



Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

DAY-NULM
Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National
Urban Livelihoods Mission



WOMEN-LED SANITATION STORIES OF CHANGE



SWACHH TSAV
Rally for Garbage Free cities

A Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0 initiative

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

SWACHH  TSAV

Women-Led Sanitation Stories of Change

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India can move forward only by raising the levels of respect for women and the sense of equality.

The power of conviction in women; their willpower, their decision-making power, their ability to take quick decisions, their perseverance to achieve their goals, and the results of their hard work, are the identity and reflection of women's power.

”

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India



Sh. Hardeep Singh Puri

Union Minister, Housing and Urban Affairs

Message

The Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that “the progress of humanity is incomplete without the empowerment of women. The issue is no longer Women Development, it is Women-led Development.” The Swachh Bharat Mission has furthered this vision by not only bringing dignity, safety and empowerment to Indian girls and women, but also by creating entrepreneurship opportunities for them across the country.

In its ninth year of transformation now, the Swachh Bharat Mission has cultivated the largest behavioural change movement in sanitation even as it has ushered in the welcome transition to women-led sanitation. The many inspiring ‘Stories of Change’ by women in the field of sanitation increases my faith in their leadership potential, both at individual as well as collective levels.

This compendium of ‘stories of change’ is only an illustrative example for a country the size of India. There are thousands of women across the country who have equally inspiring stories to tell of their innovative and community-oriented work on sanitation and waste management in India’s cities. Under Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0, I am confident that we will witness even more stories of change-makers leading the movement for ‘Garbage-Free Cities’.

On the eve of the celebration of the International Day of Zero Waste, this publication is a befitting tribute to all women in the field of sanitation.

Congratulations and best wishes to all the women who have played a significant role in this national success story.



Sh. Kaushal Kishore

Minister of State, Housing and Urban Affairs

Message

भारतीय महिलाएं अवसर मिलने पर किसी भी क्षेत्र में उत्कृष्ट प्रदर्शन कर सकती हैं, जिस क्षेत्र में भी वे दिल से काम करती हैं। देशभर में अपनी यात्राओं के दौरान मैंने कई छोटे-बड़े शहरों, कस्बों में ऐसी बहुत सी महिलाओं से मुलाकात और बातचीत की है, जिन्होंने स्वच्छ भारत मिशन को अपना व्यक्तिगत मिशन बनाया, उनकी प्रेरणादायक कहानियां मैंने सुनी हैं।

'Women Led Sanitation: Stories of change' को सभी भारतीय भाषाओं में व्यापक रूप से साझा किया जाना चाहिए क्योंकि इसमें पूरे देश की कहानियां शामिल हैं। इस किताब का सबसे बड़ा असर तब होगा जब हर महिला, हर शहर में, चाहे वह स्वच्छता से जुड़ी हो या नहीं, कहानियों को पढ़ने में सक्षम हो और खुद को इनसे प्रेरित महसूस करे।

इस किताब में स्वच्छता के क्षेत्र में काम करने वाली कई महिला स्वयं सहायता समूहों (एसएचजी) की कहानियां भी शामिल हैं, चाहे वे अपने समुदायों में व्यक्तिगत महिलाओं द्वारा शुरू की गई हों या मौजूदा स्वयं सहायता समूह की सदस्य के रूप में। इस प्रकार महिलाएं सभी बाधाओं के खिलाफ अपनी व्यक्तिगत और सामूहिक ताकत का प्रदर्शन करती हैं। बदलाव की कहानियां स्वच्छ भारत मिशन (एसबीएम) शहरी और दीनदयाल अंत्योदय योजना-राष्ट्रीय शहरी आजीविका मिशन (डीएवाई-एनयूएलएम) के बीच साझेदारी को स्वयं सहायता समूहों की स्थापना के माध्यम से एक प्रेरक तरीके से दर्शाती हैं। इन दोनों मिशनों के बीच साझेदारी को मजबूत किया जाना चाहिए।

एसबीएम-यू और डीएवाई-एनयूएलएम की पूरी टीम को बधाई और स्वच्छता का नेतृत्व करने वाली सभी महिलाओं को मेरी शुभकामनाएं।



Sh. Manoj Joshi

Secretary, MoHUA

Message

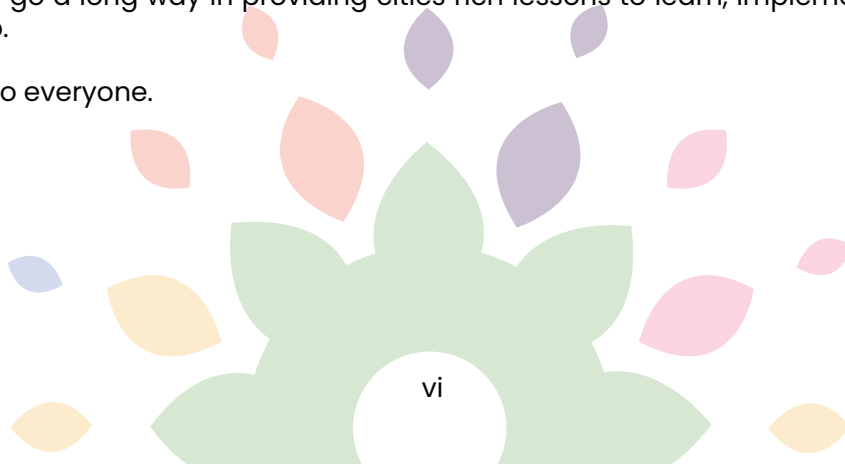
Year 2014, with the initiation of Swachh Bharat Mission, is a watershed year for global sanitation. With the United Nations declaring 30th March to be celebrated as the International Day of Zero Waste, attention to the adverse impacts that increasing solid waste is causing only gets re-emphasized. The call for Garbage Free Cities made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 1st October 2021, under Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban 2.0 (SBM–U 2.0), pre-empted the urgent priorities under Zero Waste Day.

