

# Livelihoods with Dignity



## Women waste pickers take out rally

HT Correspondent  
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### THE WASTE PICKERS' CHARTER OF DEMANDS

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to the IMC headquarters where they submitted a memorandum in support of their demands.

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The pickers, said the statement, wanted to stand up and be counted and the IMC should train them to set up and manage biogas and compost plants.



■ Women ragpickers taking out a rally in the city on Wednesday to press for their demands. HT PHOTO

## Alliance of Indian Wastepickers

March 2010

This document has been compiled by Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) with reports from all members of Alliance of Indian Wastepickers (AIW).

Design and Layout by Julian Luckham, (Luckham Creative)

Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) is a Trade Union of wastepickers registered in the year 1993, and functions as the secretariat for the AIW.

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# Alliance of Indian Wastepickers

The Alliance of Indian Wastepickers (AIW) is a national network of 35 organizations working with, and comprised of, informal recyclers, wastepickers and/or itinerant buyers. The AIW has a presence in 22 cities across India and focuses on peer support, policy advocacy, and cross-learning. The Alliance of Indian Wastepickers will have its first National Conference on March 25th, 2010 in Delhi.

## AIW conceptual framework

Solid Waste Management (SWM) is not about technical and managerial pathways alone. It must include social pathways. Inclusive SWM Policy can be a tool for both SWM and Poverty Alleviation. Recycling is not 'green' without the inclusion of the informal recycling sector.

## Wastepicking and Recycling in India

Over fifteen lakh individuals across India work as scrap and waste collectors, earning their livelihood from the collection and sale of paper, plastic, metal and glass scrap to recycling industries. These workers supply raw material to industries while keeping their cities clean, and reducing municipal costs. In addition, Indian waste pickers are recognized internationally as contributing to the health of our planet by recycling valuable materials, reducing green house gases and managing waste through "green methods" such as composting versus technologies such as incineration that further pollute the environment.



Recycling provides 24 times as many jobs per ton of waste as do incinerators and landfills. A significant number of women and socially marginalised populations engage in this occupation. The entire informal recycling industry receives virtually no financial or infrastructural support from the government and sustains itself due to the contribution of wastepickers.

## Learning from the Mistakes of Europe and North America

Environmental concerns are now centre stage on the global agenda. Carbon credit markets have added lustre to waste management. India is the emerging market at the bottom of



the pyramid for waste management businesses and technology providers. The efficient, enterprising, informal waste recycling sector in Europe, North America and Australia was wiped out by waste management companies that hawked technological solutions to waste in consumerist societies. The obliteration of the waste informal sector in those countries has had disastrous environmental consequences besides escalating the overall costs of waste management and recycling. India must not repeat that folly but learn from it.

Wastepickers are in danger of being crushed in the race for “world class cities” when actually they are integral to “sustainable world class cities”. In the name of creating “world class cities”, their future is being sold to waste management companies. Waste management companies are not interested in their welfare. They will collect and sell the waste, profit from it and wipe out the entire sector. We want the government to protect their rights to waste and their interests.

### **Informal Sector Contribution**

The valuable contribution of the informal recycling sector in India has never been in doubt. Over the past two decades the contribution of these invisible environmentalists has been recorded in successive government reports and policies largely due to the efforts of workers’ organisations. The Expert Committee on Solid Waste Management appointed by the Honourable Supreme Court of India, the High Powered Committee on Solid Waste Management and the Second National Labour Commission have placed on record their appreciation of the contribution of the informal recycling sector; called for recognising and upgrading their livelihoods and for incentives for recycling for a potential win-win situation. With genuine support by municipal and national government, informal recycling workers can become “world class workers”.



# Wastepickers Across India Unite!

On March 10th, India's waste pickers, waste managers and recyclers rallied in large numbers in Pune, Mumbai, Nagpur, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Bhopal, Ghaziabad, Indore, Ahmedabad, Latur, Hyderabad, Delhi, Nashik, Tirupati, Ujjain and Goa.

CITY

AM | THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2010

13

## Ahmedabad

The group in Ahmedabad organized a 'samelan' where 1500 wastepickers attended and a resolution was passed that included some of the demands of AIW. In addition another resolution was passed to demand a financial package to help wastepickers address the impact of the economic recession.

## Ahmednagar

Ahmednagar had a rally of around 400 wastepickers who gave their memorandum to the collector, who in turn will forward the memorandum to the government.

