a total of **92 participants** across **four batches**, including **waste pickers, their children, and youth leaders** identified by the SWaCH Cooperative. The training provided practical, accessible modules on climate change, waste systems, human rights, and the role of informal workers in achieving environmental justice.



## Welfare and Perspective Building Workshops

In February 2025, KP conducted intensive leadership training for **43 waste picker representatives from KKPKP**, focusing on building their capacity as public advocates and strategic negotiators within urban systems. Rooted in a rights-based framework, the training addressed grievance redressal, welfare access, education, healthcare, and communal harmony—reframing leaders not as intermediaries but as co-architects of systemic change.



A key focus of the training was the **KP helpline**, which participants widely recognised as a critical support channel for waste pickers. While many could recall the number by heart and shared examples of timely assistance, they also identified areas for improvement—particularly around case follow-up, communication of outcomes, and the need for greater transparency in how issues are tracked and resolved.

In response, participants discussed ways to make the helpline more accessible and participatory. Suggestions included sharing resolved cases at ward meetings, involving peer-responders to provide localised support, and strengthening coordination between field staff and helpline teams. These ideas reflect an evolving understanding of the helpline not just as a service mechanism, but as a tool for collective problem-solving and system accountability.

On **food security**, participants traced the erosion of ration entitlements since the 1990s, shifting from passive disillusionment to a rights-based understanding. Many are committed to monitoring digital entitlements and raising community awareness.

**Healthcare** emerged as an urgent and emotional issue. Participants shared experiences of neglect and exploitation in both public and private systems. Participants came in with strong biases against public hospitals, and left better informed with a more nuanced understanding. A visit to New India Assurance clarified exclusions under UHIS and highlighted the importance of asserting cashless rights and securing discharge documents. Coordination between the helpline and field staff was identified as a key area for strengthening.



Discussions on **education** revealed the emotional and structural burdens waste picker parents face—rising costs, poor school quality, and a widening digital divide. The group connected these challenges to broader patterns of class and exclusion, recognising that educational equity requires not just policy reform but emotional and material support for working-class families.

A powerful session on **communalism**, anchored by *Ram Ke Naam*, forced confrontation with internalised prejudice and structural violence. First-hand accounts of exclusion by Muslim waste pickers shifted the tone, fostering critical reflections on silence, complicity, and the need for inter-community solidarity.

Finally, participants visited local government offices to **engage directly with public systems**. These encounters demystified bureaucratic processes and bolstered confidence. Many requested more structured training on legal and administrative protocols—affirming the need for ongoing, practical political education.



This training was conceptualised with the intention of cultivating distributed, politically aware, emotionally resilient leaders. In the coming months, additional batches will be held to train all ward-level waste picker leaders across the city.



*With Zameer Kamble, director of the play “Kurup” and trans rights activist*

