

**IMPACT OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT REFORMS
ON RAGPICKERS: A CASE STUDY OF DELHI**

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POOJA RAVI



**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067
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INDIA**



Date- 28.7.2010

DECLARATION


I declare that the Dissertation entitled “Impact of Solid Waste Management Reforms on Ragpickers: A Case Study of Delhi” submitted by me in the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

POOJA RAVI

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Amita Singh
Chairperson
Centre for the Study of
Law and Governance
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

PROF. AMITA SINGH

**CHAIRPERSON
CSLG**



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*Dedicated to
Papa and
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Abbreviations

CPCB	Central Pollution Control Board
CPHEEO	Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation
CSE	Conservancy and Sanitation Department
DCB	Delhi Cantonment Board
DJB	Delhi Jal Board
GNCTD	Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi
GOI	Government of India
MCD	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MOEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
MOUD	Ministry of Urban Development
MSW Rules 2000	Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000
NCR	National Capital Region
NDMC	New Delhi Municipal Council
NEERI	National Environmental Engineering Research Institute
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
RWA	Resident Welfare Association
SC'S	Scheduled Castes
SSWM	Sustainable Solid Waste Management
SWM	Solid Waste Management
ULB	Urban Local Body

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Racing towards reforms: Perils

“The only thing that is constant is change”

- Heraclitus

Change is an inevitable process of human life. The desire to have more and to have better has been the one aspect which has remained constant throughout human history. When it comes to the functioning of states change is generally referred as ‘reform’ which comes about as a result of both external as well as internal pressures. Reform in the functioning of the state has been the hallmark of both developing and developed countries. Richard Batley defines reform as “a re-structuring of institutions and cannot just be seen as a technical matter of finding the best design solution and applying it and, nor is reform a narrowly political process of confronting specific interests.”¹ The reform movement which gained ascendancy during the 1980s brought in drastic changes in the way states functioned in developing and developed countries. However the implementation of reforms did not always prove to be a smooth process in developing countries as the race to bring in reforms led to negative consequences for a few individuals or groups in society, leaving them worse off. Such adverse effects of reforms did not receive much attention from states as there was sparse retaliation by the affected groups or individuals. Such developments showed that though constant reform is an integral part of all states but if the reform makes any one party worse off then the very purpose of the reform is defeated no matter how well intentioned it was to begin with.

It is difficult to determine the exact reason as to why certain state interventions or measures to improve the way of life for people go wrong. As James Scott says “it is not so difficult, alas, to understand why so many human lives have

¹. Richard Batley, “The Politics of Service Delivery Reforms,” *Development and Change* 35(1) (2004), p. 36

been destroyed by mobilized violence between the ethnic groups, religious sects or linguistic communities. But it is harder to grasp why so many well intentioned schemes to improve the human condition have gone so tragically awry.”² One of the first steps to determine as to why reforms on the part of the state prove to be detrimental to a few in society would be to look at the forces which drive these reforms.

1.1.1 Internal and external factors leading to reforms

The forces which drive reforms can be broadly classified into two: external and internal factors. The chief external factor which drives reform would be “market-driven globalization, generally in the guise of international financial institutions that impose their perspectives on governments and act as purveyors of ideas about appropriate policies for development.”³ The reason why these international financial institutions are able to find a way into the domestic policy making arena of a country is because they are able to forge close ties with not only the reformers or policy makers but also the economic elites present. Thus “imposition of new policies and institutions occurs because international technocrats invade domestic policy making arenas – directly through domestic acolytes who share their world view and language- and introduce powerful ideologies and conditionalities in support of change.”⁴ The support for change is not only limited to the reformers or the policy makers but “international actors also find domestic allies among internationally-oriented economic elites who seek to take advantage of new opportunities in international trade, financial intermediation and technological innovation.”⁵ Thus countries under the influence of international institutions try to bring in reforms as a way of fulfilling the conditionalities laid down by these institutions as the basis to get funds to upgrade their domestic institutions or to improve the infrastructure to meet global standards.

² James.C. Scott, introduction to *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 4

³ Merilee Grindle, “Designing Reforms: Problems, Solutions and Politics,” *University Faculty Research Working Papers Series*, RWPOI-020 (2000), p. 5

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

The influence of globalization also has another dimension. The reforms that these institutions suggest are portrayed as being vital for the development of a country. The reformers who are mostly urban educated individuals and due to the kind of training that they receive are pushed to believe that the reforms are needed to keep up with the changes that governments across the globe are bringing about and their own country must not be left out. As a consequence, they sometimes bring in reforms which are ill-suited to the needs of their own state reflecting their “strong belief in the superiority of the market”⁶ which to a great extent is due to their “academic training”⁷ and “professional experience.”⁸

The internal or domestic factors which bring about reforms are varied. However the main actors and institutions which play an important role would be pressure from certain groups or individuals in society, NGOs, mass media, small bodies within the executive and political pressure. Firstly, there is the influence of certain committed individuals or groups who want to bring about changes in the way their city functions through the filing of petitions and also through holding demonstrations with like minded individuals. Secondly, NGOs frequently highlight the dismal state of affairs showing that reforms are needed. The effort by these actors is helped by a third actor , the mass media which, by highlighting the concerns of these actors, plays a vital role in bringing to public attention the need for reforms. Fourthly, it has also been observed by scholars that pressure to initiate reforms also comes through small groups or lobbies within the executive whose reasons for such decisions are not transparent, and may even be driven by self-interest, but are presented as being “either as a response to external pressures on government or evidence of bureaucratic interests that, like extra-governmental interests, cultivate allies, adopt strategies to neutralize or defeat opponents and negotiate details to gain acceptance of proposals that serve their interests.”⁹ Lastly, it has been observed that reforms come about due to pressure from politicians who utilize these reforms to secure more votes. Thus “electorally sensitive politicians assess the relative power of winners and losers that will be created through specific reform initiatives and of

⁶ Ibid, p.4

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, p. 6

those that bolster their chances of winning elections or of their parties remaining in power.”¹⁰

Thus by looking at the various factors which lead to the generation of reforms it can be concluded that reforms are “elite projects generated by small groups that shared similar concerns about problems of governance in their countries.”¹¹ These factors suggest that the reform process does not, as is generally believed, emerge from the need to meet the demands of particular challenges, but are carefully calculated actions that may benefit a particular group or give political mileage. This shows that reforms usually follow a top down approach with the justification that the benefit of the reform would gradually trickle down to all in society. However, the very opposite of this is observed when one section of the population suffers for the benefit of all. If we are to understand why such a top down approach prevails even when it is clear that the trickle down theory does not seem to work, we need to look at two main aspects to analyse the reasons. Firstly, why are reformers not able to get a good understanding of the ground needs and consequences of their actions. Secondly, we need to see how the logic of development leads reformers to work in a fashion such that one group is always neglected.

1.1.2 Reformers:

Policy makers form a very important element of the reform process. They are the ones who formulate policies for the improvement and betterment of society. Thus, when it comes to the failure of a particular reform in its applicability or its inability to integrate all the actors who are affected, it is the working of the policy makers which is first scrutinized. One of the chief reasons cited for the inability of the policy makers to come up with policy change which suits all is their lack of understanding of what goes on the ground or a disconnect with reality. This happens due to the “high-modernist”¹² way in which policy makers are trained. In other words, they have immense confidence in using technical

¹⁰Ibid, p. 6

¹¹ Ibid, p. 7

¹²Robert E. Goodin et al, “The Public and its Policies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3

and scientific methods to solve problems, thus leading to a disjuncture in the actual needs of the problem which could also be understood in social terms. The solutions to problems or reforms were only seen to be good if they were rational. As such, the way policy makers functioned has been described as a scenario in which “technocratic hubris is married to a sense of a mission to make a better world with an overwhelming confidence in their ability to measure and monitor the world and also a boundless confidence in their capacity to pull off such a task.”¹³ Thus, the inability of policy makers or reformers to understand what goes on the ground is because of the way they think and the background they come from, that is their own social location as urban educated people who are not able to place themselves in the shoes of the people they are trying to change. This is one of the reasons which lead policy makers to make policies which are ill-suited to the needs.

Despite the negative role that has been associated with policy makers in the reform process there is also a literature which shows that policy makers are not always to be blamed when reforms go awry. Policy makers do not function in isolation as they have to work under pressures coming from the political realm as well as the social realm. Thus policy makers have to juggle between various interests to arrive at a reform which meets the demands of all. Policy makers function within a “policy space”¹⁴, which includes the “interests of social classes, organised groups, international actors and hold of history and culture due to which decision makers appear to have room to manoeuvre and capacity to influence the context, timing and sequence of reform initiatives”.¹⁵ This policy space allows the policy makers the freedom to bring about significant changes through reforms, belying the general belief that policy makers work solely to fulfil the demands of the political elite. “The space maybe narrow or wide depending on the ability of the decision makers to utilize information that they have at hand.”¹⁶ Policy space allows policy makers to balance various demands showing that they have “considerable capacity to think strategically

¹³ Ibid, p. 3-4

¹⁴ Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, “Introduction: Explaining Choice and Change,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 8

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 7-8

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 8

about managing opposition, taking advantage of opportune moments and putting together supportive coalitions for reform.”¹⁷ All these arguments go to show that the role of policy makers is pivotal when it comes to bringing in reforms as they have enough space to work independently for addressing problems at the root.

Given the amount of freedom that policy makers have with regard to reforms despite political and social pressure, we need to understand why it is that, even so, policy makers tend to fail certain sections of the population. The first reason that can be asserted is that policy makers are not able place themselves in the context for which they are working. “Policy makers must carry people with them, if their determinations are to have the full force of policy as they cannot merely issue edicts, they need to persuade people who must follow their edicts if those are to become general public practice.”¹⁸ Placing themselves within the situation that they are working towards is important as it helps them to understand the situation at hand from various dimensions. The reason for this inability of policy-makers to place themselves is because they lack “reflexive-self understanding of the community”¹⁹ that they are working for.

All the above arguments show that despite the “policy space” available to them, policy-makers are still a part of the elite group in society. Despite their ability to maneuver in the reform making process to include all the interests at hand, they would include only those demands which are important in their perception, or in other words the chances of a particular group interest to be considered would be in the hands of the policy makers. So when reforms are brought about to meet specific problems, the extent to which all dimensions of the problem are taken care of would depend largely on the discretion of the policy makers. Hence “an important ingredient in reform initiatives is how policymakers perceive a

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 9

¹⁸ Robert E. Goodin, “The Public and its Policies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 5

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 7

particular problem and what they perceive as viable solutions.”²⁰ Thus there is a chance that a reform which comes about in such a context would be elite in nature.

We can conclude by saying that the role played by the policy makers is more significant than usually perceived. Their functioning is affected by various external forces but they do have enough space to come up with many alternatives to the problems so that the interests of all may be taken into consideration. However, the way the policy makers function still makes the reform process a top down approach leaving little space for the demands of the lowest sections.

1.1.3 Logic of development

After looking at why the reform process becomes a top down approach from the role played by policy makers or reformers, we now move on to examine the role of the concept of development which is seen to be the driving force behind reforms for policy makers and how it can have adverse consequences when the way that it is perceived is skewed.

Development is on one of the key goals of any government. The concept of development came up in the 1950s to transform and make the economies of the previously colonised countries more productive. The onus of bringing about development was in the hands of the state or the state was to be the main driver of policies and programmes which would bring about development. The basic presumption about development during this period was that “the goal of development was growth; the agent of development was the state and the means of development were macro economic policy instruments.”²¹ However, by the 1980s the theory of development as economic growth which was to be state driven began to decline. One of the reasons cited for this situation was that the state was not able to play an active role in the whole process and it was

²⁰ Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, “Introduction: Explaining Choice and Change,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 8

²¹ Colin Leys, “The Rise and Fall of Development Theory,” in *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, (James Currey Ltd, Indiana University Press and East African Educational Publishers, 1996), p. 7

observed that letting in the 'market forces' would lead to better levels of development, which led to a reassessment of the role of the state.

Giving an open rein to the 'market forces' was done without fully understanding the consequences with the decisions of the state being based on market principles or in other words "politically motivated policy decisions (setting capital free to pursue profit whenever it wishes and on whatever terms it can impose), rationalized by a particular brand of development theory (neo-liberalism) which assigns all initiative to the market (i.e. capital)"²² was being made.

Development was, of course, being seen in predominantly economic terms. The social consequences of the policies which were being pursued by the state for development were not fully recognized by the state especially in the developing countries where some sections were being adversely affected by such actions on the part of the state. Development was only being equated with economic growth with a belief that that the economic prosperity which comes about would eventually trickle down to all in society, which did not however materialize. Hence policies or a program for development by the state needs to be evaluated in terms of whether or not it is leading to the development of all in society. One way of doing this would be how Amartya Sen describes it, that is, to link development with freedom. If a particular policy for development leads to enhancement of an individual's freedom then that policy can be seen as being of some use as "development can scarcely be seen merely in terms of enhancement of inanimate objects of convenience, such as rise in the gross national product (GNP) or in personal incomes, or in industrialization or technological advance or social modernization. These are of course valuable-often crucially important- accomplishments, but their value must depend on the effect on the lives and freedoms of the people involved."²³

²² Ibid, p. vi

²³ Amartya K Sen. "What is development about?," in *Frontiers of Development Economics The Future in Perspective*, ed. Gerald M. Meier and Joseph E. Stiglitz, (Oxford University Press, 2001) , p. 506

In the Indian scenario, the state has been pursuing the goal of development without such a broad prospective as has been outlined by Sen which can be seen as the reason why certain sections in the Indian society are left out or adversely affected in the race by the government to develop and progress. Reforms for better development outcomes that the government initiates are only informed by considerations of the material results that it would produce, giving scant attention to the social consequences of these actions. Sen argues that using freedom as a tool to measure development would better serve the interests of all in society because of three reasons. Firstly, using freedom to understand development allows us to see if development leads to a better life for the individual, than “to concentrate on the objective of individual freedom rather than merely on proximate means such as growth of GNP, industrialization, technological progress.”²⁴ Secondly, using the lens of freedom to view development helps to examine if the policy of development followed by the state is leading to further freedom or not. Thirdly, “looking at development through the perspective of freedom helps us to distinguish between repressive interventions of the state (in stifling liberty, initiative and enterprise and crippling the working of individual agency and co-operative action) and the supportive role of the state (in enhancing the effective freedoms of the individual).”²⁵ Thirdly, such a dimension “captures the constructive role of the free human agency as an engine of change”²⁶ or in other words it shows that it is the people who eventually matter in the whole process of development as they are the ones who if free would carry development further and thus any kind of exclusion by the state of any one group would defeat the goal of development.

Thus, a poor understanding of the term development on the part of the state officials such as reformers or policy makers and the reliance on the market forces to assist in the task of development without fully understanding the social consequences of such actions, leads to the exclusion of certain sections of the population. Usually the sections which are left out by the state in its drive to

²⁴ Ibid, p. 512

²⁵ Ibid, p. 513

²⁶ Ibid.

develop and modernize by bringing in reforms, are the people from the poorer sections of society who are easily ignored. Not only are certain sections ignored in the process of development but they also have to face adverse consequences as a result of the states effort to bring it about. Therefore the state needs to have a more nuanced understanding of the concept of development in the name of which it tries to bring in reforms. The propensity of the state to continually ignore the kind of problems certain people face when it comes to development can be better understood when there is a careful examination of the perspective of the state and the kind of relationship that the state has with such sections of the population. In other words the concept of social exclusion needs to be examined to understand how and why some people are excluded from the purview of the state.

1.1.4 Social exclusion

The term social exclusion was coined by Rene Lenoir in his book *Les Exclus: Un Franoise sur dix* in 1974. In the book, Lenoir talks about the people who are excluded that is “mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal asocial persons and other social misfits.”²⁷ Over time, along with the people who were excluded came a list of things that people may be excluded from such as:

a livelihood a secure and permanent employment earnings; property, credit or land; housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education; skills and cultural capital; the welfare state, citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; family and socialibility; humanity respect fulfilment and understanding.²⁸

There has been a lot of confusion as to what is denoted by the concept of social exclusion. According to Arjan de Haan the concept of social exclusion has been defined differently through the ages. Haan observes that the French Republican

²⁷ Amartya Sen, “Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny,” *Social Development Papers No.1* (2000), p. 1

²⁸ Ibid.

tradition defines the concept of social exclusion based on Rousseau's thought and "emphasises on solidarity and sees the idea of the state as an embodiment of the will of the people."²⁹ Thus due to such a conceptual background "exclusion is primarily defined as the rupture of a social bond- which is cultural and moral- between the individual and society."³⁰ In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, "social exclusion occurs when there are unenforced rights and market failures"³¹. The Monopoly paradigm, which draws on the work of Weber, emphasises "the existence of hierarchical power relations or group monopolies which lead to exclusion where powerful groups restrict the access of outsiders through social closure."³² Thus the definition of social exclusion is based on the context in which it being used. The versatility and adaptability of the concept to various situations also shows that the term is not be confused to fit every situation. Amartya Sen points towards this adaptability of the concept and states that there is "a need for caution in using the term indiscriminately, using the language of exclusion to describe every kind of deprivation as there can be a temptation to dress up every deprivation as a case of social exclusion even though the concept is only useful in certain contexts and not all."³³

What can be derived from the evolution of the term social exclusion is that social exclusion is a process as Arjan de Haan describes it and not a term for the people who are being marginalized or in other words "social exclusion is a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live."³⁴

The two main ways by which social exclusion occurs according to Amartya Sen is through "active and passive exclusion."³⁵ Active exclusion occurs when certain policies try to exclude people from certain schemes or benefits for

²⁹ Arjan de Haan, "Social Exclusion: Towards a Holistic Understanding of Deprivation," Department for International Development London (1999), p. 4

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Amartya Sen, "Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny," *Social Development Papers No. 1* (2000), p. 9

³⁴ Arjan de Haan, "Social Exclusion: Towards a Holistic Understanding of Deprivation," Department for International Development London (1999), p. 6

³⁵ Amartya Sen, "Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny," *Social Development Papers No. 1* (2000), p. 14

example “immigrants being denied voting rights, whereas passive exclusion is about deprivation brought about by social processes in which there is no deliberate attempt to exclude people for example poverty.”³⁶ When people are excluded from the process of development we can term this type of exclusion to be passive exclusion, where the state brings in policies to improve the human condition but certain sections are not only left out of the process but their condition gets worsened by such efforts for improvement. Thus the process of social exclusion helps us to understand the processes by which the state keeps a certain section out of its plans.

After looking at how the state excludes people, we need to see how the state remedies exclusion by including people in its plans. Such acts of inclusion by the state would help us to better understand if mere inclusion is the answer to social exclusion.

1.1.5 Inclusion

The term inclusion has many dimensions to it. The common understanding of the concept is a process by which people are included in the socio political realm. However this is a very narrow understanding of the concept. Inclusion does not always lead to the good of the individual as has been portrayed by the Marxist thinkers. Marxists look at inclusion using the language of the contract where they show that though the labour is included in the process of production he is being forced to do so showing that there is “unfair inclusion”³⁷. Thus there is a need to take into consideration both unfair exclusions and unfair inclusions.