### 'AMC SHOULD GIVE SAFETY GEAR TO GARBAGE PICKERS'

Of the 2,400 tonnes of waste the city generates daily, 300 tonnes is collected by waste pickers. These garbage collectors are helping the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation save its money and hence the municipal body should provide them with safety gear, said CEPT professor for Planning and Public Policy C N Ray at a conference on garbage collectors organised by Sewa at Vasavada Hall on Wednesday. March 10 is observed as the day of wastepickers under the Alliance of Wastepickers Network.

Sewa is a member of this network. Besides Ray, social researcher Ghanshyam Shah was the main speaker at the meet.

Professor Ghanshyam Shah said that door-to-door collection of garbage should be given only to traditional waste pickers and their cooperatives.



## Aurangabad

Aurangabad hosted a rally and public meeting with approximately 500 people attending. Their memorandum was given to the Commissioner on 11th March 2010.

## Bangalore

In Bangalore there was good press coverage of the event in a major Kanadda paper. The coverage included their demands.

## Bhopal

Over 400 waste pickers attended a gathering in Bhopal with several state authorities attending. Women wastepickers talked about work related issues before the concerned authorities of the state government. Shri Babulal Gaur, Minister for Urban Administration and Development attended the gathering and listened to the issues of the wastepickers. He assured attendees that their work will be recognized and respected. He also ensured their social security by getting them registered on the list of Municipal workers as the waste collectors and contributors to waste management. Fr. Prasad SVD, the Vice - Provincial INC expressed the necessity of coming together for livelihood concerns. The newly elected Municipal corporators Ms. Shobha Narwade and Bhairusing Yadav were also present for the programme.



## Delhi

In Delhi 6 organizations had rallies in 5 areas. Each gathering was a rally that included walking to the closest MCD zone office and handing over a memorandum to the office. Approximately 170 participants rallied at Civil Lines (AIKMM), 115 participants in Rohini (AIKSM), 115 participants in Najafgarh (Green Flag Union), and 125 participants in Vasant Vihar (Chintan, Safai Sena and BVD).



## Ghaziabad

In Ghaziabad, UP, 300 wastepickers from Safai Sena and Chintan participated in an awareness and visibility rally, walking almost 4 kms through residential areas. Wastepickers distributed their handbills and pamphlets on "how to segregate waste."

## Goa

In the northern and southern districts of Goa there were awareness meetings among wastepickers. Two educated children of wastepickers were chosen to coordinate a baseline survey of wastepickers in Goa.

## Hyderabad

A round table discussion regarding unionization of waste collectors in Hyderabad was held on Wednesday 10th March . The participants concluded that waste collectors are deprived of basic amenities and are left out of several government schemes, primarily owing to the lack of a common platform to raise their voice. Resolutions were passed to initiate a union for waste pickers to fight for their rights and represent their problems to the government.

## Indore

Approximately 350 wastepickers participated in a rally and other supporters also participated. The Commissioner came and met with the wastepickers. He promised to follow-up with a meeting with the delegation to discuss the demands.

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Women ragpickers taking out a rally in the city on Wednesday to press for their demands. HT PHOTO

## Latur

Latur had a rally with 400 wastepickers and submitted their memorandum to the collector. The collector discussed the issue of fire in the plastic recycling unit of wastepickers and promised to discuss it with the local corporation.

## Mumbai

More than 2000 wastepickers gathered at the rally in Mumbai. A delegation of 5 people met the Commissioner and submitted the memorandum.



## Nagpur

In Nagpur, about 1000 people participated in a rally that was 3-4 kms long. A small group of wastepickers from Raipur also attended. The rally ended with a public meeting. A delegation met the Commissioner and the wastepickers refused to move without meeting the Mayor. The Mayor addressed the group and committed to work with NMC to address the issues of wastepickers. She stated that wastepickers should enrol on the BPL list in big numbers. A KKPKP representative attended the event in Nagpur. The event in Nagpur had good press coverage.

# सिटी टाइम्स

कचरा बिनाने वाली महिलाएं आज जोरदार प्रदर्शन कर रही हैं। परिषद पत्र बनाकर विरोध किया। प्रदर्शन के दौरान...



### Rag pickers voice their demands

Abroad: Rag pickers in the city demand the government to provide them with a decent living. They also demand that the government should provide them with a decent living. They also demand that the government should provide them with a decent living.

## पुण्य नगरी

कष्टकऱ्यांचा १० ला मोर्चा

### Waste collectors to begin stir from Mar 17

The city's rag pickers and waste collectors are set to begin a protest on Wednesday. They are demanding that the government should provide them with a decent living. They also demand that the government should provide them with a decent living.

## नवा मराठा

राज्याहत्कासाठी कष्टकऱ्यांची १० मार्चला शहरात रॅली



### GARBED RIGHT

Women who collect garbage in the city are protesting against the government. They are demanding that the government should provide them with a decent living. They also demand that the government should provide them with a decent living.

