

Waste pickers

Waste pickers, individuals engaged in the collection of recyclable materials from waste streams, confront a myriad of challenges that span health hazards, economic instability, social stigma, legal recognition issues, education limitations, environmental concerns, exploitation, and inadequate social security and health benefits.

Health Hazards: One pressing issue faced by waste pickers is the daily exposure to health hazards. Due to the lack of proper protective gear and constant exposure to hazardous materials, waste pickers are vulnerable to injuries, infections, and respiratory problems. This significantly impacts their overall well-being and poses a constant threat to their health.

Economic Instability: Economic challenges form another prominent aspect of their struggle. Waste pickers typically earn modest incomes, and the informal nature of their work adds to the instability of their livelihoods. Fluctuating prices of recyclables further contribute to their economic vulnerability, making financial sustainability a constant concern.

Social Stigma and Marginalization: Social stigma and marginalization pose additional hurdles. The work of waste pickers is often stigmatized, leading to social discrimination and exclusion. This lack of recognition for their valuable contributions to waste management perpetuates a cycle of marginalization, hindering their integration into broader societal frameworks.

Legal Recognition Issues: The absence of legal recognition and rights is a systemic issue faced by waste pickers. Many operate within the informal sector, lacking the legal protection and acknowledgment necessary to assert their rights. This further complicates their efforts to access social security benefits and secure their well-being.

Education Limitations: Education and skill development limitations add to the challenges, particularly for the children of waste pickers. Barriers to education and limited opportunities for skill enhancement impede their ability to break free from the cycle of poverty and explore alternative livelihoods.

Environmental and Safety Concerns: Environmental and safety concerns constitute another layer of difficulty. Working in environments with potential safety hazards, including exposure to toxins and accidents, waste pickers lack the necessary safety measures and infrastructure to mitigate these risks effectively.

Exploitation and Economic Hardships: Exploitation by middlemen exacerbates economic hardships. Many waste pickers sell their collected materials to middlemen at suboptimal prices, contributing to their economic exploitation. The absence of direct access to recycling facilities perpetuates this dependency and hinders their potential for economic empowerment.

Inadequate Social Security and Health Benefits: Inadequate social security and health benefits are overarching issues. Waste pickers often lack access to essential benefits such as health insurance and proper healthcare, leaving them financially vulnerable in the face of illness or accidents.

- [Key Challenges in Accessing Schemes by Waste pickers](#)

Key Challenges in Accessing Schemes by Waste pickers



In Bangalore, it has been observed that migrants constitute approximately 60% of the total waste pickers, with a noteworthy 90% of these migrants belonging to the Muslim community. A significant proportion of migrant waste pickers are categorized as 'transitory' waste pickers, indicating that they initially engage in waste picking as their primary vocation and subsequently transition to other fields such as construction, metro-related work, or employment as security guards. This trend highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of the waste picker population, illustrating their movement across various sectors over time. The discussions with our partners have provided valuable context and understanding of the demographic composition and occupational trajectories of waste pickers in the Bangalore region.

Waste pickers face a notable limitation in terms of entitlements and available schemes. When migrating to cities, waste pickers typically carry only basic documentation such as Aadhar cards, bank account details, and voter IDs. These essential documents serve as their primary identification and verification tools. However, the challenge lies in the limited awareness among waste pickers regarding the various entitlements and benefits they are eligible for. Due to this lack of awareness, waste pickers may not fully access the available schemes and entitlements that could significantly contribute to their well-being.

Waste Picker Cards: Currently, no new cards are being issued, with the last batch of 10,000 cards distributed in Bangalore around 2012, which are now obsolete. However, the Center for Development (CfD) has provided ID cards to waste pickers, featuring their addresses. This initiative has resulted in increased income, facilitated access to factories, and reduced instances of harassment.