On the occasion, it is a proud moment for the SBM–Urban division to have documented the many exemplary works by women in this short compilation called Women-led Sanitation: Stories of Change. SBM–U partnered with the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY–NULM) to seek these outstanding contributions by individual women and SHGs. Congratulations to both the divisions for this able partnership.

Each of the 25 stories in this compilation is a one-of-a-kind initiative, whether it is an individual waste picker whose pioneering work catapults her to represent India at the global Rio+ sustainability conference or the tribal women who run fleets of desludging trucks or the women from privileged backgrounds who give up their safety nets to launch start-ups against waste while creating livelihoods for the poor.

The book will go a long way in providing cities rich lessons to learn, implement, replicate, and scale up.

Best wishes to everyone.





Smt. Roopa Mishra

Joint Secretary and Mission Director, SBM, MoHUA

Message

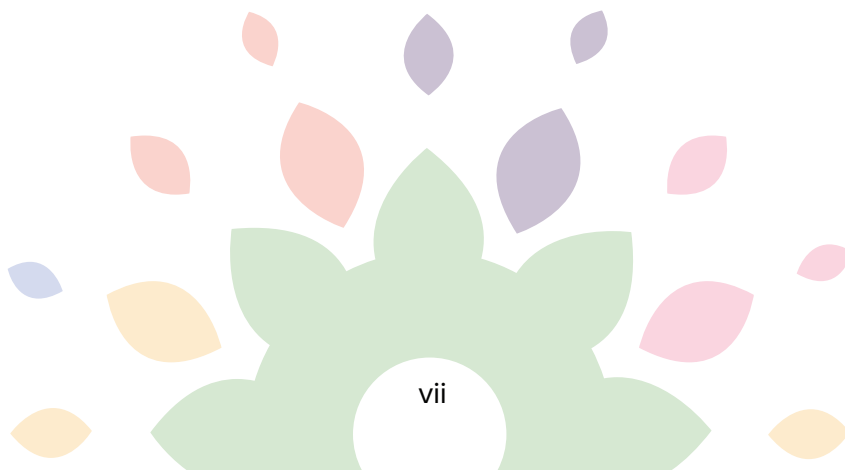
Since the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) eight years ago, the number of women in leadership roles in sanitation has been unprecedented. One can see a clear sense of direction in the uncharted territories these women have traversed despite challenging backgrounds, which is worthy of emulation and propelled SBM-U and NULM to collaborate for this book *Women-led Sanitation: Stories of Change*.

This compendium will bring forth the myriad roles that these women are playing as sanitation champions, community leaders, behaviour change influencers, entrepreneurs, enterprise managers, or as members of community collectives like the self-help groups. These 25 stories have been categorized broadly under the three pillars holding up the mission of Garbage Free Cities – Sanitation, Waste Management, and Behaviour Change.

As we celebrate International Day of Zero Waste on 30 March 2023 with our cities, our resolve under SBM-U 2.0 is to continue to encourage and support all women-led sanitation initiatives to make our cities garbage free.

We thank these often-unsung sanitation leaders and promise them our full cooperation.

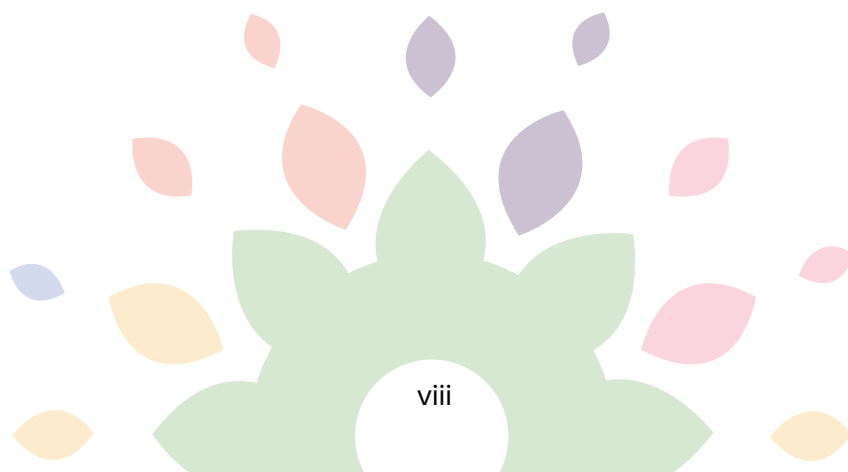
Thank you all and best wishes!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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4. Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence, India (CURE-India), New Delhi
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7. GIZ, New Delhi
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SECTION 1

Sanitation



In full throttle: Narsapur-based entrepreneur's fleet of desludging trucks

Venkatalakshmi from Andhra Pradesh's Narsapur always wanted to go out and work. But hailing from a tribal community besides being a woman were big hurdles that limited employment opportunities for her. Her father used to run desludging trucks, and as a child she used to help him. By the time she was a young woman, she had gained in-depth understanding of not just the engineering and operational aspects of the truck but also the business aspects of running the enterprise. She had only been married for a few years when Venkatalakshmi's husband, who owned a desludging truck, took ill due to excessive consumption of alcohol. She also had to take care of her married daughter's family. These circumstances forced her to take up the operations of the family business.



Venkatalakshmi took a loan to buy desludging trucks, hired drivers, painted the trucks to make them appealing, and advertised them. She financed all this herself and empowered her family to work with her. Initially, she found it difficult to continue due to lack of support from the family, including from the communities, and even from households. Everyone had little confidence that a woman could clear septic tanks using mechanised processes, a work traditionally reserved for men. But with courage and commitment, she gradually built her reputation and that grew her business.

