

ANNUAL REPORT - 2020-21



To all the front-line workers who continue their work despite the devastating pandemic, especially the waste pickers who tirelessly demonstrate resilience in these difficult times.

Kashtakari Panchayat

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Foreword

What looked like a passing phenomenon has made its presence felt as a part of everyday life. The pandemic continues to devastate lives and waste pickers have faced a major setback. Many of the usual project activities have had to undergo changes with the various restrictions to mobility, organizing and travel. Anticipating the severity of the pandemic, provisions were made to ensure basic protective gear for waste pickers working in the formal systems, and rations to all waste pickers. Waste pickers continue to work at high risk of infection, with many contracting the virus and some unfortunately losing their lives battling it.

Despite the challenges, waste pickers have demonstrated resilience and courage, and adapted to the rapid changes our society is going through. This includes familiarizing themselves with online meetings and bearing the additional responsibility to look after their children who have had little or no schooling throughout the year. The countless stories of hope have inspired and motivated us and strengthened our resolve and commitment to continue the work albeit the myriad changes.

TEAM KP

Come Covid, and ...

...

"Quit your work or move" when faced with this tough option, Anjana Gorkhe chose to move rather than quit. In these times of the Corona Virus when most of us are afraid to move outside our homes and have work-from-home options, Anjana had to move her home so she could continue working – outside her home, serving the city and its residents who depend on her to keep their surroundings clean and hygienic"

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Introduction

Kashtakari Panchayat was established in 2010 with a view towards supporting waste pickers, their families and collectives. This support is in the form of direct benefits to waste pickers' families primarily for educational and health needs, training and facilitation of access to rights and entitlements, livelihoods, services and resources, and research and publications for creating critical awareness about waste pickers' issues and increasing their visibility in society. Kashtakari Panchayat can be seen as a platform, which provides opportunities for different stakeholders to engage meaningfully with each other. It is also a means of linking financial and non-financial resources for effective action, which ultimately improves the lives of everyone.

Key Focus Areas

Our focus areas in 2020-21 continue to further our vision of supporting waste pickers. This year however has seen slight changes in the nature of work, with relief support in the pandemic being a significant part of it.

- Providing relief to waste pickers and their families in terms of safety gear, food security, medical reimbursements, cash, and other need-based support.
- Enhancing waste pickers' children's access to education and bridging the gap between elementary and secondary education and upgrading quality of education.
- Training of waste pickers about their rights and entitlements and procedures to access them.
- Exploring newer, more creative avenues for enhancing waste pickers' livelihoods thereby finding ways of protecting the environment and bettering their living conditions.
- Creating visibility and awareness among citizens about waste pickers' lives through various platforms including, active interface, social media, and publications.

To capture the diverse areas of engagement of Kashtakari Panchayat this report is categorized into three sections, Waste pickers and Covid-19, Waste pickers and the Environment and Waste pickers and Entitlements.

Waste pickers and Covid -19

Adjusting to the new normal

With the onset of the pandemic and the ensuing lock downs, the waste picker community became an extraordinarily vulnerable group as they neither had the option of working from home nor suspending work. They continued to provide the essential service of solid waste collection, exposing themselves to high risk of getting and transmitting the virus. The waste collectors integrated in the door-to-door collection model collected waste daily from over 10,00,000 households throughout the year. The free roaming or itinerant waste pickers had to rely solely on the sale from daily recyclables, which were significantly reduced due to the lock down. The elderly waste pickers were forced to stay at home and could not work and this led to an adverse impact on their daily subsistence. As waste pickers live and work in crowded spaces, many got infected and some succumbed to the virus. Family members of waste pickers, often daily wage, or informal sector workers themselves, were unable to find work and were dependent on the income of the waste picker member.

Despite the grueling circumstances, waste pickers were on the streets each morning, fully uniformed, donning masks and gloves to protect themselves and the ones they serviced. Many reached out to the field staff and the helpline, seeking support when their mobility was

hampered due to the weak public transport system and uncooperative staff or difficult, adversarial police officers.

A year down, they are still working in these extremely adverse circumstances, stoically putting aside their own and their families' fears and misgivings.



Waste pickers continuing work in lock down.

Relief support

- Ration kits for 8000+ waste pickers
- Monthly PPE kits for 3500 waste pickers
- Cash support of INR 1500 for 3500 waste pickers
- 5000+ waste pickers trained on sustainable menstrual hygiene products
- INR 1000 incentive for saving to 2100+ waste pickers
- Medicine support for 200+ waste pickers
- Internet support for 150+ children
- Life insurance for 8000+ waste pickers

Generous philanthropies and individuals allowed Kashtakari Panchayat to mobilise ration kits for all 8000 waste pickers of KKPKP, enabling them to tide over the most difficult periods of the lockdowns. This was done in three phases across the year – providing support in the subsequent lockdowns.

All the 3500 SWaCH members got the requisite PPE each month, for a full year.

The SWaCH waste pickers also received INR 1500 each, to support them in the first month of the lockdown when they had to continue to work in the face of immense uncertainty, insecurity and crumbling municipal, health and public transportation systems.

30 young community mobilisers from waste picker families reached out to over 5000 waste pickers and their young daughters and daughters in law, through an extensive outreach programme, providing cloth sanitary pads at subsidised rates as alternatives to polymer based sanitary pads.

Over 200 waste pickers suffering from chronic illnesses, who were not able to continue their medication because of income loss, unavailability of doctors, curtailed mobility and reduced access to health care facilities, and pharmacies were supported for the costs incurred for such medication.

In order to continue their children's education, internet costs were provided for 150+ children studying in classes X and XII.

To encourage waste pickers to continue saving, and sustain the operations of their credit cooperative, an incentive of INR 1000/- was provided to each of them who managed to save an equal amount of money through the pandemic.

All 8000 of the city's registered waste pickers were covered under a life insurance scheme that enabled 11 families of waste pickers who lost their lives battling the virus to receive compensation of INR 1 lac. Another 15 claims are in the process of getting settled.



