

Dry Waste Collection Centers and wastepickers

What do Lakshmi, Kumudha, Anamma, Musthada, Mansoor and Sadhashiiaha have in common? They were all part of the uncounted **people** living in Bangalore, making ends meet by sifting through garbage for recyclables. So what has changed for them now?

In 2012, the BBMP following Lok Adalat's directive registered waste-pickers and provided them with identity cards, thus taking a step in formally recognizing their role in the city's solid waste management system. Even though the informal sector plays a crucial role in waste management and recycling, there is still low visibility of the relevance and value of the work they perform! Low social status, exploitation, hostile and aggressive attitude boarding on suspicion is still prevalent in various places in the city. With an increasing thrust towards privatization and large scale waste-to-energy projects, the informal sector is fighting to secure threats from livelihood. In an attempt to move away from this kind of discrimination and secure their rights, the efforts saw the genesis of a membership based waste-picker / itinerant buyers /sorters led waste-picker cooperative in the city, titled HasiruDala meaning Green Force

Tracing back on their efforts, Lakshmi, 48, who has been a waste-picker for the past 29 years and the President of Hasiru Dala Cooperative says, " Most people want us to be invisible, but in 2011 that changed with the then Mayor Sharadamma handing 200 of us waste-pickers ids, However we still have a long way to go... we want better working conditions; security of livelihoods; recognition as "workers"; respect, dignity and social security".

It is a well know fact that waste-pickers form a very important link in the recycling pyramid. Several studies have documented this contribution like the 2010 UN Habitat publication which states "waste pickers perform between 50-100 per cent of all ongoing waste collection in most cities in developing countries – at no cost to the city budget",

"Better working conditions and security of livelihoods is possible if the government implements segregation at source and ensures that waste-pickers are included in the existing SWM system. Access to run Dry Waste Collection centers, is a positive step in this direction" , says Anslem Rosario, WWT who has been working with waste-pickers for the past 20 years

A step towards integration of some of the informal sector in the city has been seen in the form of access to run "Dry Waste Collection Centres", by waste-pickers and scrap dealers. For the month of November 2013, 22 DWCCs have collectively contributed to retrieving about 634 tons of Dry waste.

Sl.no	Ward no.	Ward Name	Operated by	Started on	Qty of Dry waste collected in the month of Dec-13	Quantity of Dry waste collected from the date of operation till 31st Dec 2013 (in tonnes)
--------------	-----------------	------------------	--------------------	-------------------	--	--

1	3	Allalsandra	Scrap dealer	1st october 2013	9.97	92.73
2	12	Shettihalli	Scrap dealer	7th Aug 2013	4.45	17.06
3	23	Nagawara	Scrap dealer	1st dec 2013	0.61	0.61
4	39	Chokkasandra	Wastepicker	5th Aug 2013	5.44	8.30
5	43	Nandini layout	Wastepicker	25th July 2013	5.53	19.90
6	44	Marapanapalya	Scrap dealer	17th Oct 2013	26.53	159.04
7	60	Sagayapuram	Wastepicker	18th Jul 2013	3.74	9.24
8	61	SK Garden	Scrap dealer	21st Jun 2013	14.21	78.28
9	64 & 65	Malleswaram	Scrap dealer	2nd Aug 2013	3.03	8.90
10	94	Gandhi nagar	Scrap dealer	3rd Feb 2013	10.10	60.23
11	95	Subhash Nagar	Scrap dealer	5th Aug 2013	0.00	0.04
12	98	Prakash Nagar	Scrap dealer	7th Oct 2013	0.62	1.72
13	101	Kamakshi Palya	Wastepicker	30th Sep 2013	10.11	18.38
14	109	Chikpet	Scrap dealer	5th Aug 2013	1.55	1.85
15	112	Domlur	NGO	15th May 2013	10.67	174.66
16	126	Maruthi Mandir	Wastepicker	1st Dec 2013	1.83	1.83
17	159	Kengeri	Scrap dealer	10th June 2013	5.33	27.88
18	165	Ganesh mandira/ katrikuppe	Scrap dealer	1st Dec 2013	1.83	1.83
19	168	Pattabhirama nagar	Scrap dealer	1st october 2013	5.65	45.39
20	178	Sarakki	Scrap dealer	1st June 2013	1.20	4.79
21	183	Chikalsandra	Scrap dealer	1st Dec 2013	6.24	6.24
22	194	Gottigere	Wastepicker	Oct-13	1.42	3.36
23	195	Konanakunte	Scrap dealer	Dec-13	1.69	1.69
				Total Qty	131.74	743.94

Note: In addition we have more than 12 tonnes of branded litter stored waiting for solution

Data of Gottigere and Konanakunte are of the waste collected yet to be recycled.

However the journey has not been easy. “The objective of Dry Waste Collection Centres at the ward level is to improve recycling rates and facilitate the buy-back and take-back of dry waste”, says Shalini Khanna Charles of SWMRT. Adding on she says, “It is only possible to improve the recycling rates, if implementation of segregation at source moves from paper to action on the ground. Most DWCCs are under performing as the inflow of segregated waste is very poor. This can be corrected if everyone works in tandem— residents, elected representatives, BBMP officers and the contractors”.

The lack of understanding of the concepts of DWCC makes one assume that the centres are a profit making entity; although what one fails to understand that centre can manage a break-even only if there is an equal quantity of high value waste as well. “The economic viability in the DWCC can happen only if the bulk generators are serviced by the DWCC and if waste-pickers can have access to micro- credit facilities, ”, says Lakshmi waste-picker

“Very often the biggest complaints that we face from the officers are to dispose the non-commercial waste like cloth and multi-layered plastics”, says Raja who lost out on the HSR shed that was given to him. It was one of the first DWCC s that made dream of DWCC a reality though very small it helped to understand what a Kartavya operated. “There is no market for these waste and when I was running the DWCC, I was made to understand that even the ones that have no value must be stored, but in my 10*10 shed, I had no option but to store it out, which was the main complaint by the local resident. Addressing this issue, the BBMP did construct a better and bigger place, but I was left out in the bargain”.

“Firstly, this is a very important EPR dimension that the DWCCs can bring in”, says Anslem Rosario. Most DWCCs that store this non-commercial waste have been rebuked on the grounds of un-aesthetic display. Very often than not even if the DWCCs want to accept these materials, it is often contaminated with food or sanitary waste that there is no other option but reject them” We need to seriously work on getting the companies that produce branded litter take responsibility of the packaging. The DWCCs will then work as excellent take- back centres if the government enforces the same as mandated in the Plastic Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011

“Secondly the government must take cognizance of the various rules, directives and reports that are prevalent in the country and must set aside at least 50% of these decentralized systems for the informal sector”. Even, the National Environment Policy, 2006, states that informal sector systems of collection and recycling should be recognized and enhanced.

“We still have a long way to go and learn. Our meeting every month, helps us to share our experience, learning and challenges. We are learning to keep accounts, work with officers, citizens

and Pourakarmikas; what we need is support and cooperation from everyone to do our bit of Kartavya, "says Lakshmi