Today she owns and operates three desludging trucks with full support from her family. She is being supported by the municipal corporation in Narsapur town, which is empanelling desludging operators, introducing tools and safety training to implement regular desludging, and building a state-of-the-art treatment plant. Venkatalakshmi's story is an inspirational tale of the power of involving citizens – women equally – in providing a roadmap to the sanitation businesses across India.

Warangal's Manemma is steering mechanized septic tank cleaning service

Periodic desludging of septic tanks, in the absence of a sewerage network and sewage treatment plant (STP), is a vital component of any city's sanitation and waste management practices. Civic bodies were constantly facing the challenge of keeping the city clean and the sewage waste under check. Thanks to mechanized desludging, which replaced manual cleaning for which they had to employ a whole army of sanitation workers. Now they operate a fleet of desludging trucks instead.

It is here that Warangal's Manemma showed that individuals too, in their personal capacity, can play a part in sanitation. She had a strong desire to contribute to society and protect the environment. Driven by the urge to contribute to sanitation, Manemma became one of the very few women entrepreneurs in India to run a septic tank cleaning service.

Entering the sanitation sector as a woman entrepreneur was difficult owing to the stigma attached to it. However, Manemma was determined to break this stigma. She loaned a desludging truck and received professional training to operate it. With that one truck Manemma gets an average of two to three desludging requests per day. Along with her support team, she decants the septic tank with all the safety measures in place. Manemma says that she is proud of her profession because of which she is able to give her children a good education and good life.

She is very happy to be an integral part of her town's sanitation services and urges women to come forward and explore the opportunities available in sanitation.



With resolve of steel, these SHGs bring sanitation to colonies in difficult conditions in Rourkela city

Socio-economically marginalized sections of society always need a little extra support, care and security to keep their hopes afloat and live through their difficult lives. Among these, especially affected by life-long medical disabilities, sailing through life is even more challenging. The daily sanitation needs of this section of people, for instance, may not be any different from general people's needs. However, often due to societal ignorance and long-enduring cultural barriers, these challenges get even more demanding. One such marginalized section is patients of leprosy for whom getting ignored is a way of life, whereas society's collective support would just make things so much easier.

Ma Tarini Self Help Group (SHG) in Rourkela came forward and acted in this direction. Access to sanitation for such people was the need of the hour. So, to provide the much-needed relief to this section of society, this SHG group constructed a special toilet for them with augmented water supply among other services.



The community toilet provided a safe and hygienic space to the colony and allowed the inhabitants to maintain their personal hygiene, thus reducing the risk of infections and other complications. Along with the general sanitation conditions, the menstrual health of the women of the community improved. The regular composting activity by this community turned into an income-generating opportunity. Members of Ma Tarini SHG, who are involved in maintaining this community toilet, expanded their economic empowerment. Local women sanitation workers gained greater financial independence and stability with regular income. Employment enabled them to move from a life of begging to dignified living.

For all these transformations, the SHG was awarded and felicitated by the Rourkela Municipal Corporation for its best practice, which was like an icing on the cake.

Connecting the disconnected through community collectives

Safeda Basti, an informal settlement colony in East Delhi, has around 350 households. The biggest challenge in the settlement was the frequent breakdown of the community toilet. Girls and women, especially, not only faced harassment during open defecation but also the resultant impact on women's health had a direct bearing on their livelihoods earning potential. Also, post the Nirbhaya case (2012), families were worried about the safety of their girl children and women, and were looking for ways to safe sanitation.

A community intervention in this settlement in 2014 deliberated on the innovative idea of providing household toilets through a simplified sewer line connection. With non-governmental organization CURE's support, people were mobilized, the idea of a simplified sewer, capacity of each household to contribute financially, setting up of a Toilet Savings Group with flexible pay-ins, infrastructure construction, and other related matters were discussed and deliberated in depth.



Both women and men in the settlement organized themselves as the Safeda Operation and Maintenance Group, set up a bank account, and began saving for the sewer line as part of their contribution for improved sanitation. Consequently, 96 household toilets were built and connected to the city network system, directly carrying the settlement-generated sewerage to the city's Sewage Treatment Plant.

Open defecation on the streets was eliminated completely. Open drains underwent improvements and cleaner streets became visible. Women returned to work and family incomes went up. This brought in community solidarity and increased the well-being of women and girls.

How Parmeshwari and Pullamma adopt a unique sanitation model to spread smiles with safety

Clean and accessible Public Toilets for all are an important and essential component in any city. But the lack of hygiene, improper sanitation, and stench besides issues of lighting or lack of water at these facilities discourages people from using them.

But things are a bit different at Loocafes. They are public toilets free of stench, have adequate water supply, are clean and free to use. The Loocafe is a unique self-sustaining business model with a cafe built adjoining a public toilet. The rental income from the cafe is used to maintain and keep the toilets clean and stench-free.

Parmeshwari and Pullama from Telangana's Hyderabad are two women who have benefitted from Loocafes as much as the public toilet users. These women dreamt of being self-sufficient by running their own respective businesses and Loocafe allows them to do exactly that. People who stop by to use these public toilets, stick around a little longer to have refreshments that the Loocafe has on offer. This is how these women proprietors make an earning.

Parmeshwari, who comes from a single-income household and is a mother not only found a stable source of income but also the flexibility to spend more time with her child. On the other hand, Pullamma felt empowered enough to not only control her own life but change others' lives by spreading awareness about Loocafes.



When Trichy's SHGs pioneered community-managed toilets, it transformed lives in the urban slums

When the discussion is about slums, the points that emerge in the conversations are often about lack of sanitation, absence or mismanagement of community toilets, open defecation, unhygienic surroundings, and similar issues. But urban slums in Tamil Nadu's Tiruchirappalli bear a different scenario. It was in Trichy that the concept of community-managed toilets through SHGs in India was first introduced.

The key objective of the initiative was to provide sanitation facility to the slum dwellers and create an open defecation free (ODF) city. Tiruchirappalli has nearly 400 community toilets, of which about 150 are managed by SHGs organised as 'Sanitation Hygiene Education (SHE) teams', now for more than two decades. Additionally, this ensured proper usage and maintenance of the toilets and achieved sustainability of the initiative along with embedding long-lasting hygiene behaviours and practices among the urban poor.



The involvement of SHEs in the maintenance of community toilets in Trichy has not only set a benchmark for community-led sanitation in urban areas, but also helped in generating awareness in the community regarding sanitation and hygiene, consequently influencing toilet-user behaviour that led to improving the condition of the community toilets too. The slum was totally sanitized, open defecation got eradicated, and garbage disposal was safely done under the supervision of the women SHGs. Additionally, the women are getting employment opportunities all through the year. CBOs from the area are providing hygiene education and other support services including livelihood promotion activities to improve the economic status of the women. The children in the slums are also serving as ambassadors of change, through child-to-child engagement as well as by learning hygiene messages and about toilets.

No more about Us versus Them: Women's transformative leadership shaping inclusive sanitation in this Jaipur settlement

Communities are at the centre of change. A group of women leaders from Babaramdev Nagar settlement in Jaipur decided that it was time to speak up, awaken all others around them, and together shape safe sanitation for all. It was no more about Us versus Them. It was now about nothing for us without us.

This story narrates the exemplary work done by women like Manju Rana (32), Sanju Rana (30), Chuttan Begum (60), Madeena (35), Kailashi (37), Mirchi (61), Lakshmi (30), Sunita, Kailashi (60) to strengthen inclusive sanitation for women and other marginalized sections belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic groups in the settlement. The settlement had neither access to sewer connections nor affordable desludging. The few community toilets were poorly managed.



These women then formed a Community Management Committee (CMC) and Single Window Forum (SWF), and first got themselves trained on sanitation operation and Swachh Bharat Mission guidelines 2016. Then they developed an end-to-end engagement plan: from gathering evidence to mobilizing the community to undertaking micro-planning to co-executing sanitation improvements and finally sustaining it with community-supported O&M. They told the Slum Development Committee (SDC), which had a highly male-dominated leadership, that if the sanitation concerns had to be addressed there should be strong representation of women to voice their concerns. Each group leader took the responsibility of reaching out to a specific special group such as the elderly, single women, the differently-abled, persons of other gender, and waste pickers. Technical officers from the Jaipur Municipal Corporation including Ward Councillors supported with campaigns, reaching over 400 community members with awareness about safe sanitation practices and segregation of waste at source.

Of the 100 households with no toilet, 25 got toilets constructed and the rest 75 are in the process. The CMC and SWF women leaders are meanwhile ensuring the maintenance of the community toilets. As a result, more women have understood their rights to proper sanitation which further catalyzed behavioural change in the community.

SECTION 2

Waste Management



Just being in the driver's seat made all the difference in Sanju Devi's life

In its quest to be a garbage-free nation, India has decided to step-up to the challenges of waste dumping in the open, public littering, poor waste management, lack of proper infrastructure, lack of general public awareness about sanitation, and similar issues.

But one individual small step taken is when a long journey begins with cascading change. Sanju Devi, a woman from Bihar's Patna city, truly underlines this. Sanju has been a crusader of change in her own little ways. She not only came forward to play her bit in the sanitation drive in the city, but also defied the gender norms and odds by learning to drive an e-rickshaw. At first, Sanju was sceptical of this idea because she had never driven before, while the society too frowned upon the idea of a woman driving a vehicle. But Sanju took that first step and other women followed.



The Patna Municipal Corporation helped Sanju and other women train as drivers, which empowered them with the required skills to become confident. These women soon proved that they were capable of driving, doing door-to-door garbage collection and fuelling the mobilization of waste management resources at the same time. Additionally, the good salary offered by the Corporation made their lives more comfortable, helping them feel financially safe, secure, strong, and independent.

Sanju's transformation has also helped shift the narrative around women's roles in community. Sanju has challenged gender norms and stereotypes, inspiring others to rethink of a woman's potential. Her success has encouraged other women in her community to join as drivers too, thus opening new opportunities for women who have long been marginalised and excluded from male-dominated professions.

Weaving an inspiring story of livelihood and environment conservation from plastic recycling

With an education in Information Technology and working experience in some of the most well-known multinational companies, there must have been a compelling reason for Amita Deshpande to drop it all and become an entrepreneur in waste management. Amita was moved by the deteriorating and fast degrading environment where she saw plastic as a key contributor.

Drawing from her combined experience of working in corporate social responsibility and development organizations, she first founded Aarohana EcoSocial Developments and subsequently with her husband, Abhishek Pranajpe, co-founded reCharkha, a social enterprise. The aim was to introduce ecosocial development, focusing on creating rural livelihood opportunities while conserving the environment and local heritage.



Amita started in Dadra Nagar Haveli, her native village, with a high number of tribal population constantly struggling with lack of sustained livelihood. She focused on waste management, aligning her initiatives with women artisans. At reCharkha, Amita leads upcycling of plastic waste. The process begins with collecting plastic waste followed by segregation, washing and sanitization, colour sorting, and finally weaving them on traditional handlooms to create upcycled products. The process has led to creation of regular work and livelihood, with over 80% of the workforce being women. reCharkha also employs physically challenged artisans from the community who were otherwise unemployed.

The pioneering work at reCharkha has led to a long list of international and national accolades such as the Certificate of SDG Champion, First prize winner in the Swachh Technology Challenge, Excellence in Innovation Award from the Environment Conservation Association (Dec 2022), Face of India Appreciation Award, MSME Udyogjakta Puraskar in the category eco-friendly products, Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Contribution in Plastic Upcycling by Sweden Alumni Network, and the TEDxCOEP Certificate of Appreciation, to name just a few.

Holy Waste: Women-led enterprise turns floral waste to wealth

In India, flowers are used frequently on various occasions and purposes, which leads to large volumes of flower waste. Every day tons of flowers find their way into several water bodies, public spaces, and other dump sites. These flowers cause pollution and add to the piles of garbage, adding to the growing concern of waste management. To get rid of this flower waste and save the environment, a startup brand Holy Waste came up with an innovative idea.

Maya Vivek and Minal are the founders of Oorvi Sustainable Concepts, an organization that rejuvenates floral waste. The innovative idea behind their startup is to use flower waste to create something useful, thus reducing any harm to the environment. Maya and Minal collaborated with like-minded people on a trial basis. They picked floral waste from a village temple, and the Sarpanch of the village allowed them to use the community hall for segregation of the waste, as they engaged local women. They processed the floral waste and converted them into incense sticks and soaps, and thus, the brand Holy Waste was formed.



Oorvi Sustainable Concepts partners with places of worship, vendors, event planners, decorators, and anyone who generates floral waste. It started in November 2018 with just one temple; by February 2020, the operations grew to 40 temples, 2 flower vendor zones, and one market zone.

The initiative taken by Oorvi's enterprise has resulted in saving over 200 kg of floral waste from getting dumped in landfills and river bodies every day. Now, Oorvi aims to take up activities that result in direct and regular employment of women, benefits the education of children, and improves their health and living conditions.

Nalini and HasiruDala are ensuring the informal waste pickers' contribution to sanitation is recognized

SafaiMitras (sanitation workers), are the key drivers of progress in any city's sanitation mission. It is on the back of the tireless efforts of these SafaiMitras, combined with other interventions, that cities win various kinds of accolades and recognition. The contribution of SafaiMitras to Garbage Free Cities is now well recognized.

However, there is another class of sanitation workers that do not work within the city sanitation system, yet their contribution to keeping the cities clean can never be ignored. These are the informal waste pickers, making a meagre living off waste dumps and road side litters, and wherever there is garbage, unknowingly making a significant contribution to the cities' environment.



This is where social activist Nalini Shekhar comes in to help with HasiruDala (meaning Green Force in Kannada language). HasiruDala provides informal waste pickers of Karnataka a platform to be recognized for their economic and environmental contributions. Nalini has championed the cause of integrating waste pickers from across Karnataka with the formal system, facilitating their access to various social security schemes of the Government of India.

Nalini was instrumental in the adaptation of the law that allowed waste pickers to be granted identity cards for the first time. Bengaluru became the first city in India where occupational identity cards were issued to waste pickers from the unorganized sector. Armed with the cards, the waste pickers gained access to social entitlement from the city, state, and central governments, allowing to offset the gaps in the non-liveable wage community, thus increasing livelihood stability. HasiruDala has built the capacity of over 5,500 waste pickers on financial literacy that enables them access to institutional finance and savings accounts. Some waste pickers have themselves become trainers, thus making this a self-sustaining model.

Thane women waste pickers turn waste into wealth

It is hard for many to believe that waste can be turned into wealth. The general notion has been that waste is something that deserves to be abandoned and should only end up in garbage dumpsites. That is why mountains of waste can be seen in landfill sites dotting the sky lines of almost every city in India, with significant adverse impact on the health of people and environment around.

However, the women waste pickers of Thane in Maharashtra have changed the way people think about waste. They have been involved in an incredible initiative supported by the non-profit Samarth Bharat Vyaspeeth (SBV).

What started as a small initiative to help 3-4 women waste pickers with skilling and alternate employment by SBV has turned into a massive success story of waste management. The initiative connects over 100,000 households in the community, engages with over 60,000 children, employs 24 women recyclers, and prevents about 30 tons of waste from being dumped in landfills every single day. At SBV's waste management centre, different types of waste, such as dry, floral, and garden, are segregated by women at a single location.



Inspired by this movement, a few environmentally conscious people, who wanted to help the women, came forward and agreed to segregate waste in their homes. Initially, 10 to 12 people would give segregated waste to these women. But a few years later, up to one lakh households have changed their attitudes, and now even save dry recyclable waste for these women waste pickers for up to two weeks in their homes. This is how SBV women managed to change people's perceptions of waste from something 'dirty' to something 'valuable'.

This Mumbai waste picker is also a UN-honoured sustainable development leader

Sushila Sable came to Mumbai with her mother when her village faced severe droughts. To make ends meet, both mother and daughter started picking waste. She has been working as a waste picker for over 47 years now, keeping the city of Mumbai clean with her efforts. In 1998, she came in contact with Shree Mukti Sanghatana, an alliance of Indian Waste-pickers and learnt about why waste segregation is important.

Sushila Sable started an SHG of women waste pickers and soon saved enough money to start a dry waste collection centre. That was when her journey as an environmentalist began. She quickly realized that not only did waste segregation increase her income, it also had positive impact on the environment. She was the first to suggest the creation of SHGs as a means of empowering themselves and, in 10 short months, her area had 10 SHGs.

She was also the lone former waste picker to represent India at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Brazil. Sable has also been instrumental in providing support to the community of waste pickers by assisting in many social welfare schemes, such as child assistance programmes, education programmes, health care and insurance, identity cards, legal assistance, pension benefits, training and advocacy. The 45-year-old from Kanjurmarg is spearheading a 'zero waste movement' comprising 3,000 women waste pickers by primarily training them in segregation and recycling of waste.



Waste picker Devi Rani uplifts and transforms lives in Amritsar with grit and determination

There has always been a need of inspiring people in societies who strive for socio-economic upliftment and recognition. Waste pickers in Punjab's Amritsar were badly missing such a leader until they found one in Devi Rani.

But Devi's own journey to financial stability and sustainability was not easy. At the age of 12, Devi Rani started working as a waste picker, but she was not happy with the nature of her work. She was not earning much, so in her early teens, she started teaching street children. She completed her own education after matriculation and helped children of waste pickers complete theirs too.

Devi Rani has been working with a number of SHG groups for the economic empowerment of women by engaging them in plastic recycling, composting, and cloth bags-manufacturing units. She has been facilitating capacity building for waste pickers in the city and social welfare schemes for them and their families. Devi Rani has connected hundreds of waste pickers with government schemes such as PMVKY, Ayushman Bharat, PMJDY, and others. She has led many health and blood donation drives in her community. One of Devi Rani's SHG, Komal, works on organic composting and waste management.



The SHG has brought a transformational change in the lives of women whose only source of income was rag-picking. Now they prepare organic compost and sell door-to-door for additional income. Similarly, she created an SHG for men called Lucky that deals with plastic segregation and management. Thus, Devi Rani not only carved a niche for herself but also became an inspiration for others through her selfless acts.

Sanchita Naik's 'Shop With Your Waste' outlet ensures Goa's environment stays clean and attractive

Generally people dump all kinds of waste wherever they can find some open spaces. Visibly, waste dumps on street corners or other public places, are full of single-use plastic. Huge piles of mixed garbage not only tarnish the surroundings but turn breeding grounds for various diseases, while the plastic does immense harm to the local environment in many ways.

But there are some like Sanichita Deepak Naik in Goa, who look for and find innovative ways to use such waste. Sanchita has been running an outlet called the 'Shop with Your Waste' campaign in Panaji. This program aims at reducing plastic waste generated in the city. The campaign is designed to encourage residents to bring in certain recyclable waste to select stores and establishments in exchange for discounts on their purchases.

One of the key factors contributing to the success of the campaign has been the involvement of local businesses, particularly smaller grocery shops.

Sanchita Naik is one such business owner who has contributed to the campaign's success by onboarding her grocery store to the initiative. Sanchita has been instrumental in promoting the campaign among residents in her neighbourhood and customers by encouraging them to participate actively. She has also been at the forefront of educating children in her neighbourhood on the importance of waste segregation at source.

Through her initiative, littering in and around her neighbourhood, especially by young children has reduced considerably and thus keeping the environment of this tourist state clean and attractive



Haritha Karmasena: Kerala's 'Woman army' of waste managers joins the rescue operations

The use-and-throw culture has been rampant in India with changing lifestyles. Apart from many other major affluents, there has also been the insidious presence of plastic in people's lives. Food, water, phones or computers – almost everything that people use in their daily lives uses plastic in some form or the other. This has increased the problems of waste disposal and management since much still remains to be done looking at the current composting and recycling rates in India. Prospering Kerala is facing similar issues, and has initiated the Haritha Karmasena to boost the rescue operations.



Dr. T.N Seema, Harithakeralam Mission Vice-Chairperson with harithakarmasena during organic farming training session in Wadakkanchery, Thrissur

Haritha Karmasena is a team of woman entrepreneurs that was recruited and trained to provide technical services and solutions on waste management projects. They were given the responsibility of collection, transportation, processing, disposal, and management of waste in collaboration with respective Local Self Government Institutions (urban local body). Under this initiative, comprehensive and scientific projects were planned for waste processing and management. The approach was to encourage bio-degradable waste processing at source in houses, gated colonies, markets, and institutions.

Community-level projects for waste processing also evolved in the process. This was in consonance with the objective of Garbage Free Cities under SBM-U 2.0, which advocates collection of segregated waste from households and commercial spaces along with change in citizen behaviour towards waste segregation at source.

Haritha Karmasena members have not only contributed to the state's drive to save the environment, but have also earned a living through waste collection and recycling. The Haritha Karmasena women have personified grit, perseverance, and dedication towards the cause of saving nature and thus safeguarding humanity.

Pune rides its story of change on the power of informal waste pickers' cooperative, SWaCH

Thousands of waste pickers in each city and town in India make a living from the few rupees they earn by selling potentially recyclable waste that they pick from the city's garbage dumps or community waste bins. Unaware of their rights and entitlements from governments, and with low access to the city services, their lives at the very best is miserable. While their contribution to reducing waste volume in landfills is rarely recognized.

But way back in the 1990s in Pune city, some of these informal waste pickers, mostly women, with help from Lakshmi Narayan and Poornima, two social workers got together to create a membership-based trade union called the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP). The membership soon grew as it showed the members the benefits of being lawfully organized. In the years to come, KKPKP transitioned to being India's largest cooperative of informal waste pickers under SWaCH (Solid Waste Collection and Handling).



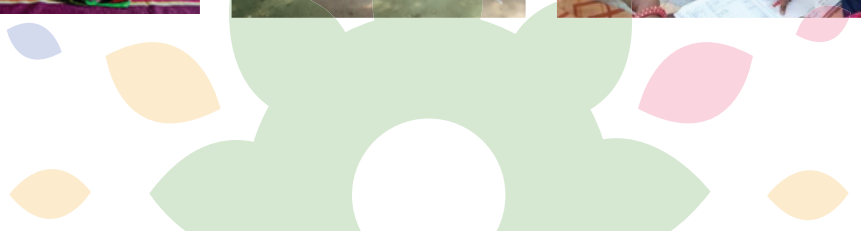
During this time Pune city, like any other mid-sized city, was aiming to introduce the new waste management policies that expressed the need for cities to take proactive actions on door to door collection, segregation, and processing. Pune, always known to be on the forefront of initiating sustainable waste management practices, recognized the potential of SWaCH. Some 1,500 SWaCH members participated in a pilot study to be engaged by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) as service providers for door-to-door waste collection from over a lakh houses in the city based on a user-fee model.

The result was win-win for both. Today 3,500 SWaCH members are integrated, with stable income of up to 10 times more than they earned as informal workers. 70,000 tons of recyclable waste is picked annually, plus improved working conditions, better health, and entitlements. PMC has saved Rs 100 crore, covering 8 lakh households with pre-skilled human resources.

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SECTION 3

Behaviour Change



Jayabai is setting norms of social justice through menstrual hygiene promotion

The issue of menstrual hygiene is seldom talked about in public. Traditional societies still find it difficult to accept the importance of menstrual hygiene for women's health, providing them no freedom to discuss it openly. Even today, social stigma around women's menstrual cycle is strong, and those people, particularly women, who talk about it are looked down upon. Besides, safe management of menstrual hygiene waste needs significant attention in the sustainable waste management endeavours of city administrators.

The topic of menstrual hygiene, however, does not deter Jayabai, a tribal woman from Karnataka's Kosangi, as she boldly speaks about and advocates for menstrual hygiene management in her tribal community. She is firm on the idea of social justice, especially for women. Jayabai is motivated with the objective of social justice and educates people from all walks of life about menstrual hygiene. She encourages adolescent girls and young women in the community to actively participate in the numerous menstrual health and hygiene management sessions conducted by non-profit organizations working in the community. She encourages the women in her community to volunteer as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) champions and get trained whenever there is an opportunity. This will help them take the lead in resolving women's hygiene issues in the community.



Jayabai has not only been reiterating messages on hygiene management during menstruation, but also about the safe disposal of used menstrual absorbent. She is aware and understands fully that trust and respect are crucial for community participation and contribution, which in turn contributes towards the overall development of the group. Jayabai thus embodies the brand of leadership that has long eluded the Indian society at large.

Polio gave her a strong reason to champion behaviour change towards open defecation

Ponnapalli ward in Narsapur town of Andhra Pradesh houses a large vulnerable slum population. The practice of open defecation was a norm here, till sustained efforts in community engagement and community mobilization changed this norm to get the ward to gain the ODF status.

Behind the change is the story of grit and determination, and deep involvement in community-led total sanitation. The name Satyanarayanamma is well-known here, closely associated with this transformational change. Satyanarayanamma is a fisherwoman and a mother of two. She is differently abled having been struck with polio, and is the sole bread winner for her family. Being well conversant with how Polio strikes only strengthened her resolve to do something about sanitation behaviour.



Satyanarayanamma started by enrolling as a member of Gender Forum, a non-government organization (NGO), which is deeply involved in building awareness on sanitation and hygiene among women and girls in her community. Along with other Forum members, she promotes discussions around menstrual hygiene and consistent toilet usage and hand washing. They also organize sanitation audits in their respective localities to track the gender-friendliness of the sanitation services and faecal sludge and septage management in the settlements. Initially, it was very difficult to convince the local community to adopt safe sanitation practices and maintain personal hygiene. But when the local women like Satyanarayanamma, who were from the community itself, came forward, it became easier to identify the specific concerns of the community and in addressing them effectively. Women like Satyanarayanamma were able to transform and sustain the ward as ODF.

Satyanarayanamma is an example of how collective action within the community can lead to behaviour change among the citizens and gain the confidence of the local authorities. It is her exemplary work which has helped Narsapur town sustain the ODF status.

Health Inspector Kavita, Pune's Singham of well-being

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shook the lives of billions across the globe to the core and changed forever the way people perceived life. Pune was also struck. But people from marginalised sections of society such as those from Ghole road and Bibwewadi slum areas were the worst-hit. They were ignorant about the COVID-19 threat. They were panic-stricken and scared and felt being ignored severely during the lockdown.

This is where the Singham of well-being, Pune's Health Inspector Kavita Sanjay Sisolekar stepped up. She reached out to the people in the slum and took it upon herself to disseminate information under the community mobilization, public awareness on COVID and behavioural change programme devised for them. She even dedicated herself to providing the necessary emotional and physical care for these slum-dwellers.



From August to October 2021, Kavita used interpersonal communication (IPC) to identify needs and provide WASH supplies in these vulnerable groups of urban Maharashtra. Kavita went door-to-door in containment zones along with doctors and health workers to take COVID swabs for testing and guide people on healthcare facilities provided by the government. At the same time, she spread awareness amongst frontline sanitation workers to use proper face masks, PPE kits and how their own health was of utmost importance for their families. Kavita also sensitised locals towards the sanitation workers and the ordeal they were going through, thus ushering assurance and hope.

Her resolve and dedication gave immense confidence to the community about effective ways to fight COVID-19 and keep their loved-ones safe.

Passion, Patience and Positivity: The 3Ps of Tejaswini Gaikwad in behaviour change work

Waste disposal is still a huge issue and poses great challenge in areas and towns where the relevant infrastructure is not as strong as required, or where people's attitude and behaviour towards waste still remains traditional. The same holds true for Wai in Maharashtra's Satara district, where scheduled desludging of waste was a tough ask. But in this, 24-year-old Tejaswini Gaikwad decided to make her contribution towards solving this problem.

Tejaswini secured the responsible position of Supervisor for scheduled desludging operations in Wai. Her job was characterized by a multitude of tasks that demanded exceptional multitasking skills. While engaging with citizens, field staff, and Wai Municipal Council (WMC) officials, she recognized the importance of effective communication in carrying out daily operations. She had to take crucial decisions, particularly regarding technical problems concerning waste disposal vehicles. In addition to her on-site duties, she had to organize regular correspondence with the sanitation department. While on the job, she learnt the importance of waste segregation and waste disposal and now spreads awareness among not just her co-workers but her community too. She understands the health hazards of dumped waste and is working passionately to spread awareness.



Her job, initially viewed as merely a means to financial independence, had transformed into an opportunity to step out of her comfort zone and become a better version of herself. As a female supervisor, she inspired confidence in citizens, particularly women, who felt safe and cooperative under her leadership.

Making her voice heard: The journey of Thulasiamma

There is a general perception that community affairs, community management, and anything related to communities, are matters that fall under the purview of the male members of the community. The under-representation of women in leadership positions across communities, local institutions and organizations, is a testimony to this. Women have been invisible and inactive relatively in decision making processes due to conventional institutional, socio-economic, and cultural restrictions.

However, it is no longer the case. With changing times, people have come to accept that women can not only take up leadership positions, but also excel at it.

Thulasiamma moved to Bengaluru 18 years ago. The slum community at Deshianagara, where she lives, had been experiencing recurrent problems pertaining to water supply and sanitation. That was when WaterAid started working in the slum. Along with the proposed infrastructure creation in the area, regular awareness sessions conducted by WaterAid motivated Thulasiamma to come out of her shell. She volunteered to be trained on matters pertaining to WASH and associated rights, writing letters to authorities, and similar initiatives so as to be able to represent her community regarding their rights. She also understood the importance of sustainability, and not only was keen to learn about the entire concept of Operations and Maintenance, but also advocated strongly for it within the community.



Her relentless efforts to improve the conditions within the community, and the urge to not just educate herself but also disseminate her learnings among others, has inspired other women in the community as well. For Thulasiamma, it was more about making her community self-sufficient, to be able to identify and understand their own situation, their rights, and use this knowledge to resolve their issues.

Yogita Wagh: Strengthening her SHG in the movement against single-use plastic waste

Improper management of garbage and lack of proper sanitation are some of the biggest problems that society has grappled with for long. Additionally, the increased use of single-use plastic and its disposal in open spaces has dealt a hard blow to the environment as well.

Disturbed by this, Yogita Wagh from Nashik in Maharashtra state stepped out of her comfort zone and decided to do something concrete to change the scenario in her community. She worked her way to engage more and more women in her movement and also ensure their empowerment in the process.

Yogita has been running her Self-Help Group (SHG) since 2018 and has been actively participating in new initiatives for women in her community. Yogita, along with other women from her SHG, started a small-scale business of making cloth bags and purses. As plastic bags were banned, she and a group of women in her village came forward to establish Jagruti Mahila Udyog Kendra (JMUK). It is a women-led enterprise to become self-sufficient and generate livelihood. JMUK is a facility where women manufacture and sell products, with necessary support for training and supplies coming from CSR funding. Yogita continues to encourage women to participate in awareness activities conducted in her village and join the SHG activities.



The collective efforts of Yogita Wagh and her SHG have made these women from Nashik self-sufficient, simultaneously empowering them to make their own decisions and run their families.

Sona Valmiki: Transforming community behaviour towards waste

Sona Valmiki, a resident of Bhatti Mines, once struggled to get the basic amenities for her family during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was barely able to earn anything.

Bhatti Mines is a low-income, 50-year-old peripheral settlement in South Delhi. The local municipal corporation had limited resources and could only collect waste from designated locations, leaving many households to dump their waste in the open. This not only led to pollution and the spreading of diseases but also attracted stray animals and insects.

To combat this problem, a local from Bhatti Mines, Sona Valmiki came to the rescue. With material and informational support from CURE, a non-profit welfare organization, she took up the task of a waste collector with income coming from contribution from the people themselves.

To sustain the initiative, CURE and women volunteer groups raised awareness of the benefits of door-to-door waste collection. Initially 100 households agreed to contribute Rs 50 per month for their waste to be collected from their doorsteps. Sona was selected to work as a garbage collector, covering the designated households and earning a reliable income of Rs 5,000 per month. Many people were used to open waste dumping and did not see the need for waste segregation. Sona mustered up the courage and worked hard to educate people about the benefits of proper waste management and segregation. Sona gave the locals of Bhatti Mines a fresh lease of life. The residents contributed to the local economy through employment opportunities for local people like Sona. Bhatti Mines now has a regular, efficient, and sustainable waste management system, all thanks to Sona Valmiki's grit and determination to bring attitudinal change towards waste.

Sona's monthly earning also grew as the number of families increased to 310.



Women 'Preraks' are inspiring sanitation behaviours in 68 small towns of Madhya Pradesh

The state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) has some of India's cleanest cities. They have the best waste management mechanisms in place. But, many smaller and remote towns in the state are still making a slow progress towards the status of zero waste cities. There was an urgent need to address this issue. Therefore, the Urban Development and Housing Department developed a "State urban sanitation policy" with a view that all cities and towns of MP become totally sanitized, healthy, and liveable so that all urban dwellers have access to and use safe and hygienic sanitation facilities.



The Madhya Pradesh Urban Services Improvement Project envisages improving the integrated storm water and sewage management system in various urban local bodies. For this, identification and deployment of community volunteers known as 'Preraks' was done.

Sudha Choukse is a Prerak in her native town of Saikheda in Narsinghpur district. She felt that sanitation in her town was poor. The dirt and filth filled the streets and there was a foul smell in the air. This created a certain discomfort, especially in the rainy season. She interacted with neighbouring families, created awareness, and promoted sanitation and personal hygiene. She managed group discussions with women collectives like the local SHGs, Anganwadi workers, and others. After initial resistance, women in her community started coming forward to get a sewage connection. Consequently, out of around 2,000 families, some 1,000 plus have got a sewer connection in her town.

These interventions are making a positive impact on the health of local communities by reducing incidence of water-borne diseases, with preraks emerging as behaviour change champions.

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...स्वच्छ भारत मिशन 2.0 का लक्ष्य है
गार्बेज फ्री शहर,
कचरे के ढेर से पूरी तरफ मुक्त...ऐसा
शहर बनाना...

”

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

[Excerpt from the address of the Prime Minister on the occasion of launch of Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0, on 1st October, 2021]





Swachh Bharat Mission, Urban 2.0

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