Support from citizens

Kashtakari Panchayat plays an active role in educating and empowering the waste pickers, and offering remote assistance via a Helpdesk, to address their health, education, credit, livelihood, and ration related grievances. During the pandemic, calls to the helpdesk skyrocketed with over 50 percent of them around access to rations. The helpdesk facilitated the procurement of government subsidised rations for most waste picker members. Information was provided to waste pickers, ration shop keepers were reached out to, and an active advocacy process was undertaken with the state to ensure that maximum benefit of the PDS system reached the most vulnerable. The credit requirements of waste pickers were also addressed through their credit society, servicing over 350 of them with over INR 2 crore of loans.



PPE support

PPE kits comprised of masks, scarves, gloves, sanitizers, soaps and detergents which provided basic security for the waste picker to protect their own health as well as the citizens and family members they come in regular contact with. The waste pickers were trained on the usage of the equipment, what precautions to take before, during and after work, with respect to their PPE as well as general cleanliness and hygiene. This was in the form of leaflets and short video clips shared with them as well as their young children who have smart phones.



IEC material for Covid awareness

Kashtakari Panchayat procured provisions towards dry ration kits in wholesale and packaged it through volunteers and staff, in smaller packets for distribution to individual waste pickers. This was done in spaces procured through and belonging to the PMC, Churches, schools and private spaces kindly offered by well -wishers.



Distribution of rations

The ration kits were distributed with the help of community mobilisers, waste picker leaders and staff members of Kashtakari Panchayat. Given the challenges in taking thumbprints, individual photographs were captured. Additional data was also collected at the distribution points to ensure waste pickers would access rations from the government PDS. Systematic information dissemination was undertaken on entitlements with respect to rations under PDS. Waste pickers were encouraged to call the Helpline number where information about PDS problems was shared, and complaints resolved and tracked. Instructions to lift paid PDS rations were telephonically communicated to callers and staff to ensure they do not lose out on the government free quota under PDS. Simultaneously KP was at the forefront, speaking to government at various levels and making petitions and submissions to ensure these frontline, grass-root workers are not forgotten, in the larger context of fear and panic.

The press covered highlights of the exemplary acts displayed by several of the waste pickers and emphasizing the significance of their work.

॥ प्रभात ॥

गुरुवार, दि. १६ एप्रिल २०२०

करोनाच्या लढ्यात 'दानाने स्वच्छता'!

प्रभात वृत्तसेवा

विश्रांतवाडी, दि. १५ - संकट मानवी स्वभावाची पारख करतात, असं म्हटलं जातं. या परिश्रित हातावरचं पोट असणाऱ्या आणि घरोघरी जाऊन कचरा उचलणाऱ्या एका स्वच्छतादुताने बावी मारली आहे. रोज कचऱ्याची म्हणून 'नाकाला रुमाल' लावणाऱ्या दांप्रीक समाजापुढे या महिलेने १५ हजार रुपयांचे 'दान' मुख्यमंत्री निधीला करत समाजापुढे एक आगळा आदर्श निर्माण केला आहे.

करोनाच्या संकटावर मात करण्यासाठी समाजातील विविधस्तरातून



मदतीचे अनेक हात पुढे येत आहेत. अनेकांनी मुख्यमंत्री सहाय्यता निधी, पीएम केअर्स फंडमध्ये मदत दिली; परंतु पुण्यातील एका कचरा वेचणाऱ्या 'स्वच्छतादूत' महिलेचे औदार्य

समाजासमोर सरस ठरेल असेच आहे. करोनाविरुद्धचा लढाईत या महिलेने १५ हजार रुपयांची मदत केली आहे. घरची आर्थिक परिस्थिती बेताची आहे. तरीदेखील मनाने श्रीमंत असलेल्या त्या दानसूर महिलेचे नाव गवळणबाई मुरलीधर उजामरे असे आहे.

गवळणबाई विश्रांतवाडीतील भीमनगर या झोपडपट्टीत राहत असून त्यांचे वय ६० वर्षांपेक्षा जास्त आहे. त्या गेल्या २० वर्षांपासून धानोरीतील स. नं. ५१, पैक्मनगर परिसरातील घरोघरी जाऊन ओला व सुका कचरा गोळा करतात. प्रत्येक घरामुनं दामहा त्यांना

चिन्मयराव

आजारापणासाठी ठेवलेल्या १५ हजारांचे दान



आजपर्यंत असं भयंकर संकट कधी बघितलं नव्हतं. संकटकाळात सगळ्यांनी मदत केली पाहिजे. आपण जगलो तर पुढे अजून कमावता येईल. पण आता लोकांची गरज भागवणे गरजेचे आहे. घोषा आहे म्हणून जर सगळेच घरात बसले तर आपलं पोट कसं भरणार? त्यामुळे कचरा तर वेचवाच लागतो. आपलं पोट भरताना देशाला जाणवणाऱ्या संकटाची आणि या आजाराने ग्रस्त लोकांची काळजी मनाचा दाव घेतो. म्हणूनच मी ही रक्कम देण्याचा निर्णय घेतला.

- गवळणबाई उजामरे

करोनाच्या लढ्यात 'दानाने स्वच्छता'!

६० ते ७० रुपये दिले जातात. त्यातही काहीजण पैसे देत नाहीत. तरीदेखील त्या सर्व घरातील कचरा नियमित गोळा करतात. दरमहा मिळणाऱ्या जेमतेम ५ ते ६ हजार रुपयांवर त्यांचा चरितार्थ चालतो. पण तरीही गवळणबाईच्या मनाच्या श्रीमंतीची तुलना कशासोबतच होऊ शकणार नाही. काही अडचणींच्या प्रसंगी अथवा औषधोपचार करण्यासाठी बचत केलेले पैसे करोनाशी दोन हात करण्यासाठी देण्याचे औदार्य दाखविले आहे. सामाजिक कार्यकर्ते जितेंद्र कराळेकर व छावाप्रमुख धनंजय जाधव यांच्या माध्यमातून ऑनलाइन मुख्यमंत्री फंडात ५ हजार रुपये निधी दिला. तसेच, करोनाच्या संकट काळात सर्वसामान्यांसाठी झटणाऱ्या धानोरीतील माता जिजाऊ प्रतिष्ठान व विश्रांतवाडीतील जीवनज्योती प्रतिष्ठान या दोन सेवाभावी संस्थांना प्रत्येकी ५ हजार रुपये असे एकूण १५ हजार रुपयांची मदत त्यांनी केली आहे. या सेवाभावीवृत्तीचे परिसरातून कौतुक होत आहे. महाराष्ट्राचे गृहमंत्री अनिल देशमुख यांनी ट्विट करून त्यांचे आभार मानले.