Although the Indian state has tried to include the excluded sections of society into the development process by bringing in various plans, programmes and policies but it has never been able to fully integrate them. The main reasons which can be determined for the failure of the state in this regard are as follows.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 10

³⁷ Niraja Gopal Jayal, “The Challenge of Human Development: Inclusion or Democratic Citizenship?,” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 10:3 (2009), p. 364

Disregard for social and cultural baggage

When reformers do try to include the sections which are left out in various new policies of the government, they do so without recognising that merely including the group would not lead to their improvement as there are cultural as well as social reasons because of which these groups have not developed. Often the groups which are neglected in the process of development by the state are in such a dire situation not purely due to administrative laxity or personal conceptions of reformers regarding this group but also due to their cultural and social identity which leads to their impoverishment. In the Indian scenario this happens because "frequently there is an overlap between the cultural and material inequalities between on the one hand inherited symbolic or cultural disadvantage of caste or religious identity and on the other of economic disadvantage."³⁸ Thus reformers need to understand that by coming up with policies to include these sections by giving them "greater opportunities for voice have not led to material improvement."³⁹

Those at the bottom of the ritual order, on the margins of society, continue to carry multiple burdens of denial and deprivation both cultural as well as economic. Despite constitutional protection and legal intervention, despite democracy and guaranteed representation, despite their often energetic participation in the political process, the Human Development Indicators of these groups remain poor. There has been inadequate policy recognition of the fact that questions of dignity and exclusion; and questions of cultural rights are not divorced from those of social economic rights. These multiple and mutually compounding forms of disadvantage should suggest that the groups that need our special attention are the ones who are doubly disadvantaged- that is both culturally, as also in terms of their Human Development indicators.⁴⁰

Thus while coming come with policies to improve the condition of its citizens the Indian state must realise that they need to have a holistic understanding of the groups who are left out in the development process in order to bring them at par with the rest of society. Inclusion which does not take into consideration the social and cultural factors that these disadvantaged groups carry would be just inclusion on paper.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 367

³⁹ Ibid, p. 370

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 370



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Mind of reformers

The second reason because of which the people at the margins of society have not been included in the development process is the way reformers or policy makers view this section of the population. The officials may be guided by their personal beliefs with regard to the disadvantaged sections in society. The inclusion of the people at the lowest realm in society, who mostly come from the lower castes in the Indian scenario, becomes problematic as officials can be guided by their own beliefs about caste/class and as a result are far from being committed to the task of including these sections.

The personal beliefs of the reformers also become an obstacle when these sections try to make demands. Since they have not been able to gain direct access to the reformers the route that they take is through their own informal leaders.⁴¹ However this route of access to the officials also becomes problematic as these informal leaders are also prone to corruption and can be guided by their own motives or the political parties that they are affiliated with, thus often working for their own personal benefit. The personal beliefs of the reformers and to what extent they want to have a direct interaction with the groups which have been made worse off is significant when it comes to the inclusion. Thus what is needed to rectify this situation is an “attempt to capture as faithfully as possible the intent and nature of the popular will through means like consultation.”⁴²

The politics of forgetting

Another reason why the state has not been able to include or been inclusive of the groups who have been at the margins of society is due to “the politics of forgetting”⁴³. With the coming in of economic liberalisation the Indian state came up with many measures for development but the benefits of such reforms

⁴¹ An idea taken from Saumitra Jha et al in “Governance in the Gullies: Democratic Responsiveness and Leadership in Delhi’s Slums,” (World Bank, 2005), 1-37

⁴² Neera Chandoke, “Participation Representation and Democracy in Contemporary India,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol 52, No 6 (February 2009), p. 823

⁴³ Leela Fernandez, “The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of the Urban Space in India,” *Urban Studies*, Vol 41 No 12 (November, 2004), p. 2415

were only enjoyed by the urban middle classes. As the visibility of the urban middle classes increased, and as these sections fit nicely into the plans of the state to modernize, the disadvantaged sections or people who were already at the lowest rung of society became all the more invisible to the state. Such a process has been termed as the “politics of forgetting”⁴⁴ where certain groups are ignored and overlooked in society. The rising middle-class has now become the focus point of the Indian state, such that all major ventures, reforms, policies or programmes that are portrayed as being in the benefit of all in society are in reality for the betterment of the middle classes.

The worsening condition of the already disadvantaged sections may be attributed to the restructuring of the Indian state whose relationship with people at the lowest rungs of society has become more precarious. What serves the public interest is now being equated with what suits the middle classes. “The state has been able to justify its actions because it has the ability to manoeuvre and conceal the production of memory by making its version of the events hold and by discouraging the memorization of particular happenings”⁴⁵ which show that the state has been lopsided in its working towards one group. The control of the state over documents which show the laxity of the state officials with regard to the inclusion of the marginalized sections also enables the state to naturalize the exclusions. Thus, the “politics of forgetting rests on a more active process of exclusion by which dominant social groups and political actors attempt to naturalise these processes of exclusion.”⁴⁶ We can conclude by saying that the politics of forgetting becomes a significant obstacle in the process of inclusion of the marginalized sections in society.

This brief summary of the literature on why certain interventions on the part of the state go awry suggests that this is due to the top down nature of the approach which is followed when reforms are initiated due to the elite quality of the working and thinking of the reformers (guided by the logic of development) leads to social exclusion of some sections in society and when steps are taken to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Emma Tarlo, “The anthropology of the state,” in *Unsettling Memories Narratives of India's 'Emergency'* (Permanent Black, 2003), p. 9

⁴⁶ Leela Fernandez, “The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of the Urban Space in India,” *Urban Studies*, Vol 41 No 12 (November, 2004), p. 2416

include these sections they fail due to being ill-informed. It is within this framework that that the researcher intends to study the recent reforms brought about in the process of Solid Waste Management in Delhi which jeopardizes the livelihood of ragpickers who form an integral part of the waste industry.

1.2 Reforms in Solid Waste Management (SWM) in India and Ragpickers

“Solid Waste Management (SWM) continues to remain one of the most neglected areas of urban development in India. In many cities almost more than half of the solid waste generated remains unattended.”⁴⁷ Although there have been efforts by the Government of India (GOI) from time to time to reform the system however the measures are sparse and have not succeeded in bringing in drastic changes in the way waste is managed. A point to be noted when we examine the reforms which have been introduced by the GOI for SWM is the absence of recognition for the various actors involved in the informal sector which is associated with the waste management paradigm. Such neglect on the part of the state has proved to be extremely detrimental especially to the ragpickers who form the bottommost link in the informal sector engaged with waste.

The people who earn a living by selling recyclable or reusable material through the sorting of garbage are known by various names such as ragpickers, scavengers etc according to the country and region that they operate. “Most studies report that human scavengers constitute poor segments of the population of developing countries.”⁴⁸ It has also been estimated that “up to 2 % of the population in Third World countries survives by recovering materials from

⁴⁷ Ankit Aggarwal et al, “Municipal Solid Waste Recycling and Associated Markets in Delhi India,” *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 44 (2005), p. 74

⁴⁸ Martin Medina, “Scavenger Co-operatives in Asia and Latin America,” *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* Vol 31, No 1(December 2000), p. 9

waste.”⁴⁹ Ragpicking in developing countries has been described as “survival strategies of the poor”⁵⁰ by C. Furedy. He goes on to say that:

How do the poor survive in poor cities? One answer is that they seek to become a part of the webs of recuperation, reuse, and recycling that link different levels of society, from rich households to small enterprises to squatters’ shacks. In Africa, Asia and Latin America we can identify many ways in which the poor attempt to share in what the cities have to offer, even if it is only the waste products of those who are better off. Scavenging and recuperation by poor individuals and groups are so widespread in Third World countries that apart from being condemned or suppressed by local authorities, these activities have, for the most part, been accepted without systematic study. The ubiquitous scavenger, ‘an object of admiration to a few, of pity and repulsion to most’, has been seen as the ultimate symbol of urban poverty.⁵¹

Ragpickers by salvaging through waste to recover recyclable materials not only help in closing a gap which currently exists in the system of SWM in India that is, proper segregation of wastes but also provide multiple benefits. Sorting of waste by ragpickers reduces the amount of waste hence less pollution, also reduction in waste means that less waste is sent to landfills, which in turn leads to less expenditure by local municipal authorities to dispose waste and lastly it provides a livelihood for the urban poor. Despite the benefits that ragpickers bring about very little thought has been given to this section when policies or reforms are introduced in the existing policies for better SWM which is best exemplified by two key developments that is the coming up of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000 (would be referred to as MSW Rules from here on) and the move by many cities in India to privatize SWM. In both incidents ragpickers have been completely excluded making their inclusion in the formal system of SWM very bleak which is further compounded by the social image that ragpickers carry of being dirty, filthy makes it all the all the more difficult for ragpickers voices to be heard and have popular appeal.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ C. Furedy, “Survival Strategies of the Urban Poor-Scavenging and Recuperation in Calcutta,” *Geo Journal* Vol 8, No 2(June, 1984), p. 129

⁵¹ Ibid.

1.3 Aim of the study

The study is based on the hypotheses that the state in its endeavour to bring in reforms to improve the services that it provides leads to the exclusion of certain population groups. The main purpose of the research is to examine the reasons which lead to such exclusion on the part of the state and also to determine the obstacles that are faced by the state when it tries to remedy such a situation. The case of ragpickers being made worse off as a result of reforms in SWM in India was what drove the researcher to the conviction mentioned before. In order to realise the aim of the study the researcher conducted literature review on the subject by referring to books, journals, magazines, newspapers and reports of the Indian governmental agencies on the matter. The researcher also attended a two day workshop conducted by the Centre for Policy Research titled "*The Undisciplined City*" to better understand the various issues associated with urbanization and more specifically urban interventions. The researcher also attended a seminar organised by the WSP titled "*Dirt, filth and the danger of boundaries: Gender and social agency in the politics of water and sanitation*" presented by Ayona Dutta, Kalyani Menon Sen and Amita Baviskar which gave a better understanding on the variation of how dirt and filth is viewed by elite and the poor in society. The researcher also attended one of the sessions titled "*Contested Spaces*" at the "*Conference on Social Conflict*" organised by the Delhi School of Economics and University of Oslo in which the paper presented by Amita Baviskar titled "*Extraordinary Violence and Everyday Welfare: The State and Development in Rural and Urban India*" gave the researcher a better understanding of the kind of repercussions that ill-informed development policies can produce.

1.4 Field survey

In order to examine how the state in its drive to have better services does not give due space to certain groups in the population, the researcher selected the case of SWM in Delhi where reforms had excluded one of the key stakeholders in the waste management paradigm that is ragpickers. To understand how SWM was carried out in Delhi and the kind of impact that it had on ragpickers in the

city, the researcher carried out a field survey by using qualitative methods for data collection. The researcher conducted personal interviews with the help of semi-structured questionnaires containing both open as well as close ended questions. The various actors interviewed by the researcher over a period of one and a half months consisted of five NGOs, one union of waste recyclers, an official from the Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) under the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), forty ragpickers, two private companies involved in SWM in the city and lastly an official from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The survey helped the researcher to assess the kind of impact reforms in SWM had on ragpickers and also helped to determine the various reasons for the same.

1.5 Limitations

Non- availability of a proper governmental data on ragpickers proved to be a limitation to the study and the researcher had to depend on approximate numbers provided during the interviews. Another limitation was locating ragpickers as they are not confined to any one place in particular, making it difficult for the researcher to find ragpickers in the initial days of the survey.

1.6 Organisation of chapters

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. This first chapter, provides an introduction to the study carried out by the researcher in terms of a brief overview of the framework used to conduct the study and the case selected by the researcher, the basic aim of the study, the methodology used and the limitations that the researcher faced during the study. The second chapter introduces the system of SWM in India the various reforms brought about by the Indian government for the same and how ragpickers were excluded from time to time. The third chapter outlines the reform process and the actors involved. The concept of social exclusion is examined in this chapter to understand how certain groups get excluded when it comes to reforms and how well inclusion can fare when used as an anti-dote for social exclusion. The

fourth chapter presents the fieldwork conducted by the researcher and the findings. Chapter five, that is the last chapter, presents the conclusions arrived at from the study and also details recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REFORMING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

2.1 Introduction

Development has gained immense prominence over the years with all states striving to achieve it whether they belong to the developed or underdeveloped regions of the world. A plethora of measures for development have been taken by states to improve the lives of their citizenry, measures which can be termed as reforms. However the impact of reforms has not been the same for all states. Whereas some states have benefited immensely from reforms in the way they function others have had to face adverse consequences. Cases of negative impact of reforms are more prominent in developing countries despite being “quick to follow in the footsteps of the developed world in industrializing their production processes and creating supportive human settlements, but they proved to be increasingly less capable of managing the consequences of their initial decision to become a part of the modern world.”⁵² One such case was the system of Solid Waste Management (SWM). This was an area that was given scant attention in many developing countries like India until there was external as well as internal pressure to take relevant measures. Despite the efforts made by the Indian government from time to time in this particular area there was no significant improvement in the management of waste. It was at this juncture that two developments came about. Firstly, the Indian government came up with Rules to be followed by all municipal authorities in India with regard to the management of waste. Secondly, many cities in India decided to privatize the management of waste. However the immediate consequence of these two developments proved to be detrimental to one section which was an integral part of SWM activities, which is the ragpickers. The ragpickers did not find a place in the new Rules, and the privatization of SWM put their livelihoods in jeopardy. This chapter examines the case of SWM, documenting and analysing the various reforms taken by the Indian government, detailing the background

⁵²Urvashi Dhamija, “Delhi,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 69

in which these measures were taken and also showing how the reforms were not inclusive and overlooked from time to time of one of the key stakeholders in the system, viz the ragpickers.

2.2: Managing Waste: An Overview

Ever since the beginnings of development theory in the 1950s, it has been seen as a means of “overcoming deprivation, destitution and oppression.”⁵³ However the experience of the third world with development proved to be a mixed bag especially when it came to the issue of urbanisation which was one of the chief consequences of the development process. The shift from a rural to an urban setup was not as smooth in the developing world as it was in the developed world as in the former “urbanisation was taking place at lower levels of economic development and the rate of migration of people from the hinterland was quite high.”⁵⁴ The result of such haphazard development was poor urban service delivery which was pronounced in the management of waste.

Waste is seen as:

a by-product of human activity. It is material that is abandoned or discarded because the person who has it or owns it or is in a position to extract value from it chooses to rid himself of it. Waste that is neither atmospheric emissions nor is wastewater discharge is regarded as solid waste. Waste is seen as an urban territorial phenomenon as economic history shows that it emerged when human concentrations became engaged in non-agricultural forms of production. In an urban setting waste has been described as ‘material for which the primary generator or user abandoning the material within the urban area requires no compensation upon abandonment.’⁵⁵

⁵³ Amartya Sen, preface to *Development as Freedom* by Amartya Sen (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. xi

⁵⁴Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 70

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.72-73

“Waste in urban areas is generated mainly by households, commercial and industrial establishments, institutions and streets.”⁵⁶ The nature of waste in developed and developing countries is significantly different as it is more organic and in nature and is also pathogen laden . The task of management of waste is usually performed by municipal or governmental authorities in most countries. Collection, transportation, treatment and final disposal of waste are the basic activities which are associated with the system of SWM. Although waste is mostly seen as being useless, if it is not managed with caution it can pose major health and environmental hazards. “According to a United Nations Development Programme survey of 151 mayors of cities from around the world, the second more serious problem that city dwellers face (after unemployment) is insufficient solid waste disposal (UNDP 1997).”⁵⁷

The issue of waste management is problematic for both the developed and developing countries. However, in developing countries a low priority was attached to SWM, as municipal authorities paid more attention “to competing demands from sectors such as housing, transportation and energy”⁵⁸, which prevented the coming up of an efficient system in SWM. As a result of such conditions “SWM in developing countries have continued to remain inefficient and outdated and growing costs, shortage of funds, institutional deficiencies, indiscipline among the workforce, lack of trained personnel and political pressure are making the situation worse with the passage of time.”⁵⁹ India is one of the developing countries grappling with the issue of solid waste management.

2.3: Solid Waste Management in India

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 74

⁵⁷ Da Zhu et al., “An Urban Challenge,” in *Improving Solid Waste Municipal Solid Waste Management in India A Sourcebook for Policy Makers and Practitioners* (The World Bank, 2008), p. 1

⁵⁸ Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 70

⁵⁹ Joseph Kurian, “Stakeholder Participation for successful waste management,” *Habitat International* Vol 30, No 4, (December, 2006), p.864

The situation of solid waste management in developing countries has been far from satisfactory as it was shown by the study of Sandara Cointreau on Urban Solid Waste. According to the study SWM was “frequently a source of complaints by the public and anxiety to the concerned officials.”⁶⁰ Problems such as waste management were often overlooked for development. The general view that was held in the developing world was that “an official policy to regulate waste was likely to create confusion and divert national energy from the goal of industrialization and facilitation of mass scale production of consumer goods. Care for the environment was considered to be in conflict with development goals and poverty alleviation.”⁶¹ India’s situation with regard to solid waste management was no different. SWM in India was facing hurdles due to unplanned development and rapid urbanisation. The issue of management of waste was seen as being secondary to the development goals that the country was trying to achieve. Such a belief was expressed by the political leadership as well:

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, summed up this sentiment in the 1972 in Stockholm at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment when she suggested that in countries like hers waste was a non-issue. ‘Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters? How can we speak to those who live in villages and in slums about keeping the oceans, the rivers and the air clean when their own lives are contaminated at source? The environment cannot be improved in conditions of poverty.’⁶²

Despite holding such a view with regard to the management of waste the Indian authorities have from time to time come up with reformist measures to improve the situation; however they failed to be inclusive and holistic in nature of all the groups who contributed to SWM activities. The reformist measures adopted by the Indian state proved to be a failure as they gave no recognition to the informal actors involved. A sustainable system of waste management can only come about by giving due recognition to all the actors involved in the activity. This is one of the reasons why SWM policies in the country leave a lot to

⁶⁰Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 79

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 82

⁶² Ibid.

desired. In order to assess the level of inclusiveness of SWM reforms we need to discuss two aspects. Firstly, to look at the way SWM is handled by the formal sector, that is the work done by the municipal authorities, and then to look at the informal sector in waste management and within it the role played by lowest rung of the informal sector, the ragpickers. Secondly, we need to look at how policy reforms which were brought about to improve SWM have repeatedly ignored this section. It is only after an assessment of these two aspects that we can show how the participation of both the formal and informal sectors in SWM is a key to not only ensure better and sustainable management of waste but at the same time ensure livelihood for a vast section of the Indian population.

2.3.1 SWM in the formal sector

The individuals who engage in manual activities related to the management of waste can be divided in to two categories. The first category consists of those workers who are formally employed by the municipal authorities for the collection, transportation and disposal of waste. The workers in the second category retrieve reusable materials from waste and sell such items for profit. In India it is the municipal authorities which are responsible for SWM. In the sub-section in Entry 5 of the State list which relates to the constitution and duties of local authorities, SWM has been listed as one of the obligatory duties of municipal authorities. The basic tasks which are performed by this formal sector engaged in the management of waste in India are as follows:

Collection of waste

An essential component of SWM activities is the collection of waste. In the case of India this first and basic step in SWM is highly inefficient and outdated. The municipalities do not have specific policies for the proper collection of waste such as door to door collection due to which the main generators of waste such as households and commercial establishments throw un-segregated waste onto the streets. This waste is collected by using the method of street sweeping. There are many drawbacks associated with the system of street sweeping such as “unplanned sweeping where only some places are swept on a daily basis,

lack of supervision and control of the sweepers which at times makes them lax in their duties, lack of coordination between workers who sweep waste and put it up in piles on the road and the workers who collect the waste as a result of which many heaps are left unattended creating unsanitary conditions and finally lack of appropriate tools with the sweepers”⁶³ confounds the process of collection of waste.

