

Women Entrepreneurs in Urban Waste

TICAD IV ;
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Chintan, India



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About Chintan

- Chintan : Urban Sustainability and Poverty Alleviation are linked
- Waste is a good entry point into these issues
- Waste is a tool that can empower women and impact gender relations
- Demonstrating change on the ground is critical
- Building confidence in the capacity of the poor, women and men

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What Chintan Does

- Organizes waste recyclers
- Focuses on clean work for recyclers
- Builds additional capacity of women
- Works with communities to phase out children from wastepicking
- Advocacy along with the sector
- Creates an enabling micro-environment
- Acts as a support group

The Two Cities of Delhi

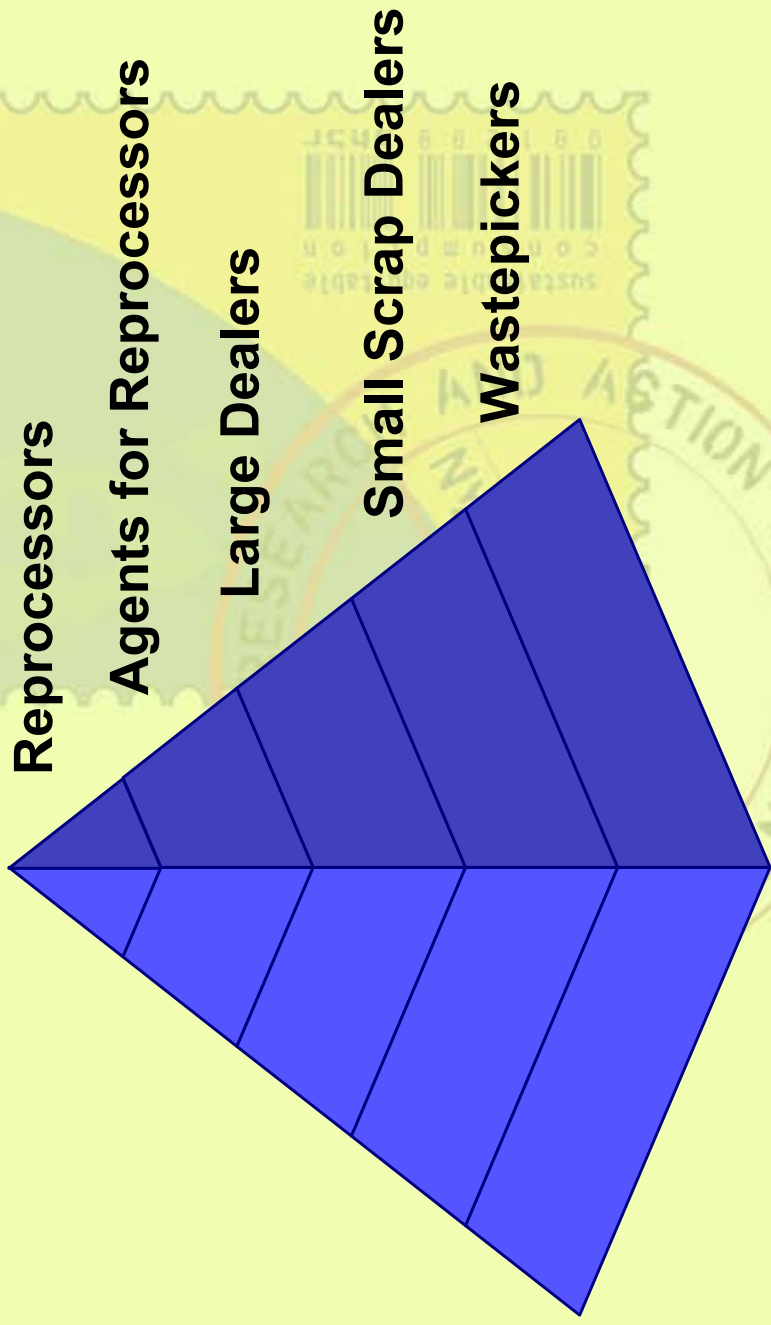


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How Recycling Works



Why Waste Recyclers?

- Widespread trend Migration, New Economies
- Addresses poverty (Stanford Review)
- Can offer women livelihoods despite low education and other household work
- Debate on toxics and recycling globally (e-waste, mercury)
- Important urban service providers
- Waste is always produced, always needs handling

The Challenges

- Informal Status – lack of access to work
- Police Harassment – bribes of upto 50 USD a month
- Municipal Harassment
- Toxics – 82% women severely anemic
- Privatization of waste collection and transportation
- Unsafe work – sexual harassment
- Patriarchal context – not allowed many public transactions
- Poor education levels

Policy Based Challenges

3 critical challenges

- Urban Natural Resource and Waste Infrastructure
- Mobility
- Access to Markets

The Resource

•Materials

•Space



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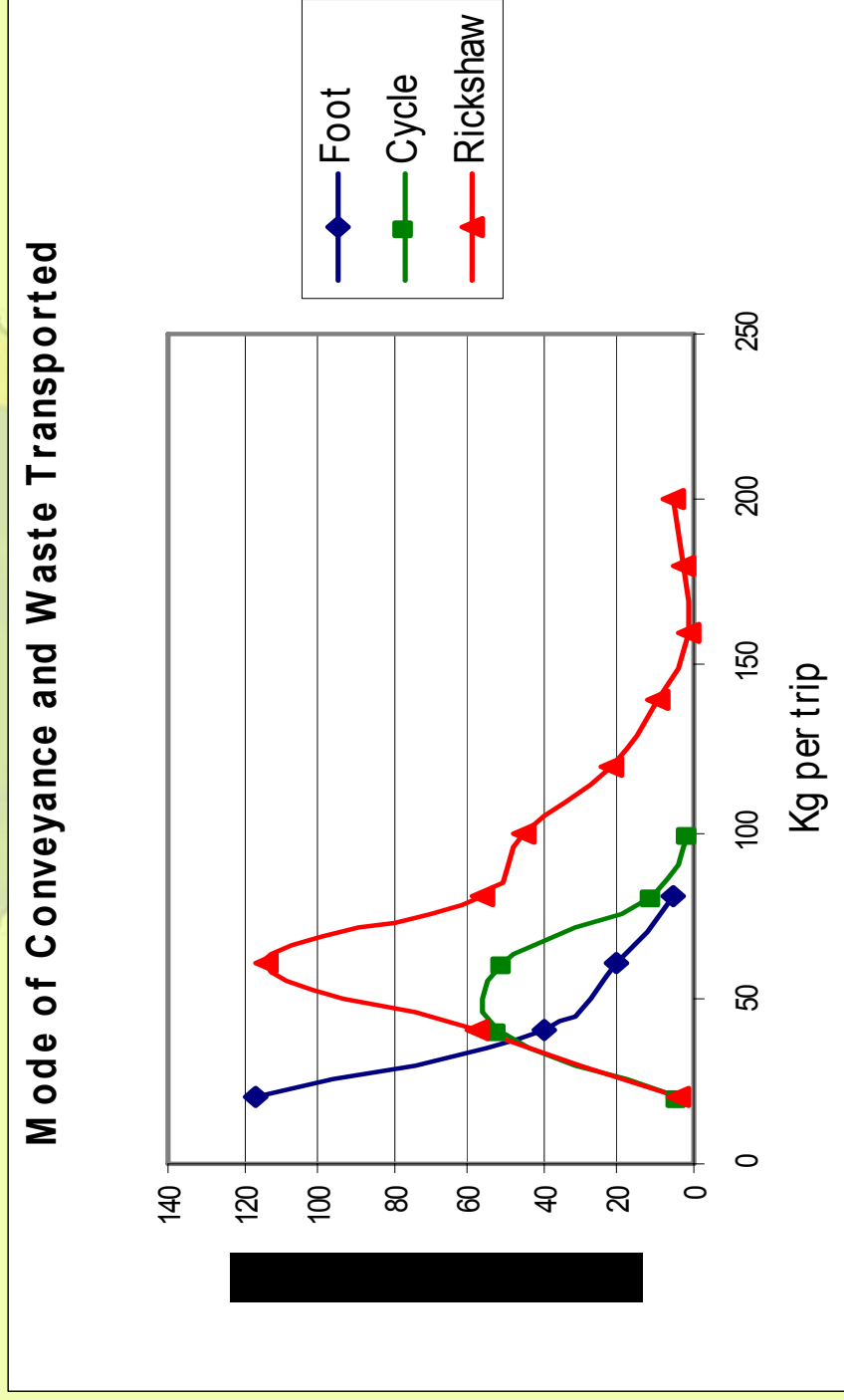
Resource Loss : Privatization

- The contract
- The loss of access to dry waste
- Loss of flexibility
- Loss of segregation
- Gendered impacts
- Door to door waste collection
- Other possibilities

Mobility



Mobility and Earnings



Access to Fair Markets



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Selling Point : Junk Shop



SEALING



The Impacts of Non-Inclusion of Women

- Informal status increases illegality. This increases vulnerability and insecurity.
- Women access less work they can do, therefore earn less, reduced household voice.
- Unable to break out of poverty due to lack of opportunity combined with vulnerability
- Reduced income means more distance to travel for new work, less time at home, forces women to take children on work, exposing and introducing them to trash OR earn less
- Cost of children's illness
- Children out of school

Addressing these Challenges

Door to Door waste collection

- Collecting waste from doorstep
- Contract/letter from residents
- Women selected and trained, but allowed to take others for help
- Composting as unique skill; Green house gas prevention

Training Women



Results

- Increase in income from Rs. 2500-3000 per month to Rs. 5300-5700
- Sharp reduction in harassment/bribes
- Increase in household income
- Men become partners in women's livelihood initiatives

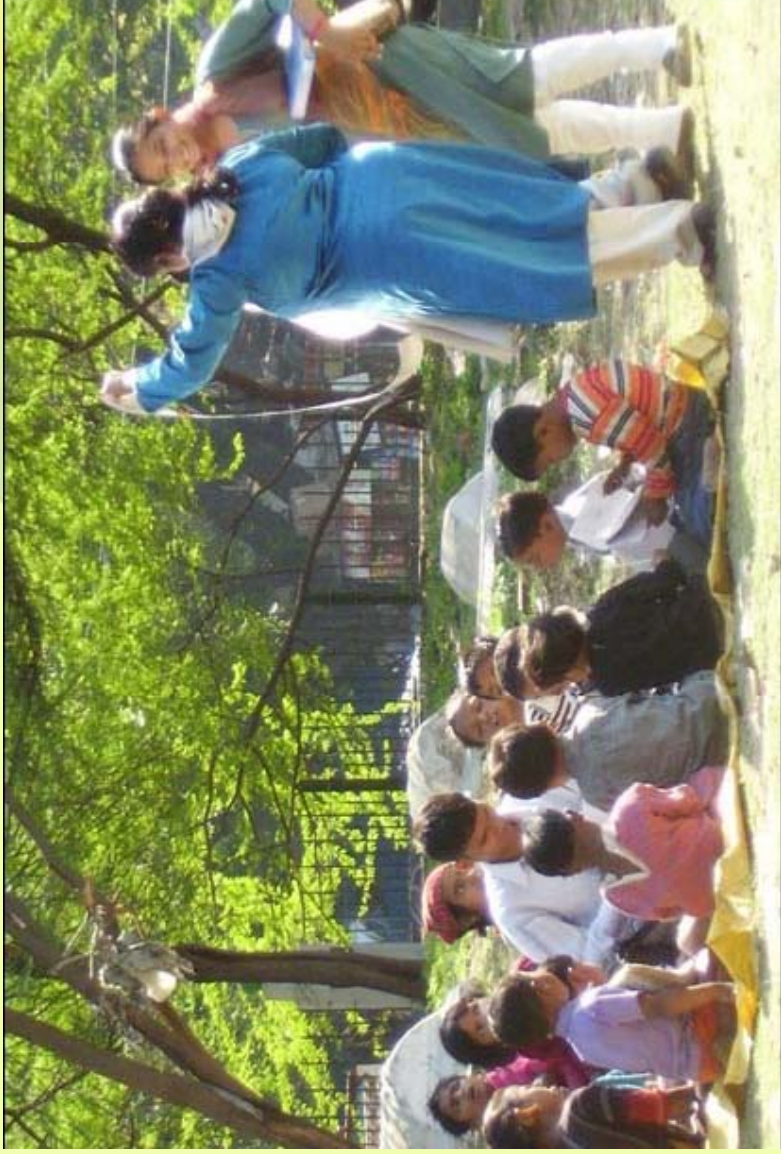


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Education

- Three Learning Centres
- Total appx. 400 children; Appx. 50% in schools
- Many girls still work at home, but combine with schools
- At least 3 school toppers (all girls)



Organizing Women Wastepickers

**For identity
For rights
For work**



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Combating Social Bias

Dirty

Muslim

Low

Caste

Thieves

girls,
2008



Using Media

Data



Using
Environmental
Arguments



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Conclusions

- Access to waste and livelihoods for the informal sector is critical
- Backward and forward linkages must consider gender needs
- Policy must use and build on local systems that are efficient, not break them – this severely impacts women
- Waste can act as a gender-based poverty alleviation strategy
- Men have to be made partners
- If cities are to be sites of growth, ‘poor pockets’ have to be developed to create gender equity

Thank You



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