News article about waste pickers working in the pandemic

SUREKHA LALA GAIKWAD



Surekha Lala Gaikwad, Indira vasti, Aundh, expressed her fears, doubts, confidence, and funny-sad experiences. "Of course, we are scared; my elderly mother-in-law lives with us, my house is so small, and we are so many. It is so difficult to keep all the surfaces clean and keep washing our hands. Some of the people in the vasti had barricaded it and said no one should go out to work. But I know that if we don't go there will be even worse health hazards than COVID19! So, I am extra careful. I use all the safety gear that SWACH strived hard to procure for us- gloves, masks, soaps, wash my hands regularly and follow all the instructions I hear all the time. It is funny how we are scared while knocking on the doors, because we wonder which of these people has come from abroad, unknown to us, and whether they have even reported themselves. And yet, when we see the faces of the citizens through the bars, (they don't even want to

open the doors sometimes), we see fear writ large! Doubt about what surfaces we may have touched, and what viruses we may be carrying!

On the flip side, our work gets over fast, people who kept us waiting while they brought the waste out, now keep it out hours before we reach, lest we ring their doorbells, contaminate another surface! I am not complaining about that, it helps us finish work faster! Some citizens have been particularly sensitive- one of them gives me a glass of *limbu sarbat*, every day to fight the heat. And perhaps that helps build my immunity too! In any case, drink or no drink, fear or no fear, foreign returned or local, I will continue to service all the citizens I collect waste from. The system depends on me and 1000s like me. How can I let it down?" asked Surekha.

Waste pickers and the Environment

Calculating GHG emissions mitigated by waste pickers.

A study was conducted to calculate the reduction in GHG emissions due to the work of door-to-door waste collectors in Pune. The environmental impact of the activities of waste pickers was studied and quantified.

Methodology

Primary and secondary sources were used to populate the GHG emissions calculator. The sources and methods used for each section are detailed below-

1. Disposal Site

The main disposal site for Pune city is the landfill at Uruli Devachi. At the beginning of 2020, the National Green Tribunal issued a notice to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to cease open dumping at the landfill. Since then, the landfill has been officially closed, and the waste pickers working at the landfill lost their access to the waste.

2. Extraction of Virgin Raw Materials

Waste is diverted by waste pickers in two ways. The first is through recovery of recyclables from dry waste, which is done by waste pickers across the entire city. In some parts of the city, waste pickers provide the additional service of in-situ composting, managing the wet waste generated on site and diverting it away from the secondary collection system. Data on in-situ composting was estimated by tracking the total number of households doing in-situ composting and an estimate of per capita generation of organic waste.

3. Transportation

A. Motorized Transport

In Pune, motorized transport of waste takes place in the secondary (feeder points to transfer stations) and tertiary (transfer stations to final disposal/processing site) waste management system of the PMC. Data on waste transportation was obtained from an internal report with data for the month of October, 2020. Excluding the recyclable materials diverted by waste pickers and waste treated through in-situ composting, all municipal solid waste is transported to waste transfer stations within each administrative ward.

B. Non-motorized transport

A primary study covering 70 pairs of waste pickers across 12 out of 15 administrative wards was conducted to determine the average distances and load size of waste transported using non-motorized pushcarts. Though waste pickers provide doorstep collection (entering gated communities and climbing apartment buildings), for this study only distance travelled on motorable roads was tracked.

4. Energy Intensive Sorting

Pune has 25 mechanized Material Recovery Facilities, each estimated to handle 30-40 MT (average 35MT/day) of waste per day. These facilities use conveyor belts for sorting dry waste. Data on electricity consumption for conveyor belts was estimated using electricity data from Hasiru Dala's PET aggregation centre in Bangalore – which uses a mechanized conveyor belt, label removal machine and mechanized baler for one shift per day.

5. Open Burning

In 2016, the National Green Tribunal issued a complete ban of open burning of waste across the country. Despite this, open burning continues. Primary data on open burning was collected through semi-structured interviews in one slum of Pune city.

Results

The results indicated that there was an annual saving of 53,660 Tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions to Pune city because of the activities of the waste pickers. Most of these saved emissions come from the large quantum of waste that waste pickers diverted from the landfill and channeled towards recycling.

Pune's Plastic Brand Audit

A brand audit of Pune's plastic waste was conducted, as part of an annual global initiative by Break Free From Plastic to identify producers and hold them accountable for the plastic they introduce into our environment. This year, the Break Free From Plastic report highlighted the crucial role of waste pickers in collection and recycling waste across the world. Waste from over 1,000 households, featuring a mix of low, middle, and high-income households, was studied for the audit. The waste was first sorted into categories by material type – plastic, paper, metal, glass, sanitary waste, wet waste, etc. Plastic waste was further sorted by type into PET, HDPE, PVC, LDPE, PP, PS, O, thermocol, rubber, wires, etc. The brand name and plastic type for each piece of waste plastic was documented for the audit.

Break Free From Plastics' Brand Audit 2020 report revealed Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestle, Unilever and Mondelez International as the top five plastic producers. Coca-Cola has been the top-most producer of single use plastic in the world for three consecutive years. The audit in Pune revealed Nestle, Coca-Cola and Unilever to be the top three international brands contributing to Pune's plastic waste. Among local brands, Chitale, Amul and Gokul were found to be the most prominent by number, largely from single-use milk packets. In absolute numbers, Chitale was the most common brand found in Pune's plastic waste.

The items in this category included chips and biscuit packaging, small sachets of shampoo/ketchup, toothpaste tubes, etc. Each of these packets has several layers of material – various grades of plastic, aluminium and/or paper which make it extremely challenging to separate and recycle. These plastics either end up at landfills and open dumps or are subjected to environmentally harmful end-of-life processes such as incineration or processing that claims to convert plastic-to-fuel.

Producers of such multi-layered plastics insist that these sachets are produced in service of the poor, to provide affordable access to their products. India's Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and Plastics Waste Management Rules, 2016 require manufacturers, producers, and brand owners using non-recyclable packaging to either pay municipalities for the cost of managing such waste or arrange to take it back and manage its disposal themselves under the principle of Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR). However, an enforceable EPR mandate is yet to be rolled out. Until then, corporates continue to introduce single-use, multi-layered plastics into our cities, outsourcing the environmental and economic cost of managing these plastics to corporations, citizens and waste pickers.

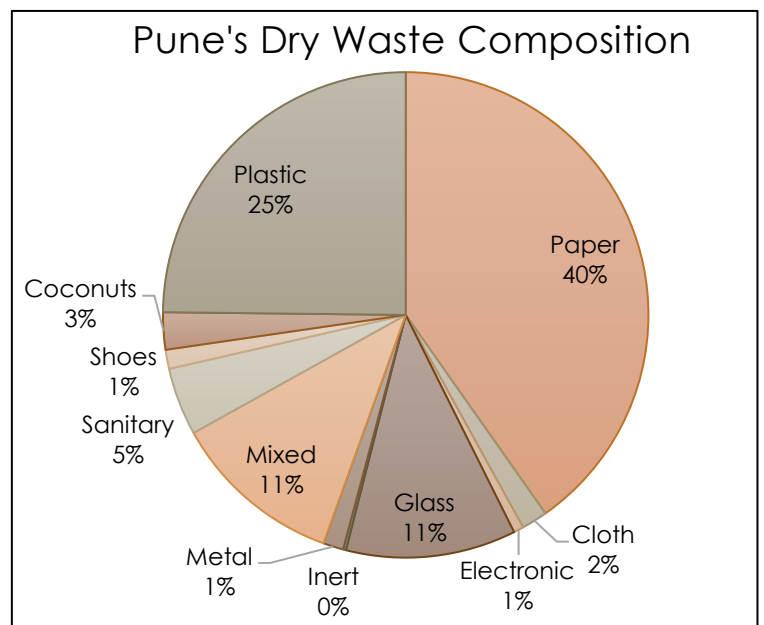


Brand audit

Brand audit findings

Summary:

- Multi-layered plastics was the most common type of plastic, forming 44% of total plastic waste, followed by single layered LDPE (27%)
- 76% of all plastic waste was food packaging
- Chitale was the top local producer of plastic waste, and Nestle was the top international producer of plastic waste



Upgrading the cooperative scrap shop

The COVID19 pandemic adversely affected the livelihoods of waste pickers, due to the near total shut down of the informal recycling sector. The easing of the lockdown measures allowed the scrap trade to restart. The time off was used to upgrade a waste picker-run cooperative scrap shop in Katraj, Pune.



Scrap shop door before (L) and after adding an entry ramp and shutter (R)

Infrastructure changes and repair work were done to increase the storage capacity of the shop and to better utilize the existing space. Additional repair work was done, and mezzanine space was created to optimize the storage. The increase in shop capacity was seen as a step to associate more waste pickers with the shop by ensuring livelihood support for up to 100 waste pickers.



Mezzanine spaces and mesh partitions to optimize space.



Plastic Scrap Grinder for additional value generation

A plastic scrap grinder was also procured to add value to hard plastics such as PP and HDPE. It is owned by the waste pickers and the operations are being managed by the cooperative shop. Waste pickers have been trained to operate and manage the plastic scrap grinding activities. In the coming years, the value addition through scrap grinding will lead to an increase in the incomes of waste pickers.

Making spaces for waste pickers

This year, three Mega Material Recovery Facilities were constructed in the city. The size of each MRF is 1500 sq. feet which is higher than the regular moderate size sheds. Balewadi Mega MRF impacts over 40 waste pickers suffering in the monsoons and summers because of insufficient space to sort waste. A toilet and washing area were added to the shed premise to ensure accessibility to basic health and hygiene infrastructure to the waste pickers.



Balewadi MRF

The shed at Ramtekdi was an existing dilapidated shed that required repairs to the floor, openings, and gate. This was repaired to create a well-equipped shed of 2000 sq feet that now impacts 40+ waste pickers by acting as the cooperative scrap shop for the waste pickers of Wanowrie-Ramtekdi and Hadapsar wards. The Burning ghat location was an open plot that was used by 16 waste pickers for the past 10 years. Working at this location was a serious health and hygiene issue during the monsoons. A mega MRF of 1800 sq feet was proposed at this open plot.



Portable storage units

The portable storage units- pinjras are movable and compact and can be kept along the roadside. 30 such pinjras have been constructed in the year and they have proven to resolve the issue of illegal dumping along the roadside while providing safe and secure spaces for waste pickers to store their recyclable materials- having a direct impact on their livelihoods and income. The pinjra is also useful for storage of equipment like buckets, aprons etc. These portable pinjras are instrumental in contributing to the recycling of waste. Having these spaces allows the waste pickers to store the recyclables for at least a week, increasing their bargaining capacity with the scrap traders as they are now dealing in higher volumes.

The colourful and catchy graphics on the pinjras make them an attractive way to showcase the important role played by waste pickers in recycling. The pinjras placed across the city so far have been received very well by the wastepickers, PMC, and the citizens.

Waste pickers and Entitlements

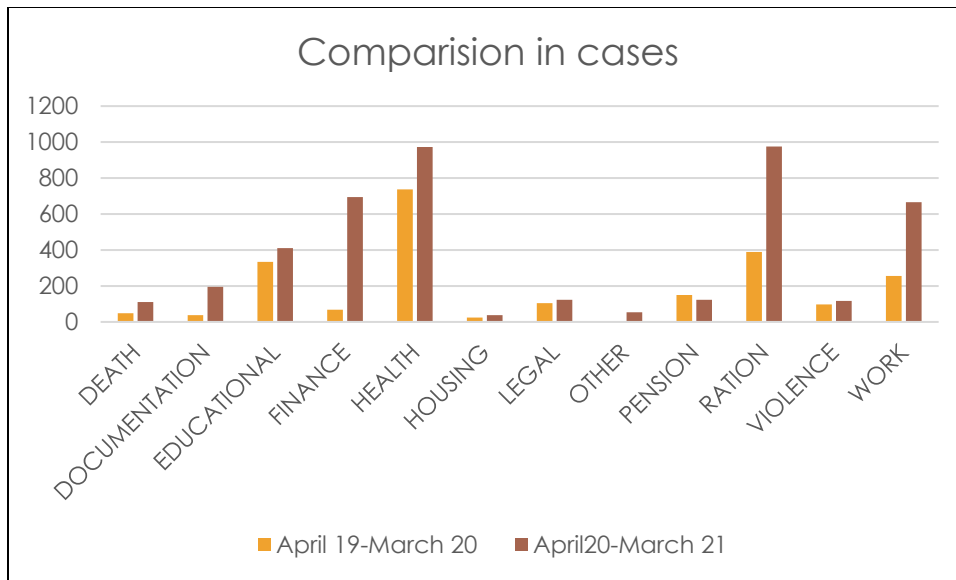
This section deals with the work done around various entitlements of waste pickers and their children. The central Helpdesk was established in 2018. The establishment of Kashtakari Seva Kendras (KSKs) for onsite delivery of services to waste pickers was a new experimental initiative that was made possible in the last year. Kashtakari Seva Kendras (KSKs) bridged the gaps in the last mile delivery of benefits and services to waste pickers. The KSKs are community-based centres that provide services and information to waste pickers living in slum pockets across the city. The push towards digitization meant that many of the application processes for government entitlements are online. Waste pickers and their wards continue to be systematically enrolled into schemes that have online application platforms. Such online platforms often prove to be disabling for waste pickers, who have little or no computer literacy resulting in many of them falling through the cracks in the system. The KSKs have therefore proved to be important links between entitlements and waste pickers. In the lockdowns, the KSKs played an extremely important role in establishing contact with waste pickers. This can be seen by the surge in the number of cases received at the helpdesk in the section below. The year also saw significant challenges to the physical spaces of Kashtakari Seva Kendras due to the lockdown restrictions, but the helpline continues to serve as a point of contact for the waste pickers to reach out to for any support in the devastating times of the pandemic.

Helpdesk

In continuation of the efforts taken in 2019 to create awareness around the helpdesk, it grew to serve more waste pickers. The first line of intervention in this system continues to be the helpdesk operator who takes the call and notes all the details about the case from the caller. If the caller requires immediate assistance in the form of letters from the office for concessions on medical bills or fee reductions at school, the operator provides the documents immediately and the waste picker can start the process on their part. The case is then reported to the thematic lead and helpdesk coordinator via email for further action. Emergency cases, such as medical emergencies, corporal punishment at school, refusal to give fee reductions or legal emergencies are reported to the thematic lead and the helpdesk coordinator for immediate action.

Substantive SOPs developed for each of the themes outline step by step instructions for resolution of these cases. Cases are tracked on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis primarily by the helpdesk coordinators to monitor handling, closure, efficiency, trends and gaps. A comparative analysis of the cases that were received by the helpdesk in 2019 and 2020 is given below.

Theme	April 19-March 20	April 20-March 21	% Increase
DEATH	48	111	131.25
DOCUMENTATION	38	195	413.16
EDUCATIONAL	334	410	22.75
FINANCE	68	694	920.59
HEALTH	737	973	32.02
HOUSING	24	38	58.33
LEGAL	104	123	18.27
OTHER	2	54	2600.00
PENSION	150	123	-18.00
RATION	389	975	150.64
VIOLENCE	97	117	20.62
WORK	256	666	160.16
Grand Total	2247	4479	99.33



Kashtakari Seva Kendra

The KSKs have been functional since June of 2019 and have seen an increase in the last year from 9 centers to 11. The personnel in these KSKs are data enumerators, entrusted with the role of filling out online forms for waste pickers and providing information about deadlines, timelines, relevant documentation, eligibility, and benefits. In addition to this, there are community mobilizers or *Kashtakari Sangathikas* who are daughters or daughters-in-law of members married into the community, colloquially referred to as *Sunbais* or daughters – in – law. The *sunbais* are active in the communities and assist with the process of enumeration in addition to providing provide information to community members and mobilizing and organizing them. These centers also function as nodal points where waste pickers, their representatives or youth groups can come together to conduct meetings or workshops. In future the KSKs are also envisaged to play the role of live museums, which act as information repositories about cost-effective housing options, recyclable materials etc.

During the year, the KSK spaces across the city faced multiple challenges and some had to be relocated. As the relief work was also done at the KSKs some citizens had raised objections pointing out the risk and the rising cases. In some areas, the shared KSK space was a community hall which was offered to organizations willing to pay higher amounts as rent and the KSKs had to be shifted. Going forward, portable cabins are being explored as an alternative to such spaces for KSKs.

Waste pickers and the education of their children

Kashtakari Panchayat has been committed to improving access to education for waste pickers' children's for over a decade. Kashtakari Panchayat believes that staying in school and acquiring secondary education or more offers the next generation more and varied opportunities for exploring alternative livelihoods and/or improving waste management systems

to better their working conditions. KP consistently strives towards this goal by reviewing and evolving newer approaches to ensure that waste pickers and their children have access to educational opportunities.

Sponsorship for vulnerable children

The sponsorship program implemented by Kashtakari Panchayat followed two routes, sponsorship to students who have scored above 60% in their last exams and to those who have passed their last exams irrespective of the percentage they scored. A sum of INR 4000-6000/- was given to students from class I through XII to encourage retention in school and working towards higher education among children. We also developed certain vulnerability criteria to ensure that the most deserving and needy within the community of waste pickers receive direct benefits. The process followed to identify children was -

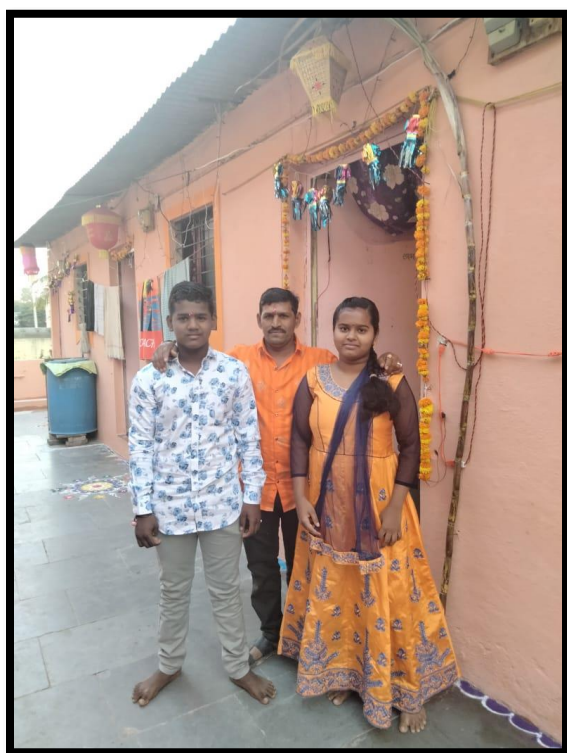
Field workers were trained to conduct home and school visits to

- a) Reach out to children who have received sponsorship earlier but have not updated their information
- b) Identify potentially vulnerable children in communities.

Data from multiple sources such as notebook distribution, helpdesk calls, previous years' records was compiled, to create a master list of extremely vulnerable children to be considered for sponsorship. The children who were orphaned, abandoned, looked after by single mothers were included. Additionally, differently abled and critically unwell children were also supported this year. 354 children were identified as vulnerable through the enrolment data collected at the KSKs. 289 were supported through this project after verification of their documents.

The sponsorship amount was distributed in public events where discussions on government schemes and their eligibility, and other educational initiatives and schemes for the waste pickers were also conducted. This was followed by children and the waste pickers sharing their experiences and dreams they continue to chase. The parents committed to utilize the sponsorship amounts towards educational expenses only and resolved to participate proactively in school meetings and other programs related to the academics of their children.

SANKET SHANKAR KAMBLE



Shankar Kamble is a waste collector from Hadapsar Area where he is integrated into the door-to-door collection model of solid waste management. He has a deep commitment for inculcating the value of education in all his children. Sanket, his son has had difficulty in hearing since he was enrolled in school but only after the school asked to get a medical certificate done, did they realize this was an issue Sanket had been grappling with for so many years. He pursued the case with various hospitals and finally after a long process, Sanket received a hearing aid.

Two months ago, Sanket developed an injury around the ear where the hearing aid has been fixed. As it started with the reddening of skin and minor irritation, they applied an ointment after consulting a local physician. Sanket used to study in the PMC School until class VII. As the school was only till class VII, he moved to Sadhana Vidyalay last year and is currently in class VIII. "What a strange thing this

virus is, the whole year has gone by, and we still don't know how long the classes will be conducted online. Sanket is a special child and needs close attention and extra guidance. Something that works better in a physical classroom setting where at least he has some friends who help him" says Shankar. At the start of the year, they had to spend around Rs.2000 for school fees and around Rs.1900 for clothes.

"My eldest daughter is in 10th now and the youngest one is studying in 7th. With all classes being online, I bought a smart phone which all three of them shared at home. When the class timings clashed, usually the eldest daughter had the phone as we felt the SSC is most important step and let her attend. It pains me so much to do this, I have decided that in case schools continue to remain closed I will plan to buy another phone and will figure out a way to bear the additional recharge costs. The sponsorship support we receive comes as a big support and reaffirms my efforts to ensure Sanket continues his education.

Enrolment into government schemes

KP places high premium on enrolment into government schemes aimed at enabling children from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access education by giving scholarships. These

scholarships include PMC's Lokshahir Annabhau Sathe and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad scholarships, Pre-matriculation scholarship for children of those engaged in Cleaning Occupations and Scholarship for Sanitation workers (Ghanbhatta Shishyavrutti) of the Pune Municipal Corporation. While the first two are merit based, the other two are occupation specific.

As the enrolment process was online, applications were filled at the KSKs. The pandemic brought in significant challenges as the schools were closed through the year and the enrolments had to be delayed. The details of the schemes are below-

- Ghanbhatta – Benefit amount is up to Rs 5000 for children studying from class 8th to 10th. 261 children have been enrolled in the year.
- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad – Benefit amount of Rs 15000 for children who have cleared class 10th with 65% and above. 38 eligible children have been enrolled in the scheme.
- Lokshahir Annabhau Sathe – Benefit amount of Rs 25000 for children who have cleared class 12th with 65% and above. 12 children of waste pickers were eligible for the scheme.
- Cleaning Occupations - Benefit amount of Rs 3000 for children studying from class 1st to 10th. Applications of 918 children have been submitted under this scheme.

Postcard campaign

The scholarship amount for cleaning occupations was increased from 1850 to 3000 per annum by the State Government, to be implemented from the year 2020-21. This breakthrough was due to the advocacy efforts of waste pickers and their children.



Waste pickers and their children – postcard campaign

In 2018, the Central Government announced an increase in the scholarship amount from Rs.1850 to 3000 per year. The state government had not implemented the change. Poornima Chikarmane, Pune and Jyoti Mhapsekar of the Stree Mukti Sanghatana, Mumbai met the Minister for Social Justice & Special Assistance along with the Deputy Chairperson of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, Ms Neelam Gorhe just prior to the covid pandemic. They were assured that this would be raised in the State Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra and that the waste pickers' demand was legitimate.



The pandemic delayed this process and further exacerbated the situation of children who had to get accustomed to the digital mode of education. Lack of access to smartphones and the internet, meant many children struggled to keep up with the classes. Waste pickers and their children started a postcard campaign addressed to the concerned Minister-Shri Mundhe. 1500 children eligible under the scholarship sent postcards from their local post offices. A campaign was launched on social media to build statewide momentum. Their grit and determination paid off when on March 1, the government issued a resolution with the updated guidelines for implementation of the scheme.

Right to education

500 waste pickers expressed interest in admitting their children/wards into private unaided schools under the RTE 12.i.c that offers 25% reserved seats to children from socially or economically marginalised groups. Applications for 477 of these children could be filled and registered and forms were successfully submitted for 107 students. Out of these, 12 children were allotted schools under RTE, as per the lottery system.

Waste pickers and the right to health



A community meeting to discuss menstrual hygiene.

In June 2020, Kashtakari Panchayat launched a pilot study in slum communities¹ in the wards of Kothrud and Warje in Pune City. The study engaged waste pickers and introduced menstrual hygiene education and reusable cloth sanitary pads, which are considerably cheaper than disposable pads, do not require disposal, are environmentally friendly and more hygienic. A total of 200 cloth pads were given to waste pickers in Kothrud and Warje communities. A packet of four pads was priced at INR 500, which we sold to them at the subsidized cost of INR 50 in order to encourage them to buy the product. Before distributing the packets of cloth pads, an educational session on menstrual hygiene was conducted.

A study was also conducted with 186 waste pickers to better understand their attitudes towards various menstrual hygiene products. During the multiple COVID lockdowns in Pune, schools and colleges have remained closed. College-going children of waste pickers felt a sense of loss of work and complained about restlessness and anxiety. Regular youth group meetings also had to stop, and it took some time to adjust to online meetings on Zoom. Youth leaders were initially involved in distributing PPE kits and food rations in slum communities but given their eagerness to support waste pickers, we decided to involve them in the process of promoting sustainable menstrual hygiene products. A training program for female youth leaders or Yuvatis was held to educate them on alternative menstrual hygiene products and train them to work as menstrual hygiene educators for waste pickers. This gave them a sense of ownership over the program and allowed them to earn a small honorarium for their work.

The outreach activity included creating context-specific educational information by and for waste pickers. Over 5,500 waste pickers were reached through the program in a phased manner, through different field workers, who distributed over 1,016 cloth pad kits.

¹ In Kothrud it included the communities of Sainath Nagar, Lokmanya Nagar, Sagar Colony and Kishkinda Nagar and in Warje, it included the communities of Ramnagar, MHADA colony and Gosavi Vasti.

CHOICES WE MAKE



Monika is a confident young girl pursuing Law from Yashwantrao Chavan Law College. She is the daughter of Jayashree Kamble, a waste picker from Bhawani Peth Area of Pune. Over the last year as she entered the third year of her graduation, she realized the importance, as well as the need to be financially independent. In November she had an opportunity to attend a series of training workshops around menstrual health and hygiene. She was introduced to alternatives to sanitary pads, one of them being a cloth pad. "The cloth pads are made of cotton and can be reused for a period of 4-5 years. I was shocked to know that a sanitary pad takes up to 800 years to decompose. My mother has to handle sanitary napkins on a daily basis and listening to her has been triggering as well" exclaims Monika. She has been promoting cloth pads

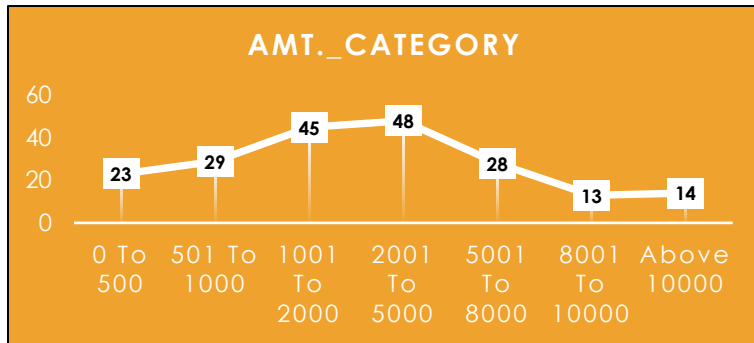
to the families of waste pickers by conducting meetings in the communities. These pads are being made available at a subsidized cost to the waste pickers by EcoFemme, an organization from Tamil Nadu. "The first time I met a group of waste pickers and tried to demonstrate the usage of cloth pads, they avoided eye contact with me and left even before I could complete. But there are people who are beginning to understand what I am saying, the other day a girl called me up after a week and said that she had a good experience using the cloth pad and that just cheered me up. The best thing about these pads is that they can be folded to resemble a wallet or a purse that makes it easier to navigate the societal taboos around it". Monika is extremely mature for her age and knows that a change in behavioral patterns of people is a long and tortuous path. Her face lights up all of a sudden and she says, "The important thing is that I am convinced about this and that is how I will be able to influence people to contribute in building a sustainable future for us all"

Reimbursement of medical expenses to waste pickers with chronic illnesses

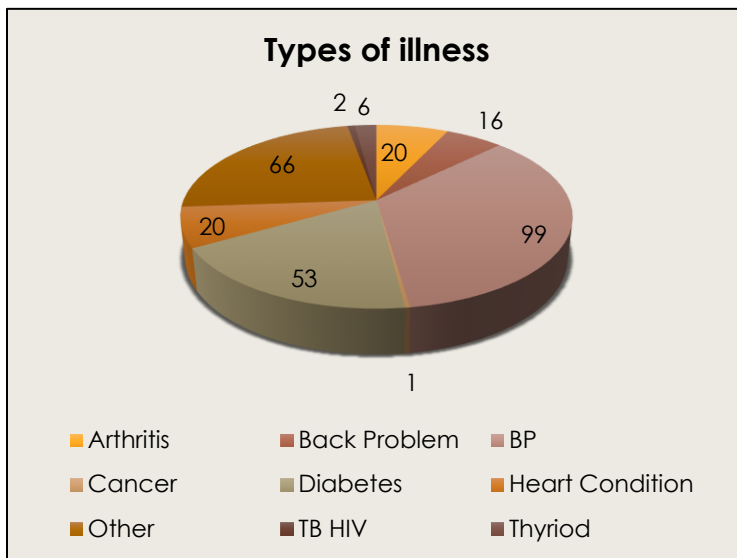
The stringent lockdown measures made the purchase of essential items such as groceries and ration, and in some cases life-saving medication, exceedingly difficult. Waste pickers suffering from chronic illnesses were not able to take necessary care because of income loss, unavailability of doctors, curtailed mobility and reduced access to health care facilities, and pharmacies etc. The health intervention was aimed at identifying waste pickers from the community in Pune with chronic ailments that require regular medication such as asthma, heart disease, cancer, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, TB etc. and reimbursing costs incurred by them.

204 waste pickers were supported via medical reimbursements. Data was collected and analysed with the help of a simple app called the Kobo collect. Waste pickers with chronic

ailments were encouraged to get in touch with the helpline to report their issue and become part of the survey. Each beneficiary was reimbursed by cheque.



Through this process it was learnt that many waste pickers spend a significant part of their income on medicines. An alternative of generic medicines was explored to help these waste pickers to reduce around two-thirds of their medicinal costs as generic medicines have the same dosage, intended use, effects, side effects, route of administration, risks, safety, and strength as the name-brand versions. In many cases waste pickers have been provided with the details of the nearest generic medicine shop available and they have been able to access the same.



KESHARBAI NAGTILAK



Kesharbai Nagtilak has spent her life in the trade of waste and her husband has been a constant companion in her journey. She works near Katraj area for decades now. Four years ago, she experienced a throbbing pain in her head and rushed to Bharati Hospital for a checkup.

The doctors stated that there was a clot in her brain and that the only way to get rid of it would be an operation involving high risks. She was asked to visit Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai for the operation. However, as it involved high risks, she decided to continue with the medication. She purchased the first lot of medicines for Rs. 3000 that lasted for a month. The doctor has advised her to continue the medicines or her condition might deteriorate rapidly. Ever since, she has been spending around 3-4 thousand rupees a month on her medicines. "Unfortunately, medicines will have to be my companion now. The doctors have said that

I have to be on medication as long as I live. To take a second opinion I went to Barshi, my hometown and consulted a doctor there. They have asked me to get an MRI done at the earliest. I was admitted for a week there. It's been a year now and with Covid, things have been scarier" said Kesharbai. She has been on regular medication and was able to keep all the bills and prescriptions safely in a file.

"It becomes very difficult to lift the garbage buckets and I can't raise my voice because that triggers a sharp pain in my head. But I feel grateful for the support, it helped us not just financially but also to keep my anxiety under check. I will be visiting my village soon for a checkup. One thing I have learnt over the years is that it is necessary to be systematic in documentation, a habit that I will continue to maintain" concluded Kesharbai.

Engaging with youth



Youth leaders at scrap shop

KP focuses on increasing participation and engagement of youth on different issues through capacity building measures so that they become enlightened and responsible citizens of the community and give back to society. Various capacity building activities have been undertaken with youth with a view towards preparing them as leaders in their communities to take forward issues and mobilize other youth around them. This year phone counselling sessions with around 35 youths were held across vastis regarding the junior and senior college admissions.

Meetings with youth leaders and vasti wise meetings with youth were conducted. With the

aim of creating awareness around the Covid - 19 precautionary measures, around 15 youth prepared a flash mob which was performed in Kothrud area after conducting a rally. Campaigns against child labour were conducted in the month of November to spread awareness in the community as well as to build capacity of youth leaders to come up with creative ways of engaging with this issue. Different means like posters, films and other creative means of communication were used to generate awareness. Children learnt about their environmental rights and ways in which they can create avenues to participate and take ownership of their surroundings. In different slum pockets, youth also participated in waste segregation campaigns to ensure citizens are aware about how they should dispose of their waste.

CONSTITUTION – MY GUIDING LIGHT



"I am preparing for my HSC examinations which are right around the corner now. It has been a strange year, with the preparations being online. In the lock down, one of the most useful things that I got to do was to attend a workshop on the Constitution. One of my earliest memories is of my mother waking up early and going for waste collection. I used to hear about instances of discrimination but always felt that I was too small to do anything about it. We learnt to draft letters wearing the lens of constitution. It is an immensely powerful tool which I will now start using whenever I come across any such instances. Not just that, it is also helpful to lead a more responsible life" said Pratiksha Khandale.

Conclusion

The year began with a nationwide lockdown and an uncertain future. Unlike many others, the waste picker community continued to work throughout the lockdown. It was a year that tested the patience of the waste pickers who had put everything on the line to ensure that the city's waste is cleared every day and its citizens are safe. Towards the end of the year, vaccinations were available and waste pickers have been recognized as front line workers, eligible for vaccination on a priority basis.

To address the challenges of loss of work and incomes, in the process of vaccination, appeals were made to citizens across the globe to pitch in for support towards rations, cash transfers and protective gear. The devastating second wave struck towards the end of the year and yet again it leaves a bleak picture of the future in front of everyone. The waste pickers braced this too and continue to work despite the myriad challenges.

In the coming year, we will focus on providing safety gear, ration kits and cash transfers for waste pickers. Particularly vulnerable waste pickers will be supported to compensate for the loss of livelihoods. To ensure support to livelihoods, a new scrap shop is being set up and would be functional in the next year. As the pandemic has affected the education of children, especially since many do not have access to online modes, efforts will be made to conduct surveys to map the ground reality to draw up a robust, sustainable plan to address their needs. The year ahead will have implications not only on the waste sector at large but also on the individual lives of waste pickers and their families, and all activities will need to be dynamically designed to adapt to the impact of the pandemic.