Storage of waste

The waste which is collected by the sweepers is dumped into specific locations allotted by the municipal authorities for the purpose. These waste collection depots are called dustbins, *dhalaos*, vats and so forth which are open and are located on the roadside. The major drawbacks associated with such deposit sites are that “they are not evenly distributed in cities and towns with some wards making them available in large numbers so that they are close to one another and in some areas they are far apart making it difficult for the sweepers to access them. The poor design of these waste depots with regard to the amount of waste they can store often leads to overflow of waste and infrequent collection of waste from such sites makes it highly unhygienic which also becomes a reason why citizens often protest too close placement of these depots near their premises.”⁶⁴

Transport of waste

The waste which is collected at waste depots is transported to the landfills for disposal by manually loading waste into open trucks and tractors which makes the “activity time-consuming and results in loss of labour productivity and increases the occupational health risk to the workers.”⁶⁵ Since this task is not performed on a daily basis the system becomes highly inefficient.

⁶³Da Zhu et al., “Current Situation in Indian Cities and Legal Framework,” *Improving Solid Waste Municipal Solid Waste Management in India A Sourcebook for Policy Makers and Practitioners* (The World Bank, 2008), p. 20-21

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 23

Disposal of waste

This forms the last stage in terms of SWM in India. The waste which is collected by the open trucks from the various waste collection depots is taken to landfills which are situated outside the city and dumped into open landfills. Since the municipalities do not have any provision to segregate waste, or guidelines for proper treatment of waste before they reach dumping grounds, this leads to the dumping of hazardous medical and industrial waste. "The waste is left uncovered to degrade in natural conditions leads to the generation of leachate polluting the surrounding water bodies and air with methane emissions and uncontrolled burning creating serious health and environmental problems for the city as a whole and the poor people living in the vicinity of the dumping ground."⁶⁶

These are the main activities which are associated with the system of SWM performed by the formal sector in India. Along with this formal sector in waste management there exists an informal sector which also contributes to an important aspect of SWM which is generally ignored by the municipal waste workers. This is segregation of waste and the recycling of reusable materials. In the informal waste hierarchy, this function of segregation and recycling of waste is done by ragpickers. However, despite the important role that they play in waste management their work is by and large ignored by the governmental authorities. Without the inclusion of this group into the formal system of SWM the prospect of having a sustainable system of solid waste management is not achievable as the activities that they engage in lead to an improvement in the way waste is managed at all levels thus making it imperative to discuss and assess the role played by the informal sector in SWM.

2.3.2 Informal sector in SWM

Alongside the formal setup to manage waste, which is carried out by the local municipal authorities in India, runs an informal sector which also makes a significant contribution to the management of waste. The main function which

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 25

is performed by this sector is the segregation and recycling of waste. Recycling can be described as “the extended re-use of essential resources and materials to supplement scarce resources”⁶⁷ or the “process by which materials otherwise destined for disposal are collected, processed and manufactured or reused, and it is within this generic definition of recycling that the varied opportunities for the creation of employment or specifically informal and small business scales are rooted.”⁶⁸ Recycling of waste is not a feature which is solely present in developing countries like India as it does exist in developed countries such as the USA. The primary difference between the two is that recycling is carried on a more formal basis as compared to the case in India where it remains largely an activity which is carried out by the informal sector. Recycling of waste in the US occurs right at the stage of collection of waste unlike in India where segregation of recyclable waste at source or when waste is collected is sparsely done.

Unlike the developed countries, SWM activities in developing countries are not handled exclusively by formal agencies like municipal authorities as there exists an informal sector which plays an equally important role in the management of waste. With regard to SWM “countries in the developing world had indigenous informal networks that routinely engaged in collecting reusing, recycling waste which was capable of reducing the municipality’s load. But public policy by and large has considered it impractical to incorporate these in the official waste management system.”⁶⁹ Such non recognition on the part of the municipal authorities proved to be detrimental in two ways. Firstly, if the municipal agencies had tried to incorporate this section into the formal mechanism of waste management it would have led to better collection of waste in congested cities than using sophisticated machinery and more areas could be covered as well. Secondly, non- recognition of this sector also meant that when

⁶⁷Belinda Langenhoven and Michael Dyssel, “The Recycling Industry and Subsistence Waste Collectors: A case study of Mitchell’s Plain,” *Urban Forum*, Vol 18, No 1,(January 2007), p. 115

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 72

policies were being formulated to improve SWM the manner in which it impacted this sector was overlooked which at many times adversely affected their livelihoods.

The main actors who form a link in the informal sector associated with the management of waste consists of recyclers, or waste-pickers or ragpickers forming the bottom-most level, with the junk dealers or *kabaadiwallahs* (small, medium and large scrap dealers) above them, and the final and highest level comprising of the waste recycling units.

Since for example in India there were no mechanisms in place to carry out door to door collection of waste, waste was deposited by the citizens on the streets. The ragpickers who form the lowest rung of the informal sector would salvage though the waste on the streets and at waste depots and recover materials which could be recycled. At times when they were denied to rummage through waste on the streets they would also go the landfill sites to recover recyclable material. The recyclable material which was collected would then be taken by the ragpickers to a junk dealer to be sold for a price. This is how most of the ragpickers earned a livelihood. The work which is done by the ragpickers is overlooked by the municipal authorities even though the activities that they perform save the municipalities huge amounts of money and time. If it was not for the segregation of waste done by the ragpickers in the absence of guidelines for segregation during the collection of waste, the waste which is sent to the landfill sites for final disposal would take a lot of time and money to degrade. The incorporation of the ragpickers in the formal mechanism of waste management can fill two gaps in the waste management system: first, they can help in the door to door collection of waste and second, they can contribute to the segregation of waste which is by and large ignored by the municipal authorities. The formal incorporation of ragpickers in SWM activities would also ensure that they get a proper livelihood and the conditions of their work can be improved as opposed to the risky environment they work in, with no proper equipment which can prove to a threat to their health.

Despite the potential benefits of inducting ragpickers into the formal chain of SWM they have been continuously ignored by the Indian authorities with not the slightest acknowledgement of the work done by them. The apathetic attitude of waste managers to the condition of ragpickers stems from the way issues of waste are seen where the:

political benefits of sustainable improvements in waste management are overshadowed by those offered by competing options which merely make waste invisible such as removal of squatter settlements on public spaces or construction of a high wall around a community park, steps which ironically could interfere with a design for ensuring more durable improvements. The technological aspirations of waste managers are likely to revolve around acquiring more sophisticated high visibility equipment which may not even be appropriate for managing waste in a relatively backward setting.⁷⁰

Measures and reforms introduced by Indian authorities over the years have not been able to bring together all the stakeholders in SWM despite the benefits of such a move. The next section surveys the various developments and reformist policies for the improvement of SWM in India, and how these efforts have given sparse thought to the informal sector especially in the case of ragpickers, assessing the reasons why the work done by this section is ignored.

2.4 Government of India initiatives in SWM

It was not until the 1990s that the subject of SWM gained any importance with the Indian government. Like all developing countries the emphasis was more on pursuing developmental goals. The work done by municipal authorities or urban local bodies (ULBs) who were responsible for carrying out activities related to SWM was not satisfactory due to the paucity of funds, lack of staff, little being spent on the treatment and disposal of waste, and lack of clear guidelines to carry out their function and inability to recognise the role played by the different stakeholders in the management of waste. Most of the policies which came up during 1960s and 1970s were very passive in nature with directions on how the municipal authorities could improve their financial condition and

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 75

setting up of composting facilities thus overlooking the other areas and actors associated with SWM. The significant developments which took place with regard to SWM in India are as follows:

The Committee on Urban Waste

SWM activities in India during the years after independence were mainly confined to the collection of waste and its disposal to form compost. As a result, the technical and organizational aspects associated with waste management were given low priority. "During 1970-71 four million tonnes of compost was estimated to be produced at 3100 centres out of which 2300 were urban centres."⁷¹ The results of composting however proved to be unsatisfactory as the quality of the compost was not up to the mark. Also SWM services provided by the municipal authorities were proving to be inadequate. Taking into consideration the sordid state of SWM in the country the Government of India setup the Committee on Urban Waste under the Chairmanship of Mr. B Sivaraman who was the Vice-Chairman of the National Commission on Agriculture on May 6th, 1972. The committee submitted its report in 1975 based on the study of 230 urban local bodies and made recommendations on for improving SWM in the country.

Central Scheme on Solid Waste Disposal

A central scheme on solid waste disposal was initiated as a result submitted by the Committee on Urban Waste in 1975 during the 5th Five Year Plan. Grants were given to large urban centres for better collection and transportation of waste, and to create more compost plants. The result of financial help from the centre however proved to be inadequate to reform the existing system of solid waste management as conditions continued to deteriorate. One of the reasons for this was that the authorities were not able to understand the complexity which was associated with SWM. The measures to reform by giving grants to the municipal authorities for better transport facilities for waste or composting were irrelevant when there were no proper guidelines as to how they were to perform the prior requirement of proper and efficient methods to collect and

⁷¹ A.D.Bhide, "Lessons from Solid Waste Management Projects in India- A Historic perspective," (paper presented at the Policy Workshop & Training Programme on Municipal Solid Waste Management, Chennai, Delhi, August 21-25, 2006), p. 2

segregate waste. The assumption of the technical experts was that by bringing in new technology like better pick-up trucks or more compositing, such as was followed in the developed nations would take care of the flagging condition of SWM in the country. However such an “unquestioning adoption of western systems”⁷² was not suitable for India as the context in which SWM was carried out in this country was different, and the blind adoption of “modern collection trucks was not feasible in servicing irregularly laid out neighbourhoods which did not have wide paved roads such as slums or squatter settlements.”⁷³ What was needed was a rethinking of SWM keeping in mind the conditions which existed in India and recognition for all groups who held a stake in SWM, whether they belonged to the formal or informal chain in the management of waste. The need was to manage waste in such a manner that it was “more sensitive to modern technological developments, sub-national, national and international political power configurations and participatory modes of decision-making which can encompass all interested groups and government authorities.”⁷⁴ Such a perspective on SWM was reflected in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro.

Rio Janeiro Conference: Sustainable Solid Waste Management (SSWM)

The main theme of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, was the concept of “sustainable development”⁷⁵ which enjoins that development is to be achieved in a manner which is less resource-intensive so that enough is left for the future generations. India, along with the 171 countries who attended the conference, pledged to

⁷² Peter J.M.Nas and Rivke Jaffee, “Informal Waste Management Shifting Focus From Problem to Potential,” *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, Vol 6, No 3(September, 2004), p. 343

⁷³ Ibid, p. 344

⁷⁴Urvashi Dhainija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 91

⁷⁵Sharachchandra M. Lele, “Sustainable Development: A Critical Review,” in *Green Planet Blues*, ed. K.Conca & G.D. Dabelko Boulder (Westview Press), p. 249. The concept of sustainable development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 at Brundtlandt according to which “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

abide by this principle in its developmental activities. The issue of SWM also found place in the conference with the aim of bringing about Sustainable Solid Waste Management (SSWM) which featured in an action plan called Agenda 21. Chapters 20 and 21 of Agenda 21 provided guidelines as to how to achieve sustainable management of waste. “The agenda called upon national governments and not on municipalities alone to recognise the significance of the smallest administrative unit for purposes of waste management”⁷⁶ and in this respect “ recognise the synergy that could be generated by bringing together the waste pickers and the affluent waste generating householders”⁷⁷ with provisions for “ technical assistance to informal waste reuse and recycling operations.”⁷⁸ The main objective of Agenda 21 was to make national governments incorporate sustainable methods to handle waste and also recognise and include multiple actors who had a stake in SWM whether they were from the formal or informal chain. As the result of this conference India tried to incorporate the principles of the SSWM but however two years after the conference the situation of waste management further deteriorated culminating in a plague which broke out in 1994 due to mismanagement of waste.

The Surat Plague

Despite the efforts of the Central Government and despite India being a party to Agenda 21 on SSWM, the condition of waste management in the country continued to deteriorate, finally culminating in the Surat plague which broke out in 1994 due to unsanitary conditions which were the direct result of poor management of waste. It was after this incident that the Indian government recognised that management of waste should be given greater priority and the actions to be taken should be more forceful in nature. In pursuance of this recognition, the Government of India appointed a high-powered committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. J.S. Bajaj who was a member of the Planning Commission in 1994. The committee submitted its report in September 1995 titled the Report of the High Power Committee on Urban Solid Waste

⁷⁶Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 98

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.100

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Management in India, making recommendations for the better management of waste on an immediate basis and also proposing strategies to be followed in the long term.

The recommendations made were in conformity with the principles that India had pledged to abide by at the Rio conference in 1992 about “the interactive interdependence of health, environment and sustainable development.”⁷⁹ The report of the committee not only provided for “a broad framework for the identification and solution of the intricate problems of urban solid waste management at the local, regional and national levels, but also recommended the use of microsystems so designed as to adequately and effectively meet local environmental, economic and institutional needs.”⁸⁰

Besides giving guidelines for better waste management, an interesting aspect of the report was that it recognised the role played by the informal sector in SWM or more specifically the role played by the ragpickers. The report stated that:

Presently the informal sector of ragpickers is contributing substantially to the recovery of recyclable material from urban solid waste. However, ragpickers mostly women and children live under and work in extremely unhygienic conditions. It is essential to improve the present system of collecting and utilizing the recyclable material. The rag-pickers could be organized to set up cooperatives. These workers can then collect recyclable material right at the household level; incidentally they could also collect at the same time the organic waste material from the household and deposit it at the road side collection sites. This would get rag pickers the recognition that they are an essential link in urban solid waste collection and recycling system. This will also prevent health hazards associated with rag picking in the garbage dumps and provide them better working conditions and possibly better economic returns.⁸¹

In this regard the report also recommended that the ragpickers could be integrated or employed by the municipal authorities for the door-to-door collection of waste and be provided with proper equipment to segregate waste

⁷⁹ Planning Commission, “Urban Solid Waste Management in India,” *Report of the High Power Committee*, (New Delhi: Government of India, 1995), p. Preface.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 14

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 14

at this point instead of letting them rummage through waste depots or landfill sites which pose immense risks to their health.

According to the report, organising ragpicker cooperatives could be worthwhile in the long run as it would not only:

lead to ragpickers getting a fair wage for their work they also can benefit from the non-formal education and learn skills that will be of use as they grow older. It is also possible that their intimate insights into the recycling trade make them the best suited to make optimal use of the recyclable and some day their cooperatives may grow into small scale reprocessing units which are profitable and at the same time useful in reducing the burden of non-degradable urban solid waste.⁸²

The report also looked into the status of the recycling system in the country stating that “growing cities will have to evolve their mechanism to solve waste disposal problem economically in the near future. The mounting cost of the raw material and for prevention of environmental degradation, waste recycling is important and should be encouraged and promoted at all levels.”⁸³ In the context of recycling, the report further pointed to the contribution made by the ragpickers in this process stating that “considering the huge cost of waste disposal in the city, which is increasing day by day, the ragpickers theoretically contribute to the urban economy by providing the labour to cleanse the city of utilizable, recyclable material and provide material for several industries. In the light of these, the ragpickers become an important occupational group and deserves to be considered with respect, and organized.”⁸⁴

What could be concluded from the report was that the informal sector or more specifically the ragpickers involved in SWM formed an integral part of the system and organisation of this group and its induction into the functions performed by the municipal authorities would not only lead to better living conditions for them in terms of better working conditions and a secure income, it would also lead to an enhancement of the way waste is managed in the city.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 16

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 16

One way of bringing about such an inclusive system of waste management was by enacting legislation to this effect.

After the report came out, two more events came about giving further recommendations to improve SWM. The first being a workshop organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) in 1995 and the second being a study conducted by National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) sponsored by the World Bank, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) and the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD). However the recommendations were not followed through and the condition of SWM in the country continued to be far removed from any level of satisfaction. This led to the filing of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to improve Municipal Solid Waste Management practices in 1996. As a result of the PIL, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) in September 1999 issued draft rules for the management of waste and in September 2000 notified the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000 which was to be followed by all municipal authorities in India for better management of waste.

Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000

In 1996 a PIL (Special Civil Application No.888 of 1996, Almitra H. Patel and Another vs. the Union of India and Others) was filed in the Supreme Court of India against the Government of India, the state governments and the municipal authorities for not being able to manage SWM satisfactorily. As a result of the PIL, the Supreme Court of India appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Asim Burman, the Municipal Commissioner of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation along with other experts, to review all aspects of urban solid waste management in Class-I cities (cities having a population of one lakh and above). "The committee was directed in particular to suggest methods of hygienic processing of waste and suggest ways to improve conditions in the formal and informal sector for promoting eco-friendly sorting, collection,

transportation, disposal, recycling and re-use of waste.”⁸⁵ In 1999, based on workshops conducted in major Indian cities which were attended by officials related to the urban sector, national and international NGOs working on SWM and private sector organisations who were interested in investing in SWM, the Burman Committee presented its report on steps to reform management of waste.

Based on the report, the Supreme Court of India directed the MOEF to frame rules for the management and handling of municipal waste. In September 1999 the MOEF issued draft rules for Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) and in September 2000 the MOEF notified Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000 (MSW Rules) making it mandatory for all municipal bodies to follow the rules. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) was given the primary responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Rules in the Union Territories and in the case of states through state pollution control boards.

2.5 Critical Review of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000

Although the MSW Rules marked a new era in SWM by filling up the gap of having no specific rules to deal with waste in accordance with the principles of SSWM enumerated during the Rio de Janeiro Conference, and measures to monitor the work done by municipal authorities but it failed to take cognizance of the work done by groups towards waste management activities in the informal sector. Such a feature proved to be extremely detrimental for the entire chain of actors associated in the informal management of waste especially those at the bottom of the hierarchy in the informal sector, the ragpickers, the ones who directly depend upon waste to earn a livelihood. Ragpickers have not featured anywhere in the MSW Rules nor are there any guidelines to their

⁸⁵Urvashi Dhamija, “Municipal Solid Waste: Non- Hazardous Waste,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 141-142

incorporation into the formal system of SWM. The non-recognition of the work done by the ragpickers leaves them with no opportunity to have a better standard of living as they have to continue performing their work in hazardous conditions, with no job security, which can also lead them to take up illegal activities to supplement the meagre wages that they earn.

One of the reasons why the officials who were involved in the making of the MSW Rules omitted ragpickers from the SWM paradigm is because of their inadequate understanding of the indigenous ways by which waste is managed in India. The officials are more interested in improving the technical aspect of SWM and fail to recognise the social background of waste management. This inability of the policy makers on SWM is attributable to the way waste is viewed. Waste is generally seen as “material that has no use or monetary value.”⁸⁶ This is a very narrow definition of waste but this is how waste is seen as by policy makers, who therefore fail to recognise that waste does have a value and this value can provide an income to certain sections of the population.

Another reason why well trained municipal officers have not come to the forefront to deal with the various informal links associated with solid waste management such as ragpickers is that working in municipal administration is not considered as a very important administrative job. “Skilled managers are not usually attracted to the post of Municipal Commissioner. In India, except in the mega-cities, it lacks status and is a less attractive position than what a potential incumbent may have been eligible for in other departments of the government.”⁸⁷

The participation of NGOs in organising ragpickers into cooperatives and helping their induction into the formal chain of SWM was a viable option to make SWM more inclusive in nature, but the MSW Rules have no space for such an option as well. The only area where the participation of NGOs has been

⁸⁶ U. Arabi, “Solid Waste Management in Metropolitan Cities: The Case of Mangalore,” in *Urban Governance and Management: Indian Initiatives*, ed. P.S.N Rao (New Delhi: Kanishka, 2006), p. 393

⁸⁷ Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 112

sought has been in assisting the municipal authorities to conduct awareness programmes for urban citizens about the benefits of waste segregation and to promote recycling or reuse of segregated materials. Therefore, by minimising the level of contribution NGOs could make in SWM, the MSW Rules further diminished the chances of ragpickers to have a better life. Though the MSW Rules brought in proper legislation to deal with SWM, it failed to incorporate all sections or ensure full consideration to the smallest unit involved in the management of waste. The rules, though well meaning in terms of providing a reference point for all municipal authorities for SWM, have neglected the social background within which waste is managed in India and how it provides livelihood to many in the informal chain, including ragpickers. Thus the MSW Rules have not been able to advance the principle of inclusiveness which is an important step towards sustainable SWM.

2.6: Privatization of SWM

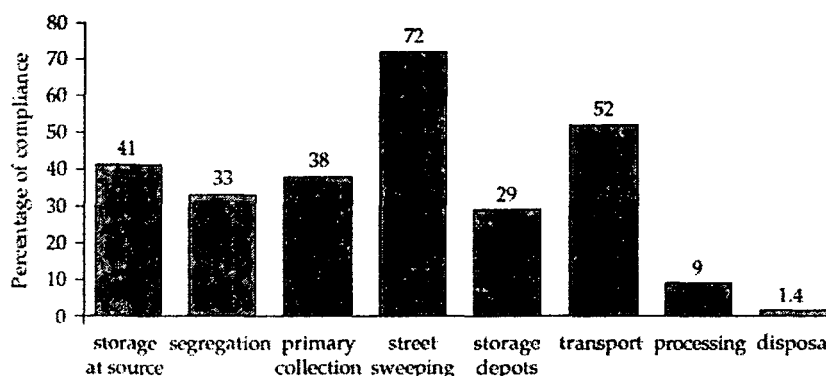
Despite the fact that the MSW Rules brought in a proper legislation with regard to SWM, municipalities faced a lot of difficulties in implementing these rules. The level of compliance which was envisaged when the rules came about was quite low. The deadline which had been set in Schedule I (Table 1.1) of the MSW Rules has not been complied with nor have the municipalities been able to implement improved waste management practices, services, waste processing and disposal facilities under Schedule II of the MSW Rules. The time period for compliance to the MSW Rules and the level of compliance of the municipal authorities in the various aspects of waste management has been given in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.2 respectively.

Table 1.1 Implementation Schedule under Schedule I of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000 (Source: Ministry of Environment and Forests 2000)

Serial No.	Compliance Criteria	Schedule
1.	Setting up of waste processing and disposal facilities	By 31.12.2003

2.	Monitoring the performance of waste processing and disposal facilities	Once in six months
3.	Improvement of existing landfill sites as per provisions of these rules	By 31.12.2001 or earlier
4.	Identification of landfill sites for future use and making site(s) ready for operation	By 31.12.2002

Figure 1.2 Level of Compliance with the MSW Rules 2000.



Source: Improving Municipal Solid Waste Management in India: A Sourcebook for Policy-makers and Practitioners.2008. Da Zhu et al.

The main reasons for the failure of municipal authorities for non-compliance with the MSW Rules are: the lack of public awareness and motivation to get involved in improving SWM, no space for the informal sector or the ragpickers and NGOs to be involved in SWM thus compounding the problem of lack of personnel that most municipalities face for implementing schemes, such as door to door collection and the segregation of waste which meets the twin purposes of recycling and safe disposal of waste as listed in the MSW Rules. The problem gets further compounded due to the apathetic attitude of the municipal authorities to waste management due to greater importance being given to larger urban infrastructural projects such as housing and services such as water and electricity and lack of well-trained personnel who are able to gauge the social as well as technical aspects of SWM.

The attempt to reform SWM by the MSW Rules proved to be far from satisfactory. This led municipal authorities to seek the help of the private sector to provide better services. Such an action led to the “municipal authority moving from being a service provider to being a regulator and service facilitator.”⁸⁸ Such a step was adopted by many cities in India with Delhi being one of them. The belief that the private sector would be able to provide better services was based on experiences of other countries where there was significant improvement in the way waste were managed but there were also examples to show the negative impact of private sector participation which “depends on the political will for change; clear agreements and contracts; the public authority’s ability to regulate the service, monitor performance and then enforce the terms of agreement; financial capacities; and mutual trust between all partners.”⁸⁹

Although the privatisation of SWM was well intentioned, with the goal of improving the way waste is managed, it can only be successful if two requirements are fulfilled. Firstly, there needs to be a clear legal framework and state policy for the benefits of privatisation to accrue. Thus the contracts that the government enters into with the private actors need to be transparent on all issues, with provisions in the contracts for a monitoring of the activities of the private actors by the municipal authorities. Secondly, the municipal authorities must ensure that private sector participation leads to the inclusion of the informal chain in SWM, i.e. the ragpickers. However while efforts have been made to put in place a clear legal policy framework to better facilitate private sector participation, there has been sparse effort to integrate the ragpickers in this reform to better manage waste.

2.7: Privatization of SWM: Impact on ragpickers

The development process in India after independence was substantially stalled. It was in the 1990s that the Indian economy opened up and the hold of the

⁸⁸Da Zhu et al., “Private Sector Participation,” *Improving Solid Waste Municipal Solid Waste Management in India A Sourcebook for Policy Makers and Practitioners* (The World Bank, 2008), p. 73

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 74

state was lessened. The main factors which drove this change were the state of the Indian economy and the pressure from potential international lenders. Since then, many areas previously monopolised by India's public sector were opened up to private investors. The main reason offered for this change was to address the inefficiency of the public sector including in service delivery. SWM was one such area. The task of performing SWM activities had, until this time, been the primary responsibility of the municipal authorities in India. However, due to the scant attention that was given to this service and lack of a proper legislation or guidelines as to how this service was to be carried out, management of waste had remained highly unsatisfactory. Although from time to time there were efforts by the Government of India to improve SWM, none proved to be adequate to rectify the problem.

One aspect of SWM which was consistently ignored by the municipal authorities was the role played by ragpickers who formed the lowest rung of the informal sector which was actively involved in SWM activities. Ragpickers in India have been an integral part of SWM even though their role was sparingly highlighted. Before reforms were initiated for better SWM in India, ragpickers lived and worked in hazardous conditions rummaging through waste on the streets, garbage bins and landfills to recover materials which were not biodegradable and selling them off to junk dealers for meagre amounts in order to earn a livelihood. As most of them were illiterate they were not able to bargain with the junk dealers and were often cheated and given less than what they could have earned from the recyclable materials that they found. Due to the prevalent view of waste as something that is useless, valueless and therefore worth discarding, the issue of solid waste management remained neglected by the Indian governmental agencies. Since waste was not viewed as being of importance, the activities associated with its proper management were paid scant attention and it was assumed that municipal authorities were the sole actors in waste management. Given such a situation there was barely an attempt to recognise the role played the informal sector in SWM which consisted of the ragpickers. The contribution made by ragpickers was quite immense as they reduced the amount of non-biodegradable waste which was going to the landfill sites, thus saving the municipal authorities money to properly dispose waste,

but this contribution was never recognised. The activity of the ragpickers was seen as being illegal and because, when ragpickers rummaged through waste there was additional littering in the streets, they were banned from waste sites within cities especially in residential colonies. Also since ragpickers belonged to one of the poorest strata, the general attitude of people in residential areas was one of suspicion, and ragpickers were not allowed to retrieve waste from such areas. This perception of ragpickers and the non-recognition of the work that they were engaged in led to their being ignored in the designing of the reforms, despite the fact that they formed an integral part of the SWM activities.

Many efforts were made by the Government of India to improve the sorry state of SWM in the country but ragpickers did not feature in these reforms. Even though India was a party to bring in SSWM at the Rio de Janeiro conference by giving consideration to the smallest unit involved in SWM and involving it, the principle was only partially adhered to as there were no measures to make SWM more inclusive in nature. This non-inclusive quality was clearly visible when, for the first time, the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000 came up detailing the various aspects associated with SWM which all municipalities should adhere to, but the role which was played by ragpickers and the NGOs who could help in this effect were completely excluded, thus diminishing the chance of ragpickers to become a part of the formal structure of SWM and get inducted into the functioning of the municipal authorities' management of waste. As a result of this, ragpickers once again had no option but carry out their work of segregation of waste in conditions which were highly hazardous in nature. In spite of not giving space to ragpickers in the formal structure of waste management and their even bleaker future after the MSW Rules came out, NGOs in some cities like Ahmedabad and Pune realised that:

There was a gap municipal services that is they collect waste only from public bins started offering door to door collection services to households. Knowing that recyclable material should be collected at the source of its generation to maintain the value of the materials, NGOs tried to involve ragpickers in door-to-door collection. Ragpickers also received training on how to collect and sort waste and how to deal with the intermediaries or households that they

serve. The biggest challenge that the NGOs faced was to convince households to pay for the new service and to allow ragpickers to collect waste from the doorstep.⁹⁰

Such measures on the part of many NGOs in some cities to improve conditions was however jeopardized when SWM was privatised in many cities.

When many municipalities found that even after the MSW Rules they were not able to achieve satisfactory results in terms of SWM, they decided to involve private actors in managing waste. According to a survey done by FICCI⁹¹ out of the 25 cities which were surveyed, 23 cities have privatized SWM activities. Different cities have adopted different levels of privatisation with some cities having privatised all activities associated with waste management such as the collection of waste, transportation and disposal of waste, while some have only one activity associated with SWM.

The impact of privatisation of SWM has proved to be quite detrimental to the ragpickers' interests. Privatisation of SWM jeopardises the position of ragpickers even further as the private companies have been given the exclusive right over waste. The exclusive right to collect waste, right over waste depots or *dhalaos* and in some cities control of the landfills ragpickers have no access to waste hence proving to be a threat to their livelihood. Since ragpickers have not been included in the MSW Rules they are completely denied access to waste. In some cities the contracts that municipal authorities have entered into with private companies for SWM activities have provisions by which the municipal agencies can (and do) suggest that the informal sector be included in waste management activities; however there are no mechanisms to ensure that this is followed through. Since ragpickers have not been given any legal status in the MSW Rules their inclusion may not be given serious thought by the private companies.

⁹⁰Da Zhu et al., "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle," *Improving Solid Waste Municipal Solid Waste Management in India A Sourcebook for Policy Makers and Practitioners* (The World Bank, 2008), p. 135

⁹¹ FICCI survey on Scope of Privatisation of Municipal Solid Waste in India. 2007.

The negative consequences which can arise out of the privatisation of these services has not been fully appreciated by the Indian authorities due to a lack of commitment to fully understand the social consequences of such actions on the poorer sections in society. When we look at SWM, we see that non-recognition of the work done by ragpickers – who form an essential unit of the informal sector in the management of waste – proves to be quite harmful as it is only such activities that “allow them relative ease of entry with minimal capital investment”⁹² due to the low status that they have in society and proves to be their “only means of sheer survival”⁹³ and also “helps to maximize what is often their only real asset – their labour power.”⁹⁴ Therefore there needs to be a careful assessment of the work done by ragpickers to make SWM in India sustainable.

2.8 Conclusion:

When we take into account the various reform initiatives in relation to SWM we observe that ragpickers who form an integral part of it have been constantly overlooked. The plight of ragpickers has never received any serious attention from the state as the authorities have been more interested in bringing in reforms on lines which show that the country is developing rather than relying on traditional methods such as ragpicking to deal with waste. “Due to the lack of much desired modernity associated with these systems and individuals”⁹⁵ the government views “acknowledgement of this activity as a sign of failure on the part of the state to modernize”⁹⁶ hence the neglect by the state to be more considerate of this group when reforms are brought about in the arena of SWM. Such exclusionary reforms also point towards the fact that like the general population which holds a disdainful view of ragpickers because they deal with garbage, a similar view seems to be held by the authorities who come up with

⁹² Alter Chen et al, “Supporting workers in the informal economy: A policy framework,” *Working Paper in the Informal Economy* (2002), p. 14

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Peter Nas J M et al, “Informal Waste Management- Shifting Focus From Problem to Potential,” *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, Vol 6, No 3, (September, 2004), p. 343

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 345

reforms in SWM as a consequence of which “they treat them as being part of the rubbish they work with”⁹⁷ that is something that is not useful. Also due to the way ragpickers are popularly viewed in society “they themselves have a negative self-perception”⁹⁸ as result of which they lack the confidence to make their plight heard.

The case of solid waste management in India suggests that reforms which are well-intentioned and possibly even lead to improvement in the lives of the citizenry can have adverse consequences for certain groups in society. The reason for this is that when reforms are instituted as formal schemes from the top, with little or no consultation with the various stakeholders who would be directly or indirectly affected by the reform, they can lead to a disjuncture between what is conceived as being suitable for a particular situation and what is actually needed. Thus a closer examination of reforms is needed to understand why well intentioned policies go awry. This is the subject of the next chapter.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RACE FOR REFORMS

3.1 Introduction

During the 1980's, as a result of internal and external pressure, governments around the globe brought about reform initiatives in the way they functioned in order to make public service delivery more efficient. However such developments left certain sections of the population out of the ambit of the positive effects conceived at the time of formulation of the reforms. The main objective of the following chapter is to explore and analyse the reform process in its various dimensions: why it comes about, the role played by the reformers, reasons for the failure of reforms, reasons for the exclusion of certain sections and lastly, the various obstacles which prevent an inclusive reform process.

The case which is taken up by the researcher to understand the reform process is the case of SWM in Delhi where reforms were introduced to improve the service, but which also resulted in the sidelining of the informal sector centrally involved in SWM. The focus of the researcher is on this key stakeholder that is the ragpickers. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section dwells on the concept of reforms and the various processes by which they come about. The second explores the functioning and role of one of the chief actors when it comes to the reform process that is the policy makers. The third section deploys the concept of social exclusion to see how certain groups in the population are excluded by the reform process. The fourth section tries to see how well inclusion can fare when it is used as an antidote for social exclusion. The final section closes the chapter with a conclusion.

3.2 The origin of reforms

Bringing about reforms in the way governments function has been a general practice followed by both the developed as well as the developing countries across the globe. Reforms have been defined as “deliberate efforts on the part of

the government to redress perceived errors in prior and existing policy and institutional arrangements.”⁹⁹

Donald F Kettle enumerates six core characteristics of reforms or objectives of reforms in his book *The Global Public Management Revolution: A Report on the Transformation of Governance*. Firstly, according to Kettle, reforms seek to improve the productivity of governments by trying to find ways to “squeeze more services from the same or a smaller revenue base.”¹⁰⁰ Secondly, reforms try to see how the government can use measures like privatization and reliance on non-governmental organisations for better service delivery “to replace traditional bureaucratic command and control mechanisms.”¹⁰¹ Thirdly, reforms aim at helping governments to better connect with their citizens by making government programmes more responsive to the needs of the citizens by providing citizens more choice among “alternative service systems”¹⁰² or train the managers of programmes to be more service oriented. Fourthly, reforms also aim at decentralization to make governmental programmes more responsive. This has at times meant different things in different countries that is in some countries it meant “shifting power within the system”¹⁰³ while in other countries it meant “transferring more service delivery responsibilities to the local governments.”¹⁰⁴ Fifthly, reforms aim at “improving the way governments design their policy.”¹⁰⁵ Lastly, reforms seek to achieve “greater accountability”¹⁰⁶ when it comes to the results of the reforms which come about.

3.2.1 Factors leading to reforms

⁹⁹Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, “Introduction: Explaining Choice and Change,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 4

¹⁰⁰Donald F. Kettle, “Foundations of Reform,” in *The Global Public Management Revolution A Report on the Transformation of Governance* (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 1

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 1-2

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 2

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

External pressure to reform: Reforms are driven by pressures coming from both the external and internal environment. When the cold war came to an end both developed as well as developing nations were racing to bring about reforms for different reasons. The developed nations were driven by the goal of creating better institutions and containing the waning trust and confidence of their citizens in public institutions, whereas reforms in developing countries were more focussed on efficiency and cost effectiveness. With the emergence of the idea of development, developing countries were under the added pressure to modernize especially under the various international agencies who were only ready to invest if the country brought in more reforms in the structures and functioning of their governmental institutions. Thus “what was distinct about the involvement of external actors in developing countries was that they came not just as advisors but as the financial sponsors of the reform, which gave them particularly great influence.”¹⁰⁷ The example of India could be taken to show how the government brought in reforms in the management of waste due to external pressure. In 1992 at the Rio de Janeiro Conference, when India decided to pledge to the principles of Sustainable Development, India also took on responsibility to design and implement better SWM practices. “The prime driving force which led India like many other developing countries to bring in reforms was the generous financial assistance for implementation of the reforms that was promised by the industrialised world.”¹⁰⁸

Another aspect that needs to be explored while looking at the source of reforms is to see the nature of the reforms which were brought about in the 1980s and how they were very different from the reforms which were introduced by states in the previous decades. The period of the 1980s is significant as it was the time when major policy reforms were brought about by many developing countries. The reforms so introduced were different because they were aimed at reducing the role of the state in development. The reason why this shift occurred was due

¹⁰⁷Richard Batley and George Larbi, “The Politics of Service Reform,” in *The Changing Role of Government The Reform of Public Services in Developing Countries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.59

¹⁰⁸Urvashi Dhamija, “From Solid Waste Management to Sustainable Solid Waste Management,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 72

a debt crisis that many developing countries were going through. "In addition, macroeconomic crisis in the form of financial shortages became a paramount reality for a large number of countries."¹⁰⁹ As result of such conditions, many developing countries had to look for assistance outside to rectify the financial crisis that they were in, which led to the involvement of international aid agencies, chief among these being the IMF.

Another characteristic feature of reforms in this period was an enhanced role for the technocrats and technical analysis. The problems which were observed by the international aid agencies in the developing countries were seen purely from a technical angle giving little thought to the social conditions which prevailed in a particular country. The developing countries also soon followed suit and incorporated a technical style in the way their governments functioned as a result of which "the power to technocrats in the developing countries often grew apace with the increasing influence of the foreign institutions."¹¹⁰ Such a development led to the social side of a problem being less discussed, the preference being given to the technical aspect of the issue. As a result of scales tipping towards technical thinking and solutions put vulnerable sections in developing countries at a greater risk. This was because "programs to benefit the poorest were the first ones susceptible to reduction or elimination"¹¹¹ making vulnerable sections in developing countries burdened.

Internal pressures for reform: Besides the external factors which push countries to bring in reforms there are internal factors at play as well. The pressure could come from an internal crisis, individuals in society or NGOs who want to improve the way their government functions. The media also plays a significant role when it comes to putting pressure on governments to reform. Thus, for example, the coverage of the bubonic plague in Surat by the media with its focus on the mismanagement of waste was one of the driving forces behind the efforts of the Indian government to understand the gravity of the problems that

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 152

¹¹⁰Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, "Reforming Policies in the 1980s: Changing Circumstances and Shifting Parameters (with Stephen J, Reinfenberg)," in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 155

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 156

improper management of waste could bring about, which eventually led the government to bring reforms in SWM in the country.

Lastly, it has been observed that reforms come about due to pressure from politicians who utilize these reforms to secure more votes. When politicians are able to determine which particular reform can increase their chances of securing a large voter base they can put pressure and speed up such reforms. “Alternatively, they reject or postpone reforms that threaten their political opportunities until unusual situations- major economic crisis, carrots and sticks brandished by international financial institutions- rob them of options.”¹¹²

3.2.2 Preconditions for reforms

In order for reforms to be successful there are, according to former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn, certain conditions which need to be present. The first condition which needs to be present according to Wolfensohn is “good governance”¹¹³ that is a government should have “sound public sector management (capacity and efficiency), sound systems to have accountability, a proper legal framework for development and lastly information and transparency.”¹¹⁴ The second condition laid out by Wolfensohn is having “a justice system that works”¹¹⁵ for which he goes on to say “ you need laws that protect property rights, you need a contract system, you need bankruptcy laws, you need protection of human rights, varying with the country, and you need a justice system that will be clean and honest.”¹¹⁶ The third condition is “a financial system that works”¹¹⁷ by which what is meant is that the financial transactions need to be transparent. The fourth and final condition is “a social

¹¹² Merilee Grindle, “Designing Reforms: Problems, Solutions and Politics,” *University Faculty Research Working Papers Series*, RWPOI-020 (2000), p. 6

¹¹³ Donald F. Kettl, “Reform as Governance,” in *The Global Public Management Revolution A Report on the Transformation of Governance* (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 59

¹¹⁴ Niraja Gopal Jayal, “The Governance Agenda Making Democratic Development Dispensable,” in *Public Administration A Reader*, ed. Bidyut Chakrabarty and Mohit Bhattacharya (Oxford University Press), p. 199

¹¹⁵ Donald F. Kettl, “Reform as Governance,” in *The Global Public Management Revolution A Report on the Transformation of Governance* (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 59

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

system that works”¹¹⁸ in which there are mechanisms to protect the vulnerable sections of society such as children, old and the disabled. Wolfensohn contends that if these conditions are present in a particular country before reforms are initiated or reforms are formulated then it would ensure better success rate and sustainability of the reform.

3.2.3 The nature of the reform process

An examination of the literature on reforms tells us that most reforms are actions which are defined, formulated and implemented by “design teams”¹¹⁹ within the executive, with little or no participation from the public. Most studies attest that proposals for policy or institutional change are generated by the executive rather than by legislatures, political parties, interest groups, or think tanks. “In many cases, executive based ‘change teams’ shepherd reforms from definition through political turmoil to adoption and implementation.”¹²⁰ The dearth of alternative institutions to formulate reforms in developing countries is also another reason because of which the reform process is confined to ‘change teams’ present within the executive. A point to be noted here is the sparse attention that is paid to the ‘design teams’ even though it is clear that these teams are the main drivers of reforms and “team behaviour is understood to be either a response to external pressures on government or evidence of bureaucratic interests that, like extra-governmental interests, cultivate allies, adopt strategies to neutralize or defeat opponents, and negotiate details to gain acceptance of proposals that serve their interests.”¹²¹

The view that the reform process is highly bureaucratic in nature is also shared by Richard Batley who argues that most reforms are managerial in nature, thus hardly arousing public passion. The level of public engagement with policy is relatively low particularly when it comes to the poor. The consumer that is the public is generally comprised of “silent stakeholders”¹²² or “‘everyday makers’

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹Merilee Grindle, “Designing Reforms: Problems, Solutions and Politics,” *University Faculty Research Working Papers Series*, RWPOI-020 (2000), p. 2

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 1

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 6

¹²²Richard Batley, “The Politics of Service Delivery Reforms,” *Development and Change* 35(1) (2004), p. 44

who are not actively involved in shaping or changing the process but are nonetheless directly affected”¹²³ in the whole process of reforms suggesting that “reforms were elite projects, generated by small groups that shared similar concerns about problems of governance in their countries.”¹²⁴ What can be concluded by looking at the process of reform is that it is highly technocratic in nature, made especially so by the international agencies which provided aid in the 1980s to the developing countries, virtually removing reform from the public arena and making the reform which came about ill-informed due to a detachment from the realities on the ground, thereby worsening the condition of some sections in the population.

Lack of political commitment on the part of the reformers is also another reason why the reform process has been seen as bureaucratic in nature because reformers or policy-makers prefer the situation which existed earlier in which they had a better position. The new reforms which came about were aimed at reducing the scope of governmental agencies so that the people who were bringing in the reforms lacked the incentive to reduce their role. Hence the “reforms which came about were often constrained by a lack of political commitment and by interests embedded in existing organisational arrangements. Even where reforms were introduced, government and public agencies could easily slip back into previous practices.”¹²⁵ This lack of commitment on the part of the reformers who brought in reforms was seen as one of the main reasons for the failure of reforms which were well intentioned. In order to understand the inability of reformers, who are one of the main actors in the reform process but are not able to gauge the full extent of the reforms that they were instrumental in bringing about, we need to examine the way the reformers work.

¹²³ Catherine Bochel et al, “Marginalised or Enabled Voices? ‘User Participation’ in Policy Making and Practice,” *Social Policy and Society* 7:2 (2007), p. 202

¹²⁴ Merilee Grindle, “Designing Reforms: Problems, Solutions and Politics,” *University Faculty Research Working Papers Series*, RWPOI-020 (2000), p. 8

¹²⁵ Richard Batley, “The Politics of Service Delivery Reforms,” *Development and Change* 35(1) (2004), p. 51

3.3 The Mind of Reformers

Reforms do not come about on their own. They are brought about by individuals within the formal governmental agencies. These actors are variously described as reformers, policy makers, decision makers and policy elites. This study, following Grindle, adopts the term policy makers. According to Grindle, “policy makers are those who have official positions in the government and whose responsibilities include making and participating in making authoritative decisions for society.”¹²⁶

In developing countries, the prerogative of making policy is generally located in the executive bureaucracy which has “the political, organisational or professional power to determine the overall philosophy or strategic direction of the policy process.”¹²⁷ In the policy-making process, the head of the state along with the bureaucracy make the final decisions. The people who are associated with policy making at this level are technically trained to deal with problems and come up with solutions. The nature of this class is different in every country. In India this class is located in the civil service, which “derives its power from the capacity to operate government, and from the fact that, while the political leadership may change, the civil servants remain in place and generally know the complexities of governing more fully than the political leadership.”¹²⁸

3.3.1 Factors influencing policy makers:

Policy makers do not work in a vacuum as is generally assumed. They do come under diverse pressures from the various quarters around them, including their

¹²⁶ Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, “Generalizing about Developing Country Policy Environments,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 59

¹²⁷ Catherine Bochel, Hugh Bochel, Peter Somerville and Claire Worley, “Marginalised or Enabled Voices? ‘User Participation’ in Policy Making and Practice,” *Social Policy and Society* 7:2 (2007), p. 202

¹²⁸“Generalizing about Developing Country Policy Environments,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 61

personal perspective on an issue. The key factors which can act as an influence on the work done by policy makers are as follows:

Societal influence: Policy makers are under pressure from various actors in society which can range from the highly organised to the unorganised. The way organisations or individuals exert pressure on policy makers is different in the developed and developing countries. The interests in developed countries are “much more institutionalized, having inroads into the formal powers within the government, playing an identifiable and significant role in articulating citizens’ and organisational interests.”¹²⁹ In developing countries the organization of varying interests in society is less organised as compared to the developed countries, the mechanisms which are used to influence policy making or the reform process are far more informal unlike formal practices such as lobbying. The reason for this is that with:

decision-making in developing countries often being a closed door activity with strong barriers to entry , there is a wide scope for pressures to be exerted on policy making through informal and non-public channels. Private deals struck in informal encounters with political leaders often loom large in explaining the political rationale for particular policy choices.¹³⁰

A common feature which has been observed in developing countries is that groups which have not been able to make any inroads when it comes to policy making seek to exert an have influence on the policy process at the implementation stage of the policy to make a certain policy or reform work in their favour demonstrating that the “processes of policy *implementation* are highly political in developing countries. Bending rules, seeking exceptions to generalized prescriptions, and proffering bribes for special consideration are inherently important aspects of political participation in developing countries and often become more important than the closed policy making process.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 62-63

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 63

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 66

Policy makers and societal interests have a very delicate relationship as policy makers cannot work in isolation from these societal interests, and doing so can lead to extreme resistance when it comes to change and can also determine the shelf life of a reform. However it may be noted here that the even though policy makers are expected and even required to keep these societal pressures in view, at the same time these “same factors can also increase their vulnerability to mistaken choices because the information that they have available to them on social, economic and political conditions is often vague, ambiguous and incomplete.”¹³²

Maintaining the status quo- Policy makers are also influenced by the ways in which a reform on their part could lead to a backlash and put their own careers in jeopardy. This, according to Grindle, is because decision-makers frequently represent bureaucratic constituencies. So integral to the choices that they make are concerns about how particular changes will affect the power, prestige, agency and clients of the ministry, agency or bureaucracy that they represent. The example which can be used to show how policy makers try to avoid reforms which put them at risk was when in India there was “refusal of a number of bureaucratic entities to assume responsibilities for urban water management reform because public officials were well aware that the reforms pressed upon them by the World Bank could easily incite instability if pursued”¹³³ and damage their reputation in the process.

*Political pressure-*Policy makers while bringing about reforms also take note of the existing political environment. The way a particular reform could affect the stability of a particular government or enhance its position also acts as an influence. “How particular decisions will affect the coalitions that sustain the regime in power, how policy changes can help develop new coalitions of support and how particular clienteles will be affected by the proposed changes often weigh prominently in their decisions.”¹³⁴ Another factor which can be observed here is how political leaders put pressure on policy makers to bring

¹³² Ibid, p. 68-69

¹³³ Ibid, p. 100

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 23

about reforms which would translate into greater number of voters voting in their favour. The driving force behind such pressures by politicians is not welfare, with little or no importance being given to the public and more importance being given to personal benefits.

International pressure- Policy makers while bringing in reforms also take into consideration or are influenced by international actors such as donor agencies. They do consider how a particular reform would lead to a better standing for the state in the international arena and also help to get further support for the state. The influence of international actors in the reform making process was more pronounced in the 1980s when international donor agencies such as the IMF imposed conditions on aid receiving countries to bring in specific reforms in the way the state functioned. Reforms in this era were driven by the logic given by international agencies so reformers had to keep this in mind while coming up with reforms, showing how international agencies developed deep roots with the domestic bureaucracy in developing countries.

Another way in which international pressure exerts an influence on the policy makers is by way of policy makers trying to bring in reforms which would be in accordance with the 'best practices' being followed by the other countries to reform the way their governments function. The main reasons behind such a belief are that their country uses the latest methods to improve its efficiency. Also another reason which guides policy makers to adopt these best practice models is the inherent belief within them that since a particular best practice model works well in a particular region it would have the same results in their own country which shows the inability of policy makers to understand the consequences of their actions and also showing the lack of understanding of their indigenous situation.

After examining the various factors that influence the work of policy makers when it comes to bringing in reforms, it can be concluded that with the presence of so many factors of influence it is possible for policy makers to make mistakes trying to appease all factions and their own. The next section examines the reasons for the inability of policy makers to have a holistic understanding of problems and the factors that explain their failure.

3.3.2 Reasons for the failure of policy-makers

Reformers form an integral part of the reform process, but nevertheless they are generally portrayed as being only interested in their own benefit. However there is also a body of literature which tells us that policy makers are not entirely to be blamed as they work in an environment where there are multiple pressures to influence, making it difficult for them to consider all. The negative connotations associated with policy-makers has been contested by Grindle who says:

How is it possible for a policy maker to be responsibly 'rational' in a messy world of complexity, inconsumerability, emotion, conflicting obligations and the need to improve when simply following or even optimizing wont do? How can planners learn, diagnose under daunting conditions of unequal power relationships, conflicts, sheer organisational messiness, lack of which involve distinctive challenges of their own...If policy makers are only seen as individuals solely interested in personal profit and are conceptualized as 'rent-seekers' and all their actions assumed to emanate from a desire to capture the state for personnel benefit then there is little basis for anticipating reasonable dialogue about the content of public policy...policy makers are generally aware of the societal pressures and interests, historical contexts and bureaucratic capacity that limit the options available to them and they often seek to manoeuvre within these constraints and to craft policy solutions that will be politically, bureaucratically acceptable but that will also encapsulate serious efforts to address problems.¹³⁵

Hence policy makers can play a positive role when it comes to reforms but when this does not happen, or when one group is left out of the reform process the reasons for such a development or failure of policy makers to integrate various interests are as follows:

Training and technical background of policy makers- In the 1980s, the reform process was led and directed by international donor agencies in the developing countries. One of the developments of the reform process was to have a sounder technical basis to the analysis of problems and solutions. This technocratic approach was widely used during this period and in time it was also embodied by the developing countries. Such a development also led to the setting up of

¹³⁵Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, "Introduction: Explaining Choice and Change," in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 4-5

technocratic cells and the recruitment of policy makers, well versed in handling problems in a technocratic manner, grew. The consequence of this was that policy makers began to look at problems through a technical lens which left little room to ponder over the non-technical issues associated with a certain problem. The solutions which were given by the policy makers were knee-jerk in nature and not fully accessing the entire picture.

The reforms also reflect the training of policy makers and the educational background that they come from, which makes them prone to a high modernist approach. This leads policy makers, as Scott writes,

“the carriers of high modernism (policy makers in the study) tending to see rational order in remarkably visual aesthetic terms. In Scott’s account, high modernism was about interests as well as faith. Its carriers were powerful officials and heads of the state who tended to prefer certain forms of planning and social organisation (such as huge dams, centralized communication and transportation hubs, large factories and grid cities) because it fit snugly into the high modernist view and also answered their political interests and state officials.”¹³⁶

Inability to place themselves in the context-Although writers such as Grindle do say that policy makers are able to place themselves in the context of the various forces around them within which they function, however their background and technical training can prevent them from having a full understanding of what goes on the ground. Reforms are based on what is seen as the best possible solution and not the most workable solution according to the understanding of the reformer. So the reformer’s bias can creep into reforms in terms of how the policy makers define a particular situation, or in other words, how policy makers review a certain situation becomes important. The “perpetual baggage”¹³⁷ of prior knowledge of how things may turn out to be if a certain reform is brought about, can further complicate the process of reform. For this reason, reformers are not able to have a close understanding of what goes on the ground. For example, in India when solid waste management became a daunting issue, the solutions for it were also informed by technical knowledge

¹³⁶ James.C. Scott, introduction to *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 4

¹³⁷ An idea taken from Robert E Goodin et al, “The Public and its Policies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Oxford University Press, ed. Michael Moran, Martin Rein and Robert E. Goodin, (Oxford University Press, 2005)

to solve the issue at hand and very little attempt was made to understand the crisis in totality. Thus, given the “lack of a reflexive self understanding of the community that they are working for, practitioners are often forced to in an unreflexive world where there is an overwhelming pressure to decide and then move on, preventing policy makers from getting a full understanding of the people and the situation in which they are working towards.”¹³⁸

Another reason reformers are not able to place themselves fully within the context that they are working in is the lack of information. Since policy makers are governed by the principles of high-modernism it leads them to believe that the actions performed by them are rational since they possess full information about their actions right from the point of formulation to the stage of implementation. This belief in full information is further fed by a process called “benchmarking”¹³⁹ in which if there is success of a policy or reform in a particular region then the policy is deemed to be a success and it is believed that such a success can be easily replicated in other regions as well. However “the concept of ‘full-information’ is always an illusion.”¹⁴⁰ As the Oxford Handbook on Public Policy states:

In practice we never really have all the information we need to ‘optimize’. At best we can set some standard of what is ‘good enough’ and contend ourselves with reaching that. In the absence of full information about the ‘best possible’, we never really know for certain whether our standard of ‘good enough’ is too ambitious or not ambitious enough.¹⁴¹

*Non-utilisation of the “policy space”*¹⁴² -Despite the various constraints on policy makers as enumerated in the previous section, when it comes to the reform process there is what is known as the ‘policy-space’ which allows policy makers to manoeuvre within the constraints and bring in their own ideas and

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 7

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 19

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴²Merilee S. Grindle and John.W. Thomas, “Introduction: Explaining Choice and Change,” in *Public Choices and Policy Change The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*,(Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 8

creativity to the table in order to ensure that the reform is far reaching, allowing all sections of the population to benefit. However policy makers are not able to use this policy space due to personal disposition or to pressures which do not allow them to use it. Here once again the policy maker's way of looking at things comes up. Policy makers would also view the policy space in their own way, so the availability of such a space does not translate to better reforms as it depends on the will of the policy makers to utilise and manoeuvre this space to benefit all, some or none. Also, policy makers' lack of information on the consequences of the reforms initiated by them on all sections of the population can easily (mis)lead them into believing that the amount of manoeuvring that they have done within the space that they have is sufficient.

Non- involvement at the stage of implementation- Implementation is one of the core steps of the reform process. Even if a particular reform designed by policy makers can potentially lead to the benefit of all sections in the population, tardy implementation can defeat the purpose of the reform which can generate complex problems. The process of implementation does not fall within the purview of policy makers, as problem assertion and policy formulation is their main task and the process of implementation is seen as the work of managers. Reforms not being implemented well can cause a backlash or adversely affect some sections of the population due to improper use.

Such a problem can be overcome in two ways with the involvement of policy makers. Firstly, by their greater involvement at the stage of implementation; and secondly by foreseeing the kind of reaction the reform can bring about in the public as well as the bureaucratic arena, depending on which the reform can be modified accordingly before implementation. Hence "decision makers should look beyond the decision to question whether the reform has a reasonable chance of being implemented and if the answer is not yes then they should decide to forego initiating a significant change because reforms that fail can be worse than no reforms at all." ¹⁴³

¹⁴³Ibid, p. 150

Reforms guided by the logic of development- In was in the 1950s that the issue of development gained salience. During this time the state was seen as the main driver of the development programme. However, by the 1980s, the capacity of the state to carry out development came under intense scrutiny. Richard Batley identifies three ways in which this new questioning of the state came about. Firstly, it was triggered by the failure of aid programmes in developing countries due to inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies. Secondly, “due to the ‘softness’ or ‘weakness’ of the state in developing societies the state apparatus maintained only a weak hold over society, lacking legitimacy, and therefore the capacity to enforce policy and therefore the capacity to enforce policy.”¹⁴⁴ Thirdly, “from neo-Marxism and dependency theory came the view that the apparatus of the state (the bureaucracy and the military) were subordinated to non-national interests, particularly those of international capital.”¹⁴⁵

Due to these reasons, there was widespread speculation about the role of the state. The adoption of the neo-liberal model of development which came up in the 1980s, in which there was a great emphasis on market forces, was seen as being a way to overcome this situation. This neo-liberal ideology found many adherents in developing countries, including in India, especially when it came to public sector reforms especially in the area of service delivery. Some of the sectors where there was such an effect were services as education, water, health and sanitation. Various reforms were initiated in these sectors. One such sector was solid waste management which forms the core of this particular study. Despite the overall reforms which were brought about in the management of waste, it was not inclusive enough as it did not engage all the stakeholders bringing about negative consequences. The issue of solid waste management can be seen as an example where reforms were introduced to improve the service, but the reform was not inclusive of all the stakeholders involved in it, more specifically the ragpickers who form the focus of this study. The reforms have been guided by the logic of development which makes it acceptable for

¹⁴⁴Richard Batley and George Larbi, “The role of government in development,” in *The Changing Role of Government The Reform of Public Services in Developing Countries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

sections of the population to be overlooked even though they work for the state. Thus, the next section looks at the concept of social exclusion and how it affects reform in policies as well.

3.4 Reforms and social exclusion

Policies which seek to bring about reform, though well-intentioned, may not always lead to the benefit of all in society, and can have a negative impact as well. This has been demonstrated in the previous chapter on how reforms in SWM in India have excluded stakeholders in the informal system involved in the SWM paradigm and especially specifically ragpickers who are the focus of this study. Before identifying the various reasons due to which exclusion of certain sections in society occurs, we first need to look at the concept of social exclusion.

The term social exclusion was first coined by Rene Lenoir in his book *Les Exclus Un Francoise surd dix* in 1974. The people who were the subject of exclusion in the book were people with physical and mental disabilities or people who needed support to survive, such as young children and the elderly. Over time, the category of the excluded was also expanded to people who were deprived in the economic, social and political realm as well. The concept of social exclusion was welcomed by some writers like David Bryne as it gave better way of understanding the disadvantaged or neglected sections in the population. Byrne observes that:

Social exclusion a considerable extent and welcome extent, it has replaced the prerogative US import, 'the underclass' in discourses about the poor in the 'post-industrial' society. He goes on to say "there are advantages in this development. The two words 'social' and 'exclusion' when put together conjoin society as a whole as opposed to the timeless state. When we talk and write about 'social exclusion' we are talking about changes in the whole society which have consequences for some of the people in that society."¹⁴⁶

There has been a significant amount of confusion as to what is denoted by the concept of social exclusion due to its versatility and adaptability to many

¹⁴⁶ David Bryne, introduction to "Social Exclusion," (Open University Press, 1999), p. 2

situations. Social exclusion should not be used to describe all kinds of deprivation as it can only be used under certain contexts. Amartya Sen explains the importance of context when it comes to social exclusion by giving the example of starvation. According to Sen, the issue of starvation can be seen as an incidence of social exclusion but doing so would be a narrow way of looking at the issue which could have many dimensions. Starvation could be due to crop failure, in which case it cannot be termed as an episode of social exclusion. Therefore we need to see what are the conditions which lead to a certain form of deprivation, and only then can we gauge if it is due to social exclusion or not. In the words of Sen, “the real relevance of an exclusionary perspective is conditional on the nature of the process that leads to deprivation.”¹⁴⁷ A.Walker and C.Walker also talk about the need to distinguish between social exclusion and other forms of deprivation like poverty by stating that:

We have retained the distinction regarding poverty as lack of the material resources, especially income, necessary to participate in the British society and social exclusion as more comprehensive formulation which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political or cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society . Social exclusion may, therefore be seen as the denial (or non-realisation) of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship.¹⁴⁸

Another feature which has been noted by Arjan de Haan is that social exclusion is a *process* and not a term to be used for people who have been excluded. This notion of social exclusion as process is emphasised by Arjan de Haan, when he observes that “social exclusion goes beyond the mere description of deprivation and focuses attention on social relations, the processes and institutions that underlie which are part and parcel of deprivation.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Amartya Sen, “Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny,” *Social Development Papers No.1* (2000), p. 12

¹⁴⁸ David Bryne, introduction to, “Social Exclusion,” (Open University Press,1999), p. 2

¹⁴⁹ Arjan de Haan, “Social Exclusion: Towards a Holistic Understanding of Deprivation,” *Department for International Development London* (1999), p. 1

3.4.1 Different types and levels of social exclusion

Amartya Sen identifies two types of social exclusion: active and passive social exclusion. “Active exclusion is when for example one part of the population is denied voting rights due to their immigration status, whereas passive exclusion is when people are not made part of the process for change for example poverty cannot be termed as an incidence of social exclusion.”¹⁵⁰ Such active and passive exclusion can have various dimensions such as political, economic and also at the level of groups. The political exclusion can take place according to Percy Smith when individuals are denied the right to vote as they are not citizens or may not cast their vote “due to inertia or apathy or transience or wish to evade from officialdom.”¹⁵¹ Exclusion can also occur at the economic level when “groups due to poverty can only access labour which is casual and offers very little job security.”¹⁵² Exclusion can also occur on the level of society when groups could be excluded due to historical and cultural attributes attached to them. Thus “certain groups are arguably at a greater risk of social exclusion either because they differ in some way from the dominant population or because of their position within society.”¹⁵³ It is because of the various dimensions that attached to the concept of social exclusion that Madanipour contends that it is a “multi-dimensional process in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political process, access to employment and material resources and integration into the common cultural processes.”¹⁵⁴

3.4.2 Social Exclusion in policy making

As a consequence of social exclusion at the political, economic and group level, individuals and communities can also be excluded when it comes to policy

¹⁵⁰ Amartya Sen, “Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny,” *Social Development Papers No. 1* (2000), p. 15

¹⁵¹ Janie Percy- Smith. “Introduction: The Contours of Social Exclusion,” in *Policy Responses to Social Exclusion* (Open University Press, 2000), p. 10

¹⁵² Ibid, p.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 11

¹⁵⁴ David Bryne, introduction to, “Social Exclusion,” (Open University Press, 1999), p. 2

making or the concurrent reforms in the existing policies. Exclusion could be stark, that is when a group is completely excluded from a reform or it can be more subtle, as when groups or individuals may be adversely affected due to their non-consideration when it comes to reforms. One example of the latter would be the reforms which were brought about in SWM in India which left the ragpickers, despite their being one of the chief stakeholders, outside the ambit of reforms. The various reasons which can be identified for such exclusion of certain groups from the reform making process are as follows:

Lack of thought about a group in society due their social standing: A group's standing in society determines the intensity of efforts which would be made for their upliftment, so a group which is looked upon with disdain due to its economic status, ethnicity, caste or nature of work, and is seen as a blot which society can do without, receives less attention not only from formal governmental agencies but also from society at large. For example, the ragpickers in the Indian scenario are seen as being dirty and polluting due to their work and their caste, hence their plight has not caught the popular imagination. They have also not been able to make their condition known to the formal governmental agencies due to lack of an organised voice, which resulted in their exclusion when reforms were introduced for the better management of waste. Such groups become invisible in the eyes of the state. This can mean that the lack of recognition of disadvantaged sections like ragpickers – due to the social stigma attached to them and ignorance of the contribution that they make to SWM – eventually led to their exclusion when reforms were brought about in SWM. This goes to show that “whether the voice of the poor is actually heard or not depends also very much on how they are perceived.”¹⁵⁵ Low status in society due to a particular section's economic and cultural background, in this case the ragpickers, led to not only ignorance from formal agents such as policy makers but also from a large part of society that is the urban residents who were keen to bring in measures which had visible results rather than support ragpickers who they could very well do without.

¹⁵⁵ Evelin Hust, “Introduction Problems of Urbanization and Urban Governance in India,” in *Urbanisation and Governance in India*, ed Evelin Hust and Michael Mann, (Delhi: Manohar, 2005), p. 10

Nature of identity and the kind of work performed: The kind of work that a section performs and the manner in which they are viewed also effects the amount of space they would be given in the policy or reform making process by policy makers. For example the nature of the work done by ragpickers which is generally viewed as being dirty, filthy and illegal and ragpickers itself being seen as dirty due to their low caste can affect the amount of thought that policy makers give to them. The reason for such an after thought about ragpickers could be as was discussed earlier in the chapter of policy- makers wanting secure their own position. In other words because of the social and cultural stigma attached to ragpickers making them unpopular in society policy makers may hesitate to formally give them space as it might prove to be an unpopular move. Hence policy makers may resort to alternative or less controversial solutions such as privatization of SWM. Another point that could be made here with regard to the nature of the work done by ragpickers is that the activity that they perform comes under the informal economy which can be a reason why there is general neglect on the part of governmental agencies to consider it as work. Barbarra Harris White observes that since “activities such as ragpicking involve various kinds of mobile exchange and production, much of which is either below all tax thresholds or concerns untaxed products,”¹⁵⁶ the activity is not recognised by the state. Hence the nature of work done by a group and its social standing in society can determine its exclusion which can also get translated into the amount of room that the group is given when it comes to the policy or reform in existing policies.

Difficult to make their demands known: Due to the various factors which prevent their speaking out, it becomes difficult for the ragpickers to make themselves heard and thus leads to a non-consideration of their interests when it comes to policy making and the concurrent reform process. They therefore have to resort to other means of survival and being heard. It is here that the NGOs come into the picture helping them to be heard but since their problems do not hold popular appeal, this level of being heard is also not quite useful.

¹⁵⁶ Barbarra Harris White, “Introduction: The Character of the Indian Economy,” in *India Working Essays on Society and Economy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4

The reasons identified above for the social exclusion of certain individuals or groups in society at different levels exert an influence on policy making and reform, further complicating the condition of the excluded groups. To remedy this situation, the state does come up with policy solutions which are more inclusive in nature. The next section looks at this process of inclusion and the kind of obstacles that can come in this process.

3.5 Inclusion the solution?

Inclusion can be seen as the opposite of exclusion by which there is an attempt to bring in people especially those “groups and individuals whose voice and contributions have historically been marginalised”¹⁵⁷ into the social-political realm. Acts of inclusion are done “with a belief that it would not only lead to more voices being heard but it is grounded in a belief that this will produce better policies and consequently, better outcomes”¹⁵⁸. However this is a very loose definition of the concept, as inclusion can have many more dimensions which can be both positive as well as negative. Amartya Sen discusses the negative side of inclusion explaining that inclusion does not always lead to the good of an individual or group as there can be “unfavourable inclusion”¹⁵⁹ like exploitative conditions at work. Thus Sen observes that “there is need to distinguish between a problem where some people are being kept out (*or at least left out*) and the characteristics of a different problem where some people are being included in deeply unfavourable terms.”¹⁶⁰

Achieving social inclusion is a daunting process as it means bringing about many changes which can threaten the established processes. So the things which need to be taken into consideration before bringing in policies for social

¹⁵⁷Catherine Bochel et al, “Marginalised or Enabled Voices? ‘User Participation’ in Policy Making and Practice,” *Social Policy and Society* 7:2 (2007), p. 204

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 201

¹⁵⁹ Amartya Sen, “Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny,” *Social Development Papers No.1* (2000), p. 29

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

inclusion are “first and foremost, a societal and governmental conviction that the removal of social exclusion barriers is a necessity.”¹⁶¹ This though an important proposition is a very difficult one to achieve as any policy or reform which brings about a change in the power and position of the existing actors would face resistance as way of maintaining their status quo in the form of laxity of implementing the reform in a proper manner and this can also effect the sustainability of the reform. Thus it becomes imperative to convince policy makers that “removing exclusionary barriers such as entrenched policy biases, vested societal interests and privilege, resource deficits, institutions unable to keep pace with rapid economic and social transformations, and weak governance is beneficial.”¹⁶²

Despite attempts by policy makers to bring in reforms which are more inclusive in nature the inclusive project can be a failure in the presence of the following conditions:

Disregard for social and cultural factors-The policy makers need to have a good understanding of the social group that they are working for. As discussed earlier in this chapter, since policy makers are technically inclined, they may fail to take into account the social and cultural characteristics of particular groups. For example, reforms to make SWM in India more inclusive through a greater involvement of the ragpickers needs to be informed by the applicability of such measures, since ragpickers carry with them multiple burdens of caste and the nature of their work. If this aspect is ignored, it can become a problem when there is a policy asking municipal authorities to integrate them. The policy needs to have proper mechanisms to ensure that such integration is possible.

Thus, policy makers need to pay greater attention to the context even when trying to make policy more inclusive. This is signalled by James Scott when he talks of ‘*metis*’ that is local knowledge which is imperative to take into

¹⁶¹ Thomas Schindlmayr et al , “Inclusive Policy Processes,” *DESA Discussion Paper* (November 2005), p. 8

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

consideration as it helps to better understand the issue at hand and also helps to ensure that the reform is long lasting which as Scott says “ has been endemic among policy makers in government and in development institutions.”¹⁶³ So there is a need for policy to be guided by the cultural factors “that may seem commonsensical to the intended beneficiaries but are often exotic, irrelevant or irrational from the perspective of the policy maker.”¹⁶⁴ Doing so would ensure that the policy or reform that the policy maker is trying to achieve for a particular group is better suited to the actual needs of the group rather than being based on what the policy maker envisions as being the appropriate solution. “As Scott masterfully demonstrates, by ignoring *metis*, policy makers impose a structures and formulaic set of intervention on societies that ill serve the purpose of improving well-being.”¹⁶⁵

When we look at ragpickers, we can see that any policy that aims to include them formally into the process of SWM needs to access its practicality. Due to the low status accorded to ragpickers, on account of their work which is seen as unhygienic and polluting, there is a social stigma attached to them. Policy makers need to keep this aspect in consideration when it comes to the aspect of inclusion of this group. “Simply making rules would not suffice as failure to pay attention to a group’s culture adversely affects a policy intervention.”¹⁶⁶ It is thus imperative for policy makers to understand the circumstances under which groups of ragpickers came to occupy such a position in society which would explain the cultural reasons for the present condition of the group. Thus, the mere provision of space would not prove to be useful for them. Here we can once again re-visit the importance of implementation to make sure that these groups are not sidelined. “This prove that a cultural lens has many implications for the world of action and interventions need to be shaped in ways that

¹⁶³ Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton, “Culture and Public Action: Relationality, Equality of Agency and Development,” in *Culture and Public Action*, ed. Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton (Permanent Black, 2004), p. 8-9

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 4

recognise the relative disempowerment of weaker and subordinate groups in cultural economic and political terms.”¹⁶⁷

Mind of the reformers - The way policymakers function could also be an obstacle to making a policy more inclusive. The educational background and training and the personal ideology of the policy maker can play a significant role when it comes to the inclusion of a particular group. Excessively technical solutions, informed by best practice principles, may not always prove to be the most practical solution. Another reason could be the inaccessibility of the policy makers. This becomes all the more important when it involves vulnerable groups such as ragpickers who have no real means of influencing the decision making process and are left to fend for themselves. In such conditions, and since they do not even get support from civil society organisations, they have only informal channels to make their voice heard, and these are not usually effective. The absence of a feedback process also hampers the chance of ragpickers to be heard out making the formulated policy ill-informed.

The politics of forgetting: One of the key features of the policy of economic liberalization in the 1990s was the emergence of a vibrant strong and assertive middle class in developing countries such as India gaining the title of the ‘new rich’. The policies which emerged from this process have tended, to a large extent, to cater to this middle class. “This assertive middle-class identity is articulated both in the public discourses and well as a range of cultural and social forms such as the development of new urban aesthetics and assertive claims on the public urban space as well as the emergence of new civil and community organisations.”¹⁶⁸ Such a development leads to policies being tailor-made for the middle classes and can also stand in the way of inclusive reform measures showing as Rajni Kothari says the “growing amnesia”¹⁶⁹ towards the poor and vulnerable sections in society. Thus as Leela Fernandez states in India’s case that:

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 360

¹⁶⁸ Leela Fernandez, “The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of the Urban Space in India,” *Urban Studies*, Vol 41 No 12 (November, 2004), p. 2416

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 2416

The growing visibility of the urban middle classes sets into motion a politics of forgetting with regard to social groups that are marginalized by India's increased integration into the global economy. The politics of forgetting in this case does not refer to processes in which particular places or nations are left out of economic globalisation. Rather it refers to a political- discursive process in which specific marginalised social groups are rendered invisible and forgotten within the dominant national and political culture with dominant social groups and political actors attempting to naturalise these processes of exclusion by producing a middle class based definition of citizenship.¹⁷⁰

This politics of forgetting is accompanied by another movement that is the "politics of spatial purification"¹⁷¹ which aims at cleansing public places from sections which seem to come in the way of or do not fit in to the plans of modernization. "The disproportionate influence that middle classes exert on policy makers, generating public debate on issues through their strong representation in the media, politics, scientific establishment, NGOs, bureaucracy and the legal system, is higher as compared to the weaker sections in society"¹⁷² which in turn translates into forgetting the classes which do not possess such abilities such ragpickers leading to their neglect and subordination. Plus the middle classes are seen as legitimate citizens or as Partha Chatterjee calls them "proper citizens"¹⁷³. The reason according to Chatterjee for not according the status of "legitimate citizens"¹⁷⁴ to the urban poor even though they are very much a part of the urban scenario is "precisely because their habitation and livelihood were so often premised on a violation of the law"¹⁷⁵, so policy makers are driven to bring in more reforms to cater to the needs of the middle classes which can seriously impinge inclusive policy making.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Emma Mawdsley, "India's Middle Classes and the Environment," *Development and Change* 35(1) (2004), p. 81

¹⁷³ Partha Chatterjee, "Are the Indian Cities Becoming Bourgeois At Last?," in *The Politics of the Governed Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Permanent Black, 2004), p. 131

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 137

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

3.6 Conclusion

We can conclude from the discussion in this chapter that reforms are a never-ending process, but if they are not informed by the context, because of the inability of the reformers to recognise and examine varying interests in society and foresee the reception of their actions, reforms can lead to possibly widespread exclusion of sections of the population. Pure knee-jerk solutions to make reforms more inclusive may not always be the right course of action. It is with this framework in mind that the researcher carried out a study of the reforms which have been brought about in SWM and discern its impact on ragpickers in Delhi which forms the content of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the fieldwork that was carried out by the researcher to determine the impact of Solid Waste Management (SWM) reforms on ragpickers in Delhi. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section describes the city of Delhi in terms of its demographic profile, the various institutional structures and how SWM is carried out in the city. The second section explicates the methodology adopted by the researcher for conducting the study. The third section presents the findings of the fieldwork at various levels. Section four discusses the results and final section closes the chapter with a conclusion.

4.2 The City of Delhi

'...who wants to leave the lanes of Delhi, even for paradise.'

Zauq

In the annals of Indian history the city of Delhi occupies a prominent place having served as the epicentre of power for many political regimes which ruled over India such as the Hindus, the Mughals and the British. "Delhi, as it stands today, is an amalgam of many different influences from many different periods, distinguished by the fact of its having been the seat of political and administrative power for much of its existence."¹⁷⁶ Present day New Delhi came into existence in 1911 when the British decided to shift their capital from Calcutta making it the eighth city to come up in the line of seven cities in the past. The new capital, New Delhi, developed as one of

Britain's most spectacular showcases of imperial modernity and embodied the rationality of imperialism in its aesthetics (refined, functional classicism), science (a healthy ordered landscape) and politics (an authoritarian, hierarchical society). As a node within a global, imperial network of sights, New Delhi represented Britain's

¹⁷⁶Kaveri Gill, "The City of Delhi," in *Of Poverty and Plastic Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs In India's Urban Informal Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 38

vision for an empire of legitimacy and longevity in the twentieth century.¹⁷⁷

In the post-independence era, Delhi has been able to retain its past status of being the epicentre of political power. However, Delhi is also gaining significance in terms of commercial and industrial activity. “While Bombay still dominates the country in terms of economic activity, Delhi competes with Calcutta for second place, serving as the hub for a north-western industrial and infrastructural corridor stretching across Punjab to Uttar Pradesh.”¹⁷⁸ These changes in Delhi came about due to the liberalization policies that came up in the 1990s which led to the opening up of the Indian economy. “The growing importance of Delhi as a commercial centre can be assessed by examining the migration pattern of the city which has led to the coming up of satellite towns such as Noida and Gurgaon to absorb the large inflows of people in search of employment.”¹⁷⁹

Despite the phenomenal growth that it has witnessed over the years, and like any other city in the world, Delhi also has its share of urban problems. “We see temporary residential structures/slums and low income low quality dilapidated housing standing in striking contrast to prestigious buildings, displaying the social and economic marginality of a large population including migrants.”¹⁸⁰

4.2.1 The Demographic Profile of Delhi

Population

The 2001 Census estimated the population of Delhi to be “13.783 million, making Delhi the third most populous metropolitan Indian city after Mumbai

¹⁷⁷Stephen Legg, “Imperial Delhi,” in *Spaces of Colonialism Delhi’s Urban Governmentalities* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 1

¹⁷⁸Kaveri Gill, “The City of Delhi,” in *Of Poverty and Plastic Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs In India’s Urban Informal Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 39

¹⁷⁹Ibid, p. 38

¹⁸⁰I.Milbert, “Law, Urban Policies and the Role of Intermediaries in Delhi,” in *New Forms of Urban Governance in India Shifts, Models, Networks and Contestations*, ed. I.S.A.Baud and J.De Wit (Sage Publications, 2008), p. 179

and Kolkata and ranked 10th among the most populous cities of the world.”¹⁸¹ In terms of the growth rate of population “during 1941-1951, it was the highest at 6.42% due to the large scale migration from Pakistan to India after the partition in 1947. Since then, the annual growth rate has been 4.22% during 1951-1961, 4.25% during 1961-1971, 4.25% during 1971-1981 and 4.15% during 1981-1991. The annual growth rate of population of Delhi during 1991-2001 has been 3.81%, which is almost double the national average.”¹⁸² With regard to the population density (refer to Fig 2.1), “the 2001 Census estimates that the city has a population density of 9,294 persons per square kilometres, as against the national average of 324 persons per square kilometres making the rate of density of the population of the city the highest in the country.”¹⁸³

Delhi has a total of nine districts and the population density in all nine differ, as illustrated in Table 2.2. “The North- West District spread over 440 square kilometres with close to 2.9 million residents is the largest; and New Delhi covering a mere 35 square kilometres with around 179,000 residents is the smallest district. The North- East district is the most densely populated (29,468 persons per square kilometre) and South-West the least (4179 persons per square kilometre).”¹⁸⁴

Table 2.1: Population density and urbanisation in four metropolitan cities of India

Indicators	Delhi	Mumbai	Kolkata	Chennai
Area (sq km)	1483	157	185	174
Density	9340	21,190	24,760	24,231
Urbanization	93	100	100	100

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress

¹⁸¹ Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress: Government of NCT of Delhi, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 13

¹⁸² Economic Survey of Delhi 2001-2002. p. 15

¹⁸³ Kaveri Gill, “The City of Delhi,” in *Of Poverty and Plastic Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs In India's Urban Informal Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 39

¹⁸⁴ Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress: Government of NCT of Delhi, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 13-14

Table 2.2: Demographic features of Delhi's districts

District	Area in sq km	Population in '000s	% Urban	Population density persons per sq km
National Capital Territory of Delhi	1483.00	13,850	93	9340
New Delhi Municipal Council	42.74	302		7074
Delhi Cantonment	42.97	125		2907
Municipal Corporation of Delhi	1397.29	13,423		9607
North-West	440.00	2861	91	6502
North	60.00	782	94	13,025
North-East	60.00	1768	92	29,438
East	64.00	1464	99	22,897
New Delhi	35.00	179	100	5117
Central	25.00	646	100	25,949
West	129.00	2129	96	16,501
South-West	420.00	1755	87	4179
South	250.00	2267	93	9067

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress

In terms of caste, “the 2001 Census calculates the Scheduled Caste (SC) population of Delhi to be at 16.9 percent of the total. The declared list of the SCs of Delhi includes among others, Bhangi, Chamar (Chanwar Chamar, Jatav Chamar, Mochi, Ramdasia, Ravidasi, Raidasi, Raigar) Chohra (Sweeper), Chuda (Balmiki) and Khatik.”¹⁸⁵

Migration

In terms of migration, it has been estimated that the annual migration into Delhi, mainly in the low income group, is a quarter of a million people. “The National Capital Region Plan had expected that the population of Delhi would be 11.2 million in 2001 and that 2 million migrants would be deflected to the counter magnet towns in the National Capital Region Area”¹⁸⁶ as a result of the relocation of economic, industrial and governmental activities however this did not materialize. “Delhi’s population is expected to become 19.5 million by 2011 and 22.4 million by 2021, as the trend of migration of increasing numbers is expected to persist.”¹⁸⁷ The general characteristics of the migrant population of Delhi are firstly, most migrants hail from Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (refer Table 2.3). Secondly, most migrants take up work in the tertiary sector. Thirdly, while most male migrants move to the cities for

¹⁸⁵Kaveri Gill, “ The City of Delhi,” in *Of Poverty and Plastic Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs In India's Urban Informal Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 40

¹⁸⁶Urvashi Dhamija, “Delhi,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 26

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

work, female migrants move due the fact that their family moved (refer Table 2.4).

Table 2.3: Prominent states of origin of in-migrants to Delhi over the last two decades

State	(per cent)					
	1991-2001			1981-91		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Uttar Pradesh	46.18*	45.35*	47.25*	49.61	50.55	48.48
Bihar	22.72*	27.61*	16.42*	10.99	14.43	6.86
Haryana	8.05	5.97	10.73	11.82	9.37	14.76
Rajasthan	4.16	3.79	4.64	6.17	5.83	6.58
West Bengal	3.97	4.08	3.83	2.79	2.75	2.85
Rest of the states	14.93	13.20	17.15	18.62	17.07	20.47
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for progress

Table 2.4 : Reported reasons for in-migration to Delhi

Reasons	1991-2001		
	Person	Male	Female
Work/employment	37.56	62.76	5.08
Business	0.54	0.83	0.17
Education	2.68	3.77	1.27
Marriage	13.80	0.23	31.30
Family moved	39.14	25.44	56.79
Other	6.28	6.97	5.38
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for progress

Employment Profile of Delhi

The employment pattern in Delhi shows that due to the ever-growing pattern of industrial growth that the city has witnessed, "it is industry, trade and manufacturing that offer the maximum employment opportunities for people and not agriculture."¹⁸⁸ In terms of the workforce, "according to the 2001 Census, Delhi's workforce went up from 49 percent in 1991 to 53 percent in 2001."¹⁸⁹ Employment in Delhi can be categorised into the two categories of

¹⁸⁸ Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress: Government of NCT of Delhi, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 37

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 39

organised labour and unorganised labour. The organised labour in Delhi (refer Table 2.5) consists of people who work in the government and private sector, where the proportion of people working in the government sector being higher as compared to the private sector. “Close to 75 percent of Delhi’s organised labour force is employed by central, state or quasi-government and local bodies whereas the private sector employs around 25 percent of Delhi’s organised labour force.”¹⁹⁰

The second category of employment in Delhi is the unorganised labour force or the unorganised employment, with about “3.5 – 4.3 million workers being employed in the unorganised sector (refer Table 2.6).”¹⁹¹ Most of these workers are employed as casual labour. “With safety norms being generally violated the conditions under which unorganised labour works are frequently hazardous and these workers are typically not covered by existing social security laws like the Employees State Insurance Act (ESIA) and the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), making them all the more vulnerable.”¹⁹²

Table 2.5: Organised sector employment in Delhi

	Employment ('000s) as on 31 March 2004		
	Total	Women	% share
Public sector			
Central government	212.3	26.8	12.62
State government	120.5	22.7	18.84
Quasi-government (Central)	158.6	25.9	16.33
Quasi-government (State)	35.3	1.3	3.68
Local bodies	93.1	15.6	16.76
Total	619.8	92.3	14.89
Private sector			
Large establishments	160.0	29.6	18.50
Small establishments	59.2	3.3	5.57
Total	219.2	32.9	15.01
Delhi grand total	839.0	125.3	14.93

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 40

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 40

Table 2.6: Estimated number of unorganised sector workers in Delhi

Industry	Estimated number of unorganized workers in Delhi (in '000s)			
	1993-4		1999-2000	
	Total	%	Total	%
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	83	3	122	3
Mining and Quarrying	4	0	1	0
Manufacturing	859	31	947	27
Electricity, Gas, and Water Supply*	0	0	0	0
Construction	304	11	245	7
Trade, Hotels, and Restaurants	703	26	1200	34
Transport, Storage, and Communications	91	3	153	4
Finance, Real Estate, and Business	100	4	123	4
Community, Social, and Personal Services	599	22	719	20
Total	2744	100	3509	100

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006

Urbanisation and Delhi

The total area of the National Capital Territory (NCT) is 1483 sq. km. In terms of the urban and rural area cover of Delhi there have been significant changes. According to the 1991 Census, “the rural and urban area composition was 797.66 sq. kms and 685.34 sq. kms respectively.”¹⁹³ The 2001 Census shows a significant increase in the urban area composition of Delhi as it stood “at 891.09 sq.kms.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, urbanisation is a dominant trend in the growth of Delhi as illustrated in table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Trend of Urbanisation in Delhi 1901-2001

Census Year	Total Population	Total Urban Population	Percent Urban Population	Annual exponential growth rate	Decennial growth percent
1901	405819	214115	52.76	-	-
1911	413851	237944	57.50	1.1	11.13
1921	488452	304420	62.32	2.5	27.94
1931	636246	447442	70.33	3.9	46.98
1941	917939	695686	75.79	4.4	55.48
1951	1744072	1437134	82.40	7.3	106.58
1961	2658612	2359408	88.75	5.0	64.17
1971	4065698	3647023	89.68	4.4	54.57
1981	6220406	5768200	92.73	4.6	58.16
1991	9420644	8471625	89.93	3.8	46.87
2001	13782976	12819761	93.01	4.1	51.33

Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2001-2002

¹⁹³ Economic Survey of Delhi 2000-2001, p. 14

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

4.2.2 The structure of governance in Delhi

Since Delhi had been the seat of political power for many regimes which came to India, the administration of the city has always been a complex issue because of the political significance attached to the city. Being the capital city, the administration and the general upkeep of the city was not left to the local authorities as was the general trend for other cities in India and was under the direct control of the Central government. "As such, social and spatial residential segregation and residential management are inherent parts of the concept of colonial city, particularly well illustrated in the case of Delhi and relayed by independent Indian authorities."¹⁹⁵

This tradition of control by the centre continued in the post-independence era till the passage of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992, which made it mandatory for all urban centres to have their own municipalities. However despite this constitutional amendment, the governance of Delhi has remained very much in control of the central government. The significant change that came about with the passage of the National Capital Territory Act of 1991 gave Delhi a unique position as compared to the other Union territories in India. The act gave the Delhi the status of being a state under the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) providing for a Legislative Assembly where people were to directly elect representatives from the different constituencies. The leader of the party that secured the maximum number of votes was elected as the chief minister and was to choose his/her ministers and was to assist the Lieutenant Governor appointed by the Centre as the titular head of the state.

The powers of the Chief Minister of Delhi are limited as the city is a Union Territory, as a result of which the power to make laws rests with the administrator appointed by the Central government, that is, the Lieutenant-Governor. The passing of the 1991 Act did not bring about a change in this

¹⁹⁵ I.Milbert, "Law, Urban Policies and the Role of Intermediaries in Delhi," in *New Forms of Urban Governance in India Shifts, Models, Networks and Contestations*, ed. I.S.A.Baud and J.De Wit (Sage Publications, 2008), p. 180

provision and the power to make laws was not given to the Delhi government. The limitation of the legislative powers of the Delhi government is not just restricted to law making, it also relates to the control of local bodies such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) as these two bodies are also under the control of the Central government. Although the Delhi government can keep a check on the work of the local bodies it cannot penalize the MCD for not fulfilling its obligations as that remains the sole jurisdiction of the central government.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)

The MCD is one of the three local bodies in Delhi, the other two being the NDMC and the Delhi Cantonment Board. The MCD was created by the passing of the Delhi Municipal Act (DMA) in 1957. Out of Delhi's total area of 1483 sq km, 1400 sq km comes under the MCD. "An estimated 97 per cent of Delhi's population resides in the MCD area. The density of population in the MCD area is 20,680 per sq km (urban) and 1208 (rural)—as against 6897 in the NDMC and 2896 in the Delhi Cantonment area."¹⁹⁶

The Act of 1957 which established the MCD was amended in 1993 detailing its various functions and composition (refer to Box 2.8). The tenure of the MCD is five years, and if dissolved, elections are to be held within six months, making it difficult to dissolve or suspend it, as was the case earlier. For administrative convenience and to bring the setting up of the local body more in tune with the objectives of the 74th amendment act of 1992, that is to make people's participation more important, the Act of 1993 also provided for a division of the area which comes under the MCD into 12 zones which are further subdivided into wards. "The purpose of the wards is not merely to facilitate representation, but also to effect administrative decentralization by dividing the municipal administration into a more localized form and therefore accessible units to individual citizens."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Delhi Human Development Report 2006 Partnerships for Progress: Government of NCT of Delhi, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 77

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Box 2.8: Responsibilities of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi

Responsibilities of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is the most important municipal authority in the Union Territory of Delhi. The obligatory functions of the MCD include:

- registration of births and deaths;
- construction and maintenance of drains, drainage works and public latrines;
- removal and disposal of garbage;
- regulation of places for the disposal of the dead;
- reclamation of unhealthy localities;
- measures for preventing the spread of dangerous diseases;
- establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and maternity and child welfare centres;
- maintenance and upgradation of hospitals;
- construction of streets and bridges;
- public vaccination and inoculation; the maintenance of municipal markets and slaughter houses; and
- establishment and maintenance of primary schools.

The MCD also has a vast range of discretionary functions, some of which are:

- furtherance of education by means other than schools;
- establishment and maintenance of libraries and museums;
- establishment of stadiums and gymnasiums;
- registration of marriages;
- survey of buildings and land; and
- construction of rest-houses, poor houses, infirmaries, shelters for the destitute and disabled, and asylums.

Source: Delhi Human Development Report 2006

The executive wing in the MCD is under the Commissioner and the deliberative consists of Councillors. Policymaking is largely under the executive branch of the MCD. The Councillors who form the deliberative department are in charge of “getting things done’ through their interface with citizens on the one hand, and the executive wing of the MCD, on the other.”¹⁹⁸

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC)

The DPCC is an autonomous body, which was given powers to ensure the environmental maintenance of Delhi. It is expected to oversee the various activities in Delhi and make sure that they are environmentally sound. “The DPCC has been vested with statutory powers, functions and duties under Section 5 of Environment Protection Act, 1986 as also under various Rules issued under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, the most recent being the Municipal Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000.”¹⁹⁹

4.2.3 Municipal Solid Waste Management in Delhi

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 78

¹⁹⁹ Urvashi Dhamija, “Delhi,” in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006), p. 56

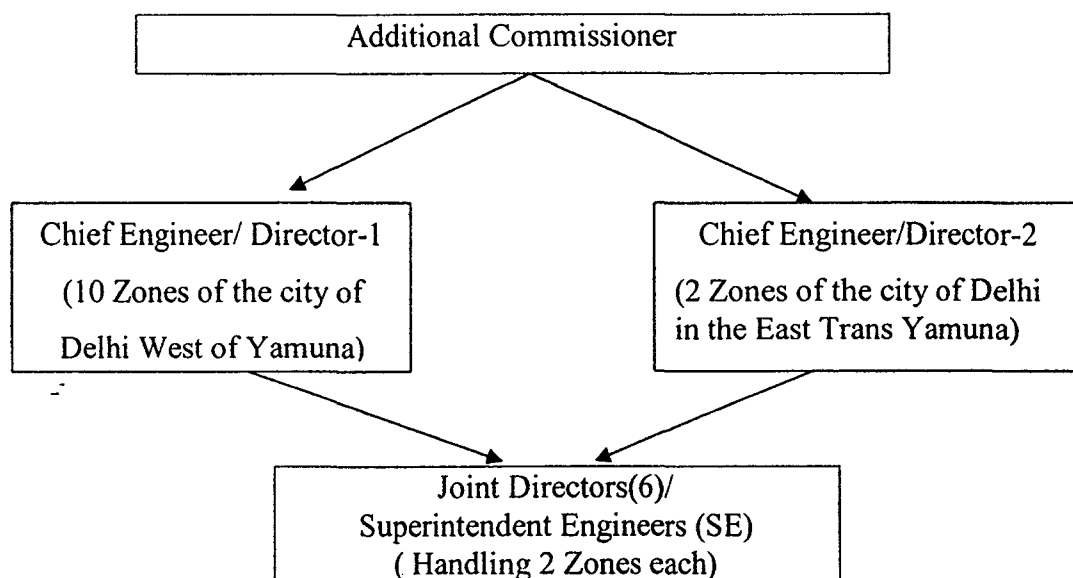
One of the chief problems which many developing countries face is the problem of managing waste with the problem being more acute in urban areas. The usual reasons cited for the huge increase of generation of waste is the rapid urbanization and growth of population, and lack of infrastructural and monetary means with the local municipal authorities to deal with the problem of waste. In India, SWM comes under public health and sanitation and is considered as a public good, the service for which is to be provided by the government. At the central level, the two main ministries which are involved in the management of waste are the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) and the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF). At the local level, it is the municipalities which are entrusted with the duty of carrying out SWM activities. In the case of Delhi, it is the MCD, the NDMC and the Delhi Cantonment Board (DCB) which carry out activities associated with SWM. The present study is focussed on the areas which come under the MCD and how SWM activities are carried out by the MCD.

SWM under the MCD

SWM is one of the obligatory functions of the MCD. The function of SWM is carried out by the Conservancy and Sanitation Department (CSE) of the MCD. The work which is carried out by CSE “includes the sweeping, maintenance and removal of garbage from garbage dumps, cleaning and de-silting of sewers, cleaning and de-silting of drains and cleaning of public toilets and urinals.”²⁰⁰ The basic organisational structure of the CSE is given in (Figure 2.9) and the organisational structure of the CSE at the level of zones is given in Figure 2.10.

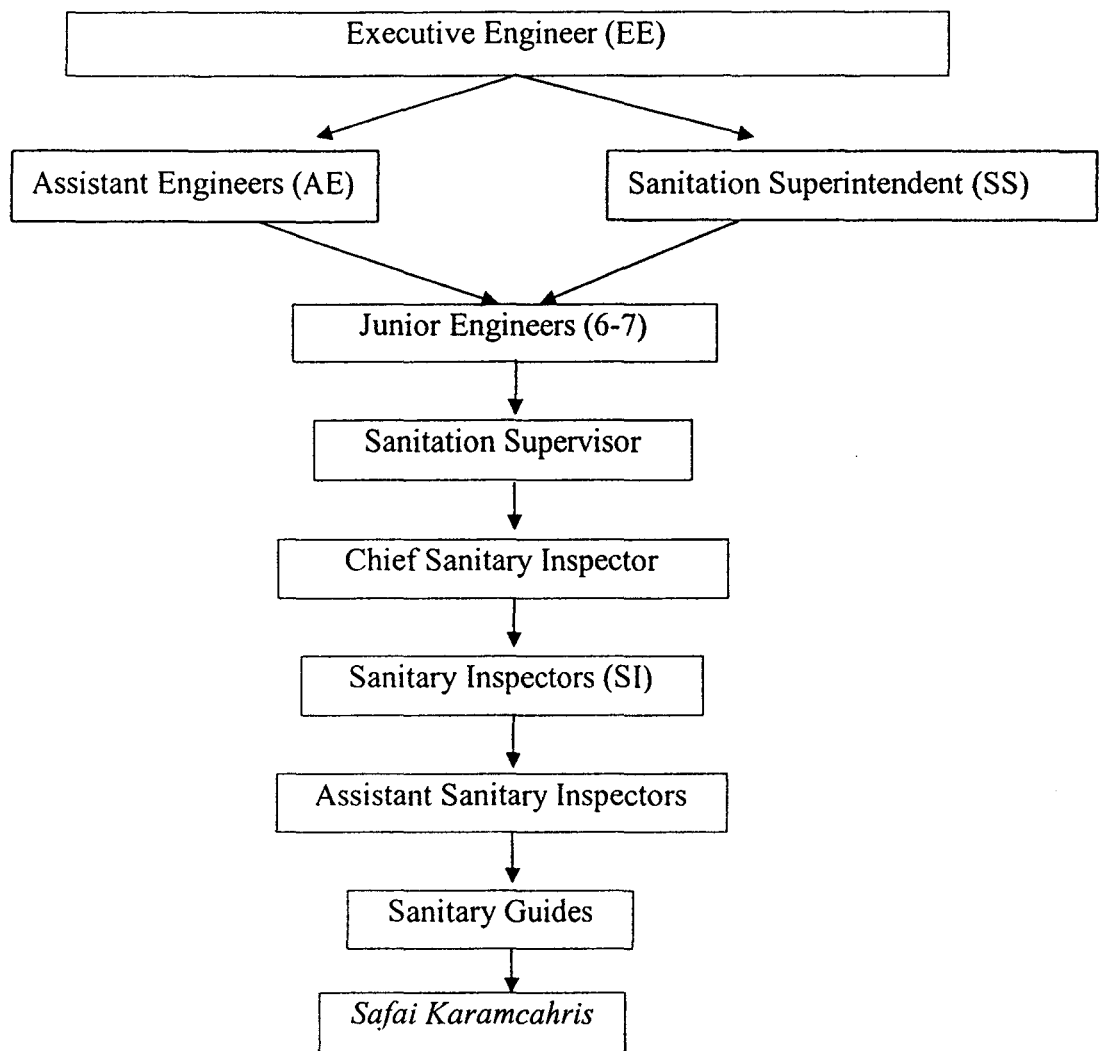
²⁰⁰Ibid, p. 52

Figure 2.9: The Organisational Chart of the CSE



Source: Urvashi Dhamija, "Delhi," in *Sustainable Solid Waste Management Issues Policies and Structures* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006).

Figure 2.10: The Organisational chart of the CSE at the level of Zones.



Source: As narrated to the researcher during the interview with an MCD official.

Initiatives taken by the Delhi Government for SWM

Delhi despite being the capital city is plagued by effective management of waste. SWM activities in the city have come under scrutiny from time to time with the general verdict being that it is not satisfactory especially in the areas under the jurisdiction of the MCD. The reasons cited by the MCD for such a state of affairs is the paucity of funds and lack of staff. However the argument which is given against the reason given by the MCD is that “unlike the municipalities in the rest of the country the MCD has been indifferent in the

matter of multiplying and upscaling ventures which are targeted at improving the management of waste.”²⁰¹

The ineffectiveness of the MCD in handling waste led to the filing of a writ petition in the Supreme Court (SC) of India by Dr. B.L. Wadhwa, “seeking directions to the MCD and the NDMC to compel them to perform their statutory duties in the collection, removal and disposal of garbage and other wastes in the city, asserting that neither the non-availability of funds nor the inefficiency of staff could absolve these bodies from their responsibilities.”²⁰² As a result of this case, the Supreme Court of India issued a 14- point directive for better management of waste to all departments both at the central as well as local authorities which were as follows:

- Experiment by door to door collection of garbage by distributing polythene bags and their daily clearing.
- Clean and scavenge the city and carry garbage from the collection centres to the designated sites every day.
- Ensure cleanliness and maintenance of the garbage receptacles daily.
- Ensure that garbage is not found spread around the collection centres and on the streets.
- Activate the defunct compost plant in Okhala and explore the possibility of constructing four additional plants.
- Open direct communication lines with people to educate them about garbage disposal.²⁰³

As a result of the SC order the MCD appointed the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to come up with suggestions to improve SWM in the city. The main suggestions made by NEERI were to incorporate the services of NGOs and private actors, create better waste collection sites, improve the transport of waste, and build better waste storage points (called *dhalao*). The MCD did follow up on some of the suggestions given by NEERI and came up with solutions like improvement in the *dhalao* (garbage dump) structure and collection of garbage from door to door. However, none of these efforts were continued for long with shortage of funds being cited as the reason for stopping them. As a result of this, there was no

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 130

²⁰² Ibid, p. 131

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 130

significant improvement in the working of the MCD when it came to better SWM services. This dismal state of SWM was reported to the SC by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). “In the CPCB’s view, neither the MCD nor the government at Delhi or at the Centre displayed any sense of urgency to introduce wide ranging manpower and technology related to reforms.”²⁰⁴

In September 1999 the MOEF issued draft rules for Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules (MSW Rules) and in May 2000 the MOEF notified Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000. The rules made it mandatory for all ULBs to improve their waste management systems in accordance with the rules by 31st December 2003. However there were major omissions when it came to the aspect of NGOs and ragpickers who had been engaged in this profession for ages. Both were omitted in the rules. In order to implement the MSW Rules, the MCD and the Delhi government both came up with various measures. The Delhi government’s contribution was to provide for more people’s participation in its venture called *Bhagidari*. The efforts of the MCD were based on workshops to involve more cooperation on the part of the NGOs; however, these measures failed as the money that the NGOs were asking for their cooperation was perceived as being too steep. The MCD thus resorted to bringing private actors into the management of waste. In 2002, it brought in the Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd. (IDFC) to suggest how SWM was to be implemented in the twelve zones of the MCD. The MCD invited many national and international private companies to take over the system of SWM in the belief that they would have a better understanding of the situation in Delhi. The MCD evidently saw privatization as the logical solution, instead of building on the traditional modes in which waste was being handled. Thus the main objective of this study is to analyse how the measures to reform SWM in Delhi has impacted the lives of ragpickers who are the part of the informal chain involved in SWM, and in particular to determine whether they have been negatively or positively been impacted and the causes for this outcome.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 134

4.3 Methodology

In order to gather information about the impact of the SWM reforms on ragpickers, a field study was taken up over a period of one and a half months during which different actors associated in the process of waste management were interviewed to study the impact of reforms in SWM on ragpickers. The study used qualitative methods, mainly personal interviews, to gather information from the various actors, using semi-structured questionnaires with both open and close ended questions.

The study began by conducting key informant interviews with five NGOs (Vatavaran, Toxics Link, Chintan, ACORD and Waste 2 Wealth) who have been working in the field of SWM in Delhi and have worked in close connection with the ragpickers in Delhi. Key informant interviews were used as the NGO heads were “more likely to be better informed about the study problem and the issues associated with it”²⁰⁵ thus providing the researcher with a better understanding as to how reforms in the system of SWM was impacting ragpickers. The interviews lasted for 45 minutes to even two hours at times.

In the second stage, the leader of the All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh (formerly know as Harit Recyclers Association) a union of waste recyclers was interviewed, using a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The interview provided the researcher with an idea of how the recyclers were coming together to make their demands known to the government, and also how they were facing the private companies who were now taking over SWM in Delhi.

In the third stage of the study, the researcher conducted an interview with a key informant in the Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO), under the Ministry of Urban Development. The interview provided the researcher with information regarding the measures that

²⁰⁵David E. McNabb, “Exploratory Research: The Probing Approach,” in *Research Methods for Political Science Quantitative and Qualitative Methods* (Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 2004), p. 137

have been taken by the Indian Government with regard to SWM and where ragpickers stand in the whole issue.

In the fourth stage of the study, 40 ragpickers were interviewed in one of the 12 zones of the MCD in Delhi, that is Karol Bagh. The objective of the interviews was to determine the basic demographic profile of ragpickers, the nature of the work that they perform, the income that they earn from the profession, their relationship with the urban authorities and urban residents, the provisions that the government has made for them, the demands that they have and the response/ non-response to these demands as well as the reasons for the same. The interviews with ragpickers helped the researcher to determine the attention that has been paid (or not) by the government agencies to this section of the population in Delhi, and hence determine if there has been any impact of the reforms in SWM on this section or not; or, in other words how inclusive reforms in SWM have been in Delhi.

In the fifth stage of the study, key informant interviews were conducted with two private companies to which SWM services in Delhi have been outsourced by the MCD. The two companies are SPML Undertaking, the project named Delhi Waste Management Ltd.), and Anthony Waste Handling Pvt Ltd (the project in Delhi named AG Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited) to gather information about how their involvement in SWM in Delhi has affected ragpickers and to also understand what their perspective on ragpickers.

In the sixth stage of the study, a key informant interview was conducted with the department in the MCD (Karol Bagh Division) which was responsible for SWM in Karol Bagh. The purpose of the interview was to look at the way SWM was being carried out in the formal sector, the perspective that the MCD had on the ragpickers, and what measures had been adopted by the MCD for this section.

The seventh stage of the study included the examination of secondary data in the form of official documents on the urban situation in India, with regard to SWM in India and specifically Delhi drawing upon newspaper reports, articles

in magazines; attending a workshop titled "*The Undisciplined City*", to get a better understanding of how urban governance functions in India; and also attending two seminars on issues of urban governance. Doing a secondary data study helped the researcher to better understand the various laws and measures taken with regard to SWM in India and also helped in triangulation and verification of the primary data which was collected.

The methodology which was used for analysis of the data was done by representing the data collected in the form of pie-charts and bar diagrams and these were further used to deduce the impact that SWM has had on ragpickers and, in the last stage of the study, analyse the reasons for the various patterns.

4.3 Results of the fieldwork

The following section talks about the various results of the research at different levels or actors that the researcher interacted with. These can be broadly divided into NGOs, a union of recyclers, ragpickers, private companies in Delhi dealing with waste management ; an MCD official and an official from CPHEEO.

4.3.1 NGOs

It has been noted time and again that when the agencies of the state fail to perform their functions it is the NGOs which step in to do the work of the state. Since it was seen that the MCD was not able to take up effective methods to manage waste, various NGOs emerged to improve the dismal state of SWM in the city of Delhi. There are many NGOs in Delhi which work on issues related to SWM, and the researcher interviewed five NGOs who have been working specifically with ragpickers or had some experience working with them. The interviews helped the researcher to gather information on the state of SWM in the city, the various reforms which have come about in the area and what has been the impact of these reforms on ragpickers. The information was collected by the researcher from NGOs based on reports and articles on the work done by the NGOs and also conducting personal interviews. The five NGOs which the

researcher interviewed were Vatavaran, Toxics Link, Chintan, ACORD (Asian Centre for Organisation Research & Development) and Waste 2 Wealth Society. The NGOs which were interviewed were mostly located in South Delhi the one exception being Waste 2 Wealth Society which was located in the Karol Bagh Zone. The findings of the interviews can be clubbed under the following headings:

Aim of the NGO and nature of work done in the past and present

The main aim of all NGOs was to achieve better ways of handling waste which would not only lead to environmental benefits but also result in social benefits by being able to generate employment in the field. When Vatavaran was asked about its aims, Dr. Iqbal Malik (Founder and Executive Director) stated that by evolving better methods for waste management “the NGO strives to identify the socio-environmental problems of the society (such as waste management) and tries to solve them with the help of the communities.”²⁰⁶ Mohammad Tariq Gaur (Senior Programme Officer) of Toxics Link stated that the aim of the NGO was to “better manage wastes...by involving the stakeholders through capacity building and not act as a service provider.”²⁰⁷ The aim of ACORD was according to Dr. Kiran Walia (President & CEO) was to “ go into an area, study the problem at hand and bring about the required changes keeping in mind the conditions of the area in question...the main focus is on change- management, organisation development, good governance, human resource development and urban and rural development.”²⁰⁸ The aim of Waste 2 Wealth as expressed by Mr. Vijay (General Secretary) is to “educate and encourage people to join hands for proper management of wastes especially in terms of paper, and in the process create employment opportunity for those who want to be a part of this change process.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Interview with Dr. Iqbal Mallik the Founder and Executive Director of Vatavaran on 25th March 2010.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur the Senior Programme Officer of Toxics Link on 30th March 2010.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Dr. Kiran Walia the President and CEO of ACORD on 8th April 2010.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Mr. Vijay the General Secretary of Waste 2 Wealth on 10th April 2010.

With regard to the kind of work that the interviewed NGOs had been involved in, that is, whether in merely bringing in new methods to handle wastes, or also through measures to improve the life of people who were involved at the grass root level. The response of all NGOs to this query was that they were involved in both. Three NGOs had come up with innovative methods to handle wastes as well, such as giving compost to people in return for recyclable waste which was done by Vatavaran. Waste 2 Wealth Society gave poor kids books in exchange for waste paper as they were not able to purchase books otherwise, leading them to drop out from school. ACORD held workshops with the MCD in order to generate awareness about the need to manage waste better.

In the area of improving the life of people involved in the waste industry at the bottommost level that is ragpickers, there was a degree of difference to which NGOs were involved. Whereas some NGOs such as Chintan and Vatavaran were intensely involved in this aspect, the remaining three NGOs had at some point been involved in working with ragpickers. However the common feature which could be observed was that all NGOs had tried to mobilise the traditional actors who were involved in the segregation of waste, which was seen as a better way to handle waste than dumping un-segregated waste, the norm followed by the MCD in Delhi. This is to say that the NGOs, while developing better models for the management of waste, involved the actors at the grassroots level instead of bringing in actors from outside. By doing this the NGOs were able to learn how waste was fully segregated by ragpickers. In the process, the NGOs could determine the negative effects of the job performed by ragpickers, educating them about its ill-effects and making them aware of safer methods to conduct their work, as well as involving them in the collection of wastes in a fashion which was not only safer but also providing them with a regular source of income.

ACORD used this strategy to solve the problem of waste in an area called Harkesh Nagar, by involving the local ragpickers to collect waste and educating the local people about the merits of proper management of waste and thus being able to convince people to segregate waste and give it to the ragpicker by paying him a nominal fee instead to dumping it in streets and drains.

A similar model was also followed by Vatavaran in Shahpur Jat where the ragpickers were organised, and after convincing the people in the area about the benefits of better management of waste, these ragpickers began to collect wastes from houses on payment of a nominal fee. This method was later used in other areas surrounding Shahpur Jat. The main aim of the project was to provide ragpickers with a better standard of living.

The same method was followed in Defence Colony by Toxics Link where it organised door-to-door collection of waste from around 500 households in the beginning, by involving ragpickers to collect and segregate waste. In this project, the ragpickers were provided with training for better segregation of waste and were provided with equipment such as gloves, uniforms and IDs to make their work safer and also with a monthly user fee of around Rs. 4000 from the households from which they collected waste. Thus, by developing models for the better management of waste the NGOs were able to bring in the stakeholders at the bottom level of the waste chain, that is the ragpickers, to organise themselves leading not only to the better management of waste, but also providing better work conditions and a better way of life. Organizing and training ragpickers, according to Mohammad Tariq Gaur of Toxics Link, led to “recognition of the work done by ragpickers and their social upliftment which was absent earlier which also led to some level of trust being built up between the urban residents and ragpickers.”²¹⁰

SWM in the Indian Scenario

When asked the question as to what constitutes SWM all NGOs had a different answer. Vatavaran believed that “when there is proper segregation of wastes and if this segregation can be seen as a way to generate employment then it is proper SWM.”²¹¹ Toxics Link was of the view that when wastes are collected properly then it can be termed as proper SWM. According to ACORD proper

²¹⁰ Interview with Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur the Senior Programme Officer at Toxics Link on 30th March, 2010.

²¹¹ Interview with Dr. Iqbal Mallik the Founder and Executive Director of Vatavaran on 25th March, 2010.

SWM was when when waste is not thrown on the streets. The view of Waste 2 Wealth was that “waste is wealth, so if waste when handled properly can generate wealth and at the same time also lead to bettering of the environment and social upliftment, then we can call such a culmination SWM.”²¹² The differences in opinion of the NGOs on the issue of what constitutes SWM is interesting as all focus on different aspects of SWM such as segregation of waste, collection of waste, storage of waste and the livelihood issue associated with waste management.

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When questioned about the state of SWM in India the response of all the NGOs was that the situation is dismal and the reasons for such a situation according to them were as follows:

- No civic sense amongst people as a large majority of the population still believes in throwing waste onto the streets as waste is seen as “something which is to be totally discarded.”
- No proper system in place for collection of waste.
- No proper guidelines as to how waste is to be handled and with proper rules to check malpractices “it happens according to the convenience and comfort of the municipal waste workers.”
- Absence of segregation of wastes. Even though the process of segregation is more viable in India, as the practice of ‘use and throw’ is not common, and with *kabaadiwallahs* (junk dealers) coming to homes, the act of segregating waste is possible but people don’t want to make an effort. Dumping of wastes without segregation is not only practiced by most households, it is also the chosen method of the municipal authorities.
- Absence of commitment on part of the official authorities when it comes to formulating rules for SWM.

To the question of their opinion on the measures adopted by the Government of India (GOI) in terms of SWM, the general response of the NGOs was that the

²¹² Interview with Mr. Vijay the General Secretary of Waste 2 Wealth on 10th April, 2010.

measures were lackadaisical and not holistic in nature. Dr. Iqbal Mallik of Vatavaran described the measures to be “photo- opportunity moments for the government to show that it is dealing with the problem of SWM.”²¹³ Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur of Toxics Link was of the view that measures which have been taken by the GOI have about come about without clearly understanding the feasibility of the measures. Giving the example of the Fifth Schedule of the MSW Rules which gives recommendations for landfills, composting and production of bio-methane gas and incineration “the question to be asked is: does India have landfill sites, resources to carry out these recommendations and if they are carried out is it feasible and desirable?”²¹⁴

According to Ms. Malati Gadgil of Chintan, the measures taken by the GOI have been “myopic in nature”²¹⁵ as the “policies fail to recognise SWM as a livelihood issue.”²¹⁶ This view of unplanned or thoughtless SWM reforms is also echoed by ACORD by giving the example of placing green and blue waste bins so that waste is segregated by urban residents but waste is still thrown in an unsegregated manner. Neither was much effort made on part of the municipal authorities to educate urban residents to use the bins, nor were the bins maintained by the municipