

## [ CHINTAN Fact Sheet ]



## Who Recycles Your Waste?

## Waste Recyclers and Recycling

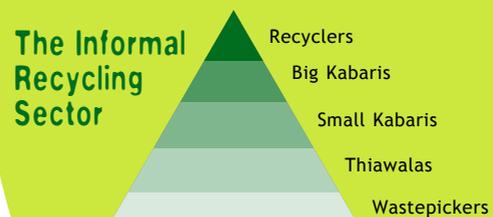
### 1-2 % of the urban population

In many countries of the developing world, the urban poor form the backbone of recycling programs. Informal waste pickers, waste recyclers, and small junk dealers, collectively known as the "informal recycling sector," make up as much as 1-2 % of the urban population in Asia and Latin America.

### Close to 16,00,00 in Delhi

The workforce in this sector numbers roughly 160,000 people and consists of waste pickers, small kabaris (small middlemen), thiawalas (collectors), and big kabaris (big middlemen).

### The Informal Recycling Sector



### About 15 lakhs in India

About 15 lakh people across India depend on wastepicking alone. Apart from them, several other types of recyclers depend on waste for their livelihoods.

### Collecting 60 kgs of waste each day

According to Chintan estimates, waste recyclers collect 15% - 20% of Delhi's total waste by weight and recycle virtually all possible recyclable materials they touch. The waste pickers collect an average of 60 kg of waste per day.

### Recycling 2000 tons each day

The informal sector recycles about 2000 tons of waste each day in Delhi.

### Using non-motorized transport

The mode of waste collection is mostly cycles (58%), followed by walking (24%) and rickshaws (18%). The average distance travelled by waste pickers using these three environmentally friendly modes of transport is 11-16 km.

### Saving 15 lakh rupees daily

If the municipality paid minimum wage to an equal number of employees for this work, it would cost Delhi at least 15 lakh rupees per day (\$25,000 USD / day).

### 15% growth rate of market

Local recycling markets in India are growing at a rate of 12% to 15% annually, a trend widely attributed to waste pickers' efforts.

### Only 20% of all plastic recyclers are registered

About 80% of the plastic recycling in the Delhi region is unregistered, on account of the high prices of land in industrial areas and the lack of knowledge and capacity.

### Cooling Agents

The informal recycling sector in Delhi alone accounts for estimated net GHG reductions of 962,133 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (TCO<sub>2e</sub>) each year. This equates roughly to removing 176,215 passenger vehicles from the roads annually or providing electricity to about 133,444 homes for one year (US estimates).

### Easy to displace

When the collection and transportation in six zones of Delhi was privatized, the large private companies who were contracted for these were also given the rights over the recyclable waste and the spaces where waste was brought by various households. This was also the place from where wastepickers typically picked out waste. Suddenly, over 50% of them were reduced from being informal to being illegal.

### Highly vulnerable

About 41% wastepicker families in the Delhi region stopped buying milk completely for their children, on account of the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009.

## How can you help those who recycle your trash?

Here are some ways by which you can help the waste recyclers. You may have other ideas too - let us know.

### First of all, do the hardest thing of all:

identify who picks waste in your neighbourhood, and who are the local itinerant buyers, or, the kabaris who come on a cycle and buy newspapers. These are your allies.

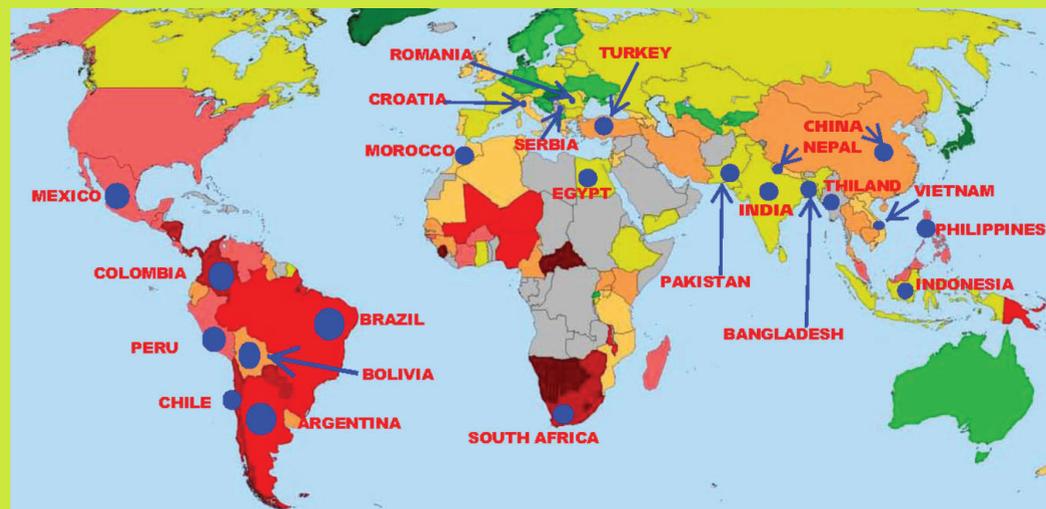


**Give off your waste**, segregated, to wastepickers in your area.

**If you don't need the money**, then give the newspapers for free to the itinerant buyer/kabari-wala.

**Organize your neighbours** and the colony to give off their waste in an organized way to local wastepickers. To do this, you must work with the wastepickers so they come everyday, on time. You need to give them identity cards and help them go to each house. They will need a payment for this service. You will need to monitor them till they learn the work. By doing this, you will help wastepickers work under safer, less vulnerable conditions and still produce environmental services. If you need help, contact Chintan.

India is not the only country where wastepickers work. Here are some others:



### Always put blades, broken glass etc

**separately** even if you are throwing your waste into a trashcan. If you are handing it over to someone, let them know what is in it.

**Be generous**, give away clothes, woolens, utensils etc to the wastepickers in your area. They need a helping hand. Not everything has to be given to the maid, just because it is the easiest option.

**If there are children** working as wastepickers, or if wastepickers are bringing along children, join hands with your neighbours and friends to find ways for the children to go to school instead. Convince the wastepicker, don't give up.

**If there is a kabari shop** in your neighbourhood, then write to the municipality and ask it to recognize it as a recycling station. Without such micro-infrastructure, recycling would be hard.

**Teach your children** more about wastepickers and recycling.

The Indian Government has recognized wastepickers and the informal recycling sector through policies and law. **Some of these are:**

- E-Waste (Management and Handling) 2011
- Plastics Waste (Management and Handling) 2011
- National Action Plan on Climate Change 2009
- CAG Report 2007
- National Environment Policy 2006

For any help, contact Chintan at [info@chintan-india.org](mailto:info@chintan-india.org). We will be happy to help you.



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C-14, 2nd Floor, Lajpat Nagar III, New Delhi 110024  
T: +91-11-46574171/72/73 F: +91-11-46574174  
W: [www.chintan-india.org](http://www.chintan-india.org) E: [info@chintan-india.org](mailto:info@chintan-india.org)