

Caselet - Human Resource

RAG PICKERS AS SKILLED LABOURERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Charvi Parikh
(*me2green* NGO, Mumbai)

DEFINITION OF 'SKILLED LABOR'

A segment of the work force with a high skill level that creates significant economic value through the work performed (human capital). Skilled labour is generally characterized by high education or expertise levels and high wages. Skilled labour involves complicated tasks that require specific skill sets, education, training and experience, and may involve abstract thinking.

DEFINITION OF "RAG PICKER"

A person who makes a living by picking up rags and other waste material that someone else has thrown away. Rag pickers are also known as Waste pickers. Waste pickers rummage through discarded waste to retrieve recyclable items which they sell to the recycling vendors to earn a livelihood.

PREVAILING SCENARIO

Mumbai generates 8,000MT of garbage every day. A significant amount of waste is generated at Mumbai's large venues such as colleges, corporate offices, malls and during large events such as weddings, exhibitions, festival celebration. More than 40% of this waste is recyclable or reusable and hence need not go to landfill. However, there are hardly any efforts at large venues or during large events to recover useful waste such as compostable wet waste, dry recyclables. BMC collects all mixed waste and dumps it at landfill.

Recovery of recyclables is then carried out by Mumbai's 85,000 rag pickers on streets, near community bins or at landfill. In spite of contributing to India's GDP, environment protection and municipality's solid waste management; the efforts of Rag pickers are not recognised by the Government formally. As a result they still remain poorest of poor and socially most marginalised group of population.

PROPOSED MODEL

Instead of depending on Government, Mumbai's commercial organizations can come forward to create new job opportunities for Rag pickers. Rag pickers can be hired as *Bin Hostess* to assist in segregation of waste at source at large venues or during large events.

There are more than 100 large venues and more than 100 daily large events in Mumbai which generate a significantly high on-site waste. If waste is segregated at the source, the recyclable items from waste can be recovered in much cleaner condition without the risk of them getting dirty, damaged or mixed with hazardous items. This also ensures higher selling price of recovered recyclables.

The facilitation requires minimum investment in terms of manpower and material. One only needs to arrange for

- multiple bins at collection site
- *Bin Hostesses*- labourer for ensuring proper segregation of waste

The proposed model can work as a profitable business:

- The expense such as additional salary and bins forms a very small fraction of total operation costs. At large venues / large events, one can recover the expenses by charging "waste fees" to venue visitors or event hosts
- Additionally, profit can be made by selling recovered recyclables

RAG PICKER IN MUMBAI – curriculum vitae**Brief Personal Profile**

Address: Live as communities in poorest slum areas such as Dharavi, near Deonar Landfill

Education: Illiterate

Employment Prospects: Negligent due to low acceptance / inclusion in society

Number: 85,000

Current Work Profile vs. Future Work Profile

	Current Work Profile	Future Work Profile
Employer	Self-employed	Large Venue Owners and Large Event Organizers
Earnings	Rs. 100-200 per day (unpredictable and less during monsoon months)	Rs. 200 per day (guaranteed)
Identity / Title	Socially most marginalised group of population	Bin Hostess
Work Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deonar landfill Hundreds of illegal garbage dumping sites in Mumbai Thousands of community bins across Mumbai streets 	Grounds / Halls / Malls / Colleges / Hotels / Corporate
Work Description	Rummaging through mixed, dirty and sometimes even hazardous garbage to retrieve recyclable items and sell to intermediate recycling vendors / scrap dealers	Stand behind the multiple set of bins. Take garbage directly from peoples' (visitor / guest) hands and segregate in front of them right at the source
Skill / Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert in Segregation / Sorting of garbage Knowledge about what is recyclable and what is non-recyclable 	<i>No additional job training required as already skilled worker</i>
Interest	Survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better Earnings Safer Working Condition Dignified Job More acceptance in Society