Hasiru Dala: Empowering the Waste pickers

To enrich the lives of waster pickers

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ABSTRACT

Ajay Rawat, Geet Amrit, Kshitiz Aneja, Marc Oberhauser and Yannick Wiessner prepared this case under the guidance of Prof. Trilochan Sastry for class discussion. This case is not intended to serve as an endorsement, source of primary data, or to show effective or inefficient handling of decision or business processes.

Hasiru Dala: Empowering the Waste Pickers (A)

It was a calm Tuesday afternoon of September 2013. Nalini Shekhar was looking outside window into the infinity while her husband, Shekhar was on the other side of the desk reading a report. After working for a decade in the United States on human trafficking and child labor issues, Nalini decided to return to India in the year 2010 to lead a calm and peaceful retirement life. But within a few days of her retirement life, she could see newspapers flooded with articles and stories discussing the proliferating waste and garbage problems in the city of Bangalore. She could see civic groups discussing about solutions but none of them were talking about the pathetic living conditions of people working as waste pickers. It is that moment she decided that her retirement plans can wait but these waste pickers must be given recognition and all sorts of basic facilities so that they can have a social security among the other members of the society. This led to the birth of **Hasiru Dala** or **The Green Force**, the brainchild of Nalini and Shekhar, to integrate the waste pickers of the city of Bangalore into the solid waste management system.

Mandur: Hell on Earth

A statement released by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India, 62 million tons of waste is generated in India annually. Out of this 5.6, million tons is plastic waste, 7.90 million tons is hazardous waste, 0.17 million tons is biomedical waste and 15 lakh tons is electronic waste. Only 75-80% of the municipal waste is collected and a meagre 22-28% of the municipal waste is processed and treated.[1]

Every day the city of Bengaluru produces more than 4000 tons of waste. Due to that high amount of waste the city nowadays is surrounded by more than seven toxic landfills and on those more than 24 lakh tons of mixed waste can be found.[2] The most well-known of these landfills can be found in Mandur, which is located North East of Bengaluru. Back then, when the garbage crisis reached its peak, Mandur was presented as the solution to it. Thus, tons of mixed waste were carried to Mandur and the whole village turned into a huge landfill. Over time the toxic waste from the urban world poisoned the water, land and air in and around Mandur. This caused an increase in diseases as well as a decrease in life expectancy among the population of Mandur. (we can add a pic of Mandur as exhibit)

After these shocking facts came out people in Bengaluru, from NGOs as well as from the government, began to realize that it was time to stop the pollution of Mandur and other places around Bengaluru. It was time to start giving back, at least some of their life to the population of Mandur. Therefore, the government introduced the law that waste must be segregated and recycled and by doing so it was made possible for Hasiru Dala to start their work.

Waste Pickers: India at a Glance

Millions of people in India mostly in the metropolis make their living by collecting and sorting the waste materials. In the hierarchy of informal occupation in urban areas waste picking is given the

[1] http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/solid-waste-management-rules-2016-53443
[2] http://www.2bin1bag.in/urbancrisis

lowest rank and majority of the people employed in this sector are women and children. Majority of them are illiterate, highly unskilled, migrants from rural areas and belong to the poorest of the poor section of the society. These characteristics also make them ineligible to work in some other skilled sectors.

Size and Significance

Study conducted in the year 2010 shows that there are roughly 1.5 million waste pickers in India.[3] Some studies show that in the Western Indian state of Gujarat there are close to 100,000 waste pickers. In the largest city of Gujarat, Ahmedabad, there are around 30,000 waste pickers and majority of them are women and children. In the Indian Capital city of New Delhi alone there are approximately 100,000 waste pickers and in Pune, a city in Central India the number is stated to be around 6000. A study has shown that among these close to 72% are women and this is quiet alarming.[4]

Working Environment

In this business, there is no relationship between the employer and the employee. Some of them are mostly regulated by contractors. Waste pickers are mostly self-employed and they have no formal as well as legal relationship with the Municipal Authority or the Local garbage traders. They are constantly exploited both mentally as well as financially by the local municipal authorities, residents of the society, police and the waste traders. No social security like basic education, health benefits and financial inclusion are provided to the waste pickers working in this sector. They regularly suffer from occupational hazards like muscular and skeletal diseases and gastro-intestinal and respiratory ailments due to lack of precautionary measures before working in extremely unhygienic environment and basic medical facilities. Since majority of the business is unorganized there is not a defined wage and payment structure for the waste pickers in India.

Policies in Practice

In the month of January 2000, The Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Act was passed under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India after being directed by the Hon. Supreme Court of India as a verdict to the Almitra Patel Case stating a mandatory policy for the collection and management of solid wastes. The act was implemented in the year 2004 and it directed every municipal authority for collection, segregation, storage, transportation, processing and disposal of the waste materials.[5] The verdict was directed only towards solid waste management and there was no mention of the waste pickers.

Mr. Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister of State for Environment, Forests and Climate Change recently announced the new Solid Waste Management Rules (SWM), 2016. These new rules are going to replace the 16-year-old Municipal Solid Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules implemented in the year 2000. One of the key highlights of the new rules is that for the very first time they have mentioned about integrating the rag pickers, waste pickers and *kabadiwalas* working in an informal sector to the formal sector by the respective State Governments. It is a very bold move by the Central Government and this is going to help them in joining the mainstream of the society.[6]

[3] Chaturvedi, Bharati (2010). "Mainstreaming Waste Pickers and the Informal Recycling Sector in the Municipal Solid Waste". *Handling and Management Rules 2000, A Discussion Paper*

[4] http://wiego.org/informal_economy_law/waste-pickers-india

[5] http://www.cpcb.nic.in/divisionsofheadoffice/pcp/management_solidwaste.pdf

[6] http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/solid-waste-management-rules-2016-53443

About Hasiru Dala

Hasiru Dala or the **Green Force** is a member based Non-Profit Organization dedicated for waste pickers and the informal waste workers. Hasiru Dala aspires to ensure that the neglected waste pickers of the society including the informal waste workers in the solid waste management structure by deploying the expertise achieved by them in this domain. Established in the year 2011, Hasiru Dala has grown significantly over the years with over 7500 waste pickers as members and is persistently trying to innovate its business model as well as services which in turn enhances the expertise and entrepreneurship acumen of the waste pickers. The organization with its work is acknowledging this deprived section of the society who play a significant role in the urban economy.[7]

The main agenda was to bring improvements in the life of waste pickers. The first step that they took was to approach the local authority for providing ID cards. They supported the case for waste pickers as they were well aware of the harassment and discrimination that these people faced. After huge struggle, the court agreed to mandate municipal corporations to provide the ID card to waste pickers, giving recognition to their contribution to the society. Now what is so great about the ID card? Firstly, any type of harassment by the police or any citizen is put to an end. Secondly, it gave them a sense of identity. For the first time they were told, this is who you are, you have the authority to pick up the waste. They suddenly felt a sense of pride in what they were doing. The third was, it gave them financial inclusion. Now they could open bank accounts. Before, most of them had no papers to proof who they are, or where they lived or anything. So financial inclusion became a possibility. Then the state government accepted the ID card as proof that you are a waste picker and therefore they could get educational scholarships which were earmarked for people who were in unclean occupations, e.g. sewage, waste picking, and so on.

After banking and scholarships, Hasiru Dala helped them in getting government insurance schemes. RSBY is a government insurance scheme and today more than 1800 families are enrolled in it. Many other initiatives were also taken by Hasiru Dala like healthcare camps, providing hostel facilities for children. These steps were focused on giving the next generation of waste pickers to do something else in life. That is their idea of trying to break the cross-generational cycle of occupation.

POLICY CHANGE:

In 2014 BBMP (local municipal cooperation) decided to define something known as bulk waste generators. Bulk waste generators are defined as “any residential complex which has more than 50 households or any commercial establishment which generates more than 10kg of organic wet waste a day”.[8] They will have to manage their own waste. The municipal cooperation will not manage their waste. The reason for doing that, it was felt that the bulk waste generator had both, responsibility towards waste management and they could afford to pay for those services and it constitutes about 40% of the total waste generated in a city. They said, that could be taken away from the government machinery, so that it could work better for individual homes and smaller shops and so on, and the services would hopefully get better. That was the thinking behind the bulk waste generator rule. Not

[7] http://hasirudala.in
8 http://218.248.45.169/download/engineering/SWM%20PublicNotifn(Bulk%20Genr).pdf

only did they say, “we will not service you, but you either have to do it through your own resources or hire an empaneled service provider, who would manage the waste for you”.[9]

NEW OPPURTUNITY:

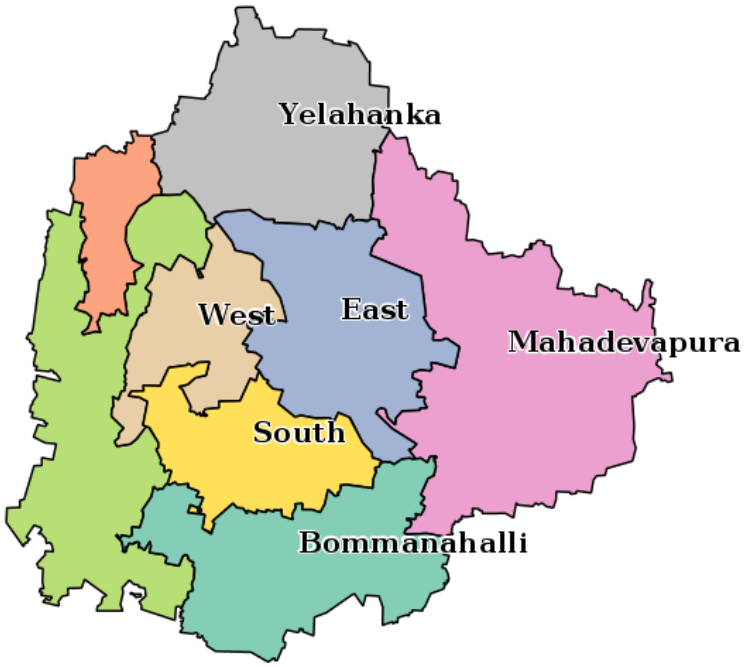
When BPNP called for empanelment of service providers, Hasiru Dala decided it was a good opportunity to try and create a livelihood for waste pickers. They thought of experimenting a new step. A few citizens supported them and four apartment complexes said they would be on board if they got into the business. Now even before segregation at source became law in the city, they insisted to only pick up segregated waste. So the resident is expected to segregate the waste at source. That was a very new concept and behavioral change was required to do it. They talked about three streams of waste, wet, dry and rejects. They piloted something called the two bin, one bag system. The green waste bin is for green organic waste, the red is for rejects, which is typically sanitary waste, hair, fingernails, things like that. And the bag is for storing dry recyclable and non-recyclable waste. Basically it is inorganic waste, like plastics, cardboard, paper. Chips packages is non-recyclable, it goes to the landfill. Those are called no-value waste and paper, plastic and so on are called high-value waste, because they are recyclable and there is market for it. They pioneered in about thousand households and the citizens took it up as a campaign and it became the “Two bin, one bag”-campaign. They were the first service provider to be empaneled by BPNP and this was in October 2014 that they got empaneled and started their services.

FUTURE PATH:

Shekhar and Nalini are at Hasiru Dala’s office discussing the way forward. The humble beginning has now become more formalized and structured. Some battles have been won, some lives have been touched and some impact has been created. But there is a long way to go. Hasiru Dala is at the juncture at which it has to be registered as a legal business entity. The question is what form it should take? Should it be a cooperative or an NGO or a private limited company or just a movement? Which structure is aligned best to their vision and achieve the magical balance of autonomy, funding and scale?

9 http://218.248.45.169/download/engineering/SWM%20PublicNotifn(Bulk%20Genr).pdf

Exhibit 1 Statistics of Waste generated in Bengaluru City



Area: 800 sq. km
Population (2008): 78 lakhs
Households: 25 lakhs
Commercial Properties: 3.5 lakhs
No of Zones: 8
No of Wards: 198

- Estimated MSW generation Projection for 2009, from all sources for BBMP zones is ~ 3000 tpd
- Per capita waste ~ 350 grams per day (gmpd) (domestic waste)
- Households contribute to ~ 54% percent of the total waste; Markets & function halls contribute to 20% and commercial establishment & institutions contribute to 17% and others 9%
- Segregation of waste at source 10%

Source: BBMP Website (http://218.248.45.169/download/health/swm.pdf)

Exhibit 2 Physical Composition of Municipal Solid Waste

Sl. No	Components	Percentage
1	Paper	0.09
2	Plastic	0.12
3	Cardboard	0.04
4	Textiles	0.04
5	Grass/Leaves/Wood	0.06
6	Leather	0.00
7	Battery	0.00
8	Electronic Item	0.02
9	Metal	0.01
10	Organic	0.23
11	Glass	0.03
12	Debris	0.05
13	Biomedical	0.02
	Total	**1.00**

Source: BBMP Website (http://218.248.45.169/download/health/swm.pdf)

Exhibit 3 Chemical Composition of Municipal Solid Waste

Sl.no.	Constituent / Property	Minimum	Maximum
1	C	13.00	42.60
2	N	0.28	1.23
3	P2O5	0.46	0.92
4	K2O	0.45	1.07
5	Moisture %	13.80	40.90
6	Bulk Density	341.00	491.00
7	Calorific Value	684.00	1240.00

Source: BBMP Website (http://218.248.45.169/download/health/swm.pdf)