### कचरा उठाने वाली महिलाओं ने निगम पर किया प्रदर्शन

शुभारंभ, ११ मार्च २०१०

शहर की परिसरों में अण्डा, शरप, मिर्च, आदि कचरा उठाने वाली महिलाओं ने निगम पर प्रदर्शन किया। इन महिलाओं की मांग है कि निगम को कचरा उठाने में देर न देनी चाहिए।

### कचरा वेचक महिला ओळखपत्राची माग

शुभारंभ, ११ मार्च २०१०

कचरा वेचक महिलाओं की ओळखपत्राची माग। निगम को कचरा वेचक महिलाओं की ओळखपत्राची माग देनी चाहिए।

### लोकमत

शुभारंभ, ११ मार्च २०१०

शहरात कागद, काच, पत्रा कष्टकऱ्यांचे १० ला रॅली

असहकार (प्रतिनिधी) - शहरात फिरून कागद वेचणारे, डबा, बाटलीवाले, भिंगार, घंटगाडी, काच, पत्रा इत्यादी कष्टकी आपल्या न्याय हक्कासाठी येत्या बुधवारी (ता.१०) रॅली काढून शासनकडे दाद मागणार आहोत. सकाळी ११ वाजता रामवाडी, सजेपुर येथून ही रॅली निघणार असून, रात शहर आणि जिल्हातील कष्टकी सहभागी होणार असल्याची माहिती संपटनेचे जिल्हाध्यक्ष भाऊसाहेब उडाणशिवे यांनी दिली.

श्री. उडाणशिवे पुढे म्हणाले, तळागाळातील रोवटच्या कष्टकी मागसाठी सुविधा व प्रतिष्ठा मिळणे हा भारतीय लोकांसाठीच नव्हे तर आहोत. पण आजवर कष्टकऱ्यांना पध नाही. कष्टकऱ्यांना बरोबरच्या नात्याने वागविले जात नाही. ही मागसे देखील नवनिर्माणचे काम करतात. हे सरकारला पटवून दिले पाहिजे. यासाठी ही रॅली आहे. (पान ३ वर)

### सिटी टाइम्स

शुभारंभ, ११ मार्च २०१०

शहरात कागद, काच, पत्रा कष्टकऱ्यांचे १० ला रॅली

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# कचरा वेचक मजदूर जनसंगठन नागपूर

महाराष्ट्र राज्यात कागद, काच, पत्रा आणि इतर भंगार माल गोळा करून पुनःनिर्मिती करिता उद्योगांना विकून उदर निर्वाह करणारी दिड लाखांहून अधिक कुटूंब आहे. प्रामुख्याने दलित समाज या व्यवसायात गुंतलेला आहे. महिला व लहान मुलां-मुर्लीची संख्या लक्षणीय आहे. शिक्षण आणि नौकरी अभावी दरिद्र आणि लाचारी पासून हा व्यवसाय आम्हाला संरक्षण देतो म्हटलं तर त्यात काही गैर नाही. उद्योगांना कच्चा माल पुरविणे शहरात स्वच्छता आणि पर्यावरणाचा समतोल राखणे आणि नगर पालिकेचा घन-कचरा व्यवस्थापन करण्याचा खर्च वाचविणे हेच आमचे योगदान आम्हा समुदाईक लोकांना दारावरून कचरा गोळा करण्याच्या कामामध्ये समाविष्ट करून घ्या. म्हणजे आम्हाला घाणित उतरण्याची वेळ येणार नाही. आज नागपूर शहराची माहिती घेता ५,००० वरून जास्त असंगठित समुदाय घन-कचऱ्यावर आपली उपजिविका चालवितात.

सरकारच्या योजनेचा लाभ मिळावा म्हणून नागपूर शहरवासी यांच्या मागण्या

- १) घन-कचऱ्यात काम करणाऱ्या समुदायासाठी कायदा बनविण्यात यावा.
- २) रहिवासी दाखला, ओळखपत्र अंतोदय राशन कार्डची सोय.
- ३) आरोग्याची सोय.
- ४) शिक्षणाची सोय.
- ५) कचरा विभाजनासाठी लागणारी जागा अश्या अनेक मागण्या घेऊन सलून अधिकारी व नेतागण यांना देण्यात येत आहे. नागपूर शहरातील सर्व घन-कचऱ्यात कार्यकरणाऱ्या समुदायास आम्ही रैली मध्ये सहभागी होण्यास आव्हान करित आहोत.

**बुधवार**  
दिनांक १० मार्च २०१० ला  
सकाळी १२ वाजता

**जमा होण्याचे स्थळ :**  
चाचा नेहरु बाल उद्यान,  
शुक्रवादी तलाव, नागपूर.

❖ संयोजक ❖  
**कचरा वेचक मजदूर जनसंगठन नागपूर.**

## Nashik

Nashik had a rally where 350 -400 wastepickers participated and submitted a memorandum to the Commissioner.



## Patna

On February 4th, 800 wastepickers participated in a rally organized by Nidan in Patna. Wastepickers raised issues regarding primary collection of garbage from door to door, violation of MSW 2000 rules by the Patna Municipal Corporation, dues payments of wastepickers by PMC, social recognition by the community and environmental issues. Nidan's Executive Director participated in the rally and addressed the Safai Mitras regarding their rights. A memorandum was submitted to Patna Municipal Commissioner, Mr. Senthil Kumar, by wastepicker representatives. He assured wastepickers that he will follow-up on issues brought forward by the Safai Mitras.



## Pune

In Pune, about 4000 members, dressed in shades of green attended a public meeting. Workers expressed solidarity with the other groups in the country and agreed with the demands of the AIW to be forwarded to various ministries. The group collected signatures on the AIW memorandum that will be sent to the Chief Minister.

Five members, Nirmala, Baida, Baby, Saru, Suman made very inspiring speeches. Mohan Nanavare made the introductory speech, and Poornima Chikarmane shared the situation of waste pickers across India. Lakshmi Narayan shared the common demands of workers, and Baba Adhav made a very strong and effective closing speech.



## Tirupati

Tirupati had a rally of wastepickers with 37 bicycles. The Deputy Commissioner met them at the Municipal Corporation and discussed the demands and was very positive. A larger demonstration is being organized soon in front of the Municipal Corporation.

## Ujjain

Ujjain had a rally with 300 women wastepickers, 100 men wastepickers and 50 children participating. The memorandum with demands was presented to the Deputy Commissioner of the local corporation. Both electronic and print media coverage was good.



# How Government Can Best Support Us Wastepickers

Government can encourage the valuable work that wastepickers do for the environment and society, while supporting the livelihoods of 150 thousand working poor individuals.



- ◆ We are standing up to be counted.
- ◆ We are integral to sustainable world class cities.
- ◆ Our livelihoods and our children's futures are not up for sale.
- ◆ Include us in solid waste management and upgrade our livelihoods.
- ◆ Include us in the work of door to door waste collection so that we become service providers with the rights to retain, process or sell what we collect.
- ◆ Train us to set up and manage composting and biogas plants.
- ◆ Invest and upgrade the informal recycling sector so that we can take up trade and processing of organic and inorganic waste so that we are no longer at the bottom of the pyramid.
- ◆ Help us to become waste managers and entrepreneurs.
- ◆ Prohibit Waste Management companies. They are not interested in our welfare. They will collect and sell the waste and profit from it and wipe out the entire sector.
- ◆ Waste is a resource, which is why all the companies are humming like bees.
- ◆ We want the government to protect our rights to waste and our interests.

## Our demands:

- ◆ Every scrap and waste collector should be registered by the Urban Local Body and provided a photo-identity card that authorises him/her to collect, retain or sell waste.
- ◆ Only registered scrap and waste collectors should be eligible for undertaking door to door waste collection.
- ◆ Every local body should as part of the land use plan/development plan/master plan, make provision for amenity spaces in every neighbourhood for undertaking composting, biogas and categorisation of scrap.
- ◆ Micro-waste collection and processing enterprises of waste pickers should be given capital and infrastructure by the urban local body and the state governments.

- ◆ Waste to energy projects that use municipal solid waste as feedstock for burn technology should not be permitted.
- ◆ All registered waste pickers should be eligible for benefits under government schemes irrespective of BPL status.

## Wastepickers in Government Reports

**Successive government commissions and committees have noted the contribution of wastepickers and called for their integration into the mainstream economy.**

### National Environment Policy 2006

“Give legal recognition to, and strengthen the informal sector systems of collection and recycling of various materials. In particular enhance their access to institutional finance and relevant technologies.” (Section 5.2.8, point (e), Pg 36)

### National Action Plan on Climate Change

“While the informal sector is the backbone of India’s highly successful recycling system, unfortunately a number of municipal regulations impede the operation of the recyclers, owing to which they remain at a tiny scale without access to finance or improved recycling technologies.”

### The CAG Audit on Municipal Solid Waste in India

(December 2008 Chapter 3, Section 3.5) “..states should consider providing legal recognition to rag pickers so that recycling work becomes more organized and also ensure better working conditions for them.”

### Bajaj Committee Report 1995

“Presently the informal sector of rag pickers is contributing substantially to the recovery of recyclable material from urban solid waste. However, rag pickers - mostly women and children - live under and work in extremely unhygienic conditions. It is essential to improve the present system of collecting and utilising the recyclable material. These rag-pickers could be organised by setting up cooperatives. These workers can then collect recyclable material right at the household level; incidentally, they could also collect at the same time organic waste material from the household and deposit at the roadside collection sites. This would get rag pickers the recognition that they are an essential link in urban solid waste collection and recycling system. This will also prevent health hazards associated with rag picking in garbage dumps and provide them better working conditions and possibly better economic returns.”



## Report on Solid Waste Management in Class I Cities of India<sup>1</sup>

Organize waste pickers to collect recyclables from households, shops and establishments.

- ◆ Explicitly acknowledged that informal sector waste pickers helped to reduce the burden of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) by saving them several million rupees annually in collection, transport, and disposal costs, and reducing pressure on scarce landfill space.
- ◆ Noted that, at a minimum, ten per cent of waste produced in India could be reused or recycled.
- ◆ Urged that the recycling industry be promoted through incentives such as land allotment, supply of power, water on priority, tax holidays, and preferential purchase of recycled products by government and semi-governmental bodies.

## Recommendations of Second National Labour Commission about Rag Pickers<sup>2</sup>



- ◆ It must be mandatory for all municipalities to register wastepickers and other scrap collectors, and to issue a photo-identity card to each such worker as has been done by the Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations. The card authorizes the bearer to collect scrap.
- ◆ In view of their contribution to the removal and reduction of solid waste, it should be mandatory for the municipalities to provide medical and life insurance coverage to all authorized wastepickers through the levy of a welfare cess from citizens.
- ◆ It should be mandatory for the municipalities to protect the livelihood of wastepickers and to consult with organizations of waste-pickers before initiating any scheme for the collection and disposal of urban solid waste.
- ◆ It should be mandatory for all municipalities to earmark green zones in each ward where waste-pickers can sit and sort their scrap.
- ◆ It should be mandatory for the municipalities to provide a rest room, drinking water, toilet and creche facilities at garbage dumping grounds / landfill sites.
- ◆ All registered scrap collectors should be listed as falling Below the Urban Poverty Line by the municipalities for the purposes of State social security schemes for the weaker sections.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Solid Waste Management in Class I Cities of India of the Expert Committee on Solid Waste Management constituted by the hon. Supreme Court of India in Civil Writ Petition No. 888 of 1996 Almitra Patel and Another vs. Union of India. Mr A. Burman was the Chairman of the 8 member committee.

<sup>2</sup> The Report of the II National Labour Commission, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, 2002. Page nos. 639 to 643

## Alliance of Indian Wastepickers

The Alliance of Indian Wastepickers is a network of the following organisations:

Aakar, Mumbai  
All India Kabadi Majdur Mahasangh (HARIT Recyclers Association), Delhi  
All India Kachra sramik Mahasangh, Delhi  
Apnalaya, Mumbai  
Bal Vikas Dhara, New Delhi  
C.S.A Christ University CHF Nagpur, Bangalore  
CHF International  
CHF Nagpur  
Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, New Delhi  
CITU, Sholapur  
CNI –ISI, Nagpur  
Disha, Kolkata  
Dronacharya Shikshan Samiti, Ujjain  
Food for Life Vrindavan Society, Mathura  
Forces, Mumbai  
Green Flag, Delhi  
Hamal Panchayat, Ahmednagar  
Janadhar Seva bhavi sanstha / Janaseva Ghana Janvikas Kendra, Indore  
Kachara Kamgar Union, New Delhi  
Kachara Shramik Union, Delhi  
Kachra Vyasthapan Sahakari Sanstha, Latur  
Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, Lokvikas, Nashik  
Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, Sangli,  
Kagad, Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, Pune  
Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Sanghatna, Ahmadnagar  
Kagad, Kach, Patra Kamgar Sanghatana, Aurangabad  
LEARN, Mumbai  
Lila Trust, Goa  
Maya, Bangalore  
Muskaan Bhopal  
Navsarjan Trust, Surat  
NIDAN, Patna  
Safai Sena, New Delhi  
SAMMAN, Bhopal  
SEWA, Ahmedabad  
Society for Community Health, Welfare and Environment Protection SCHWEP, Tirupati  
Stree Mukti Sanghatana, Mumbai  
Tiljala Shed, Kolkata  
UMMEED, Nagpur  
Waste Wise Trust, Bangalore



# Wastepickers Across India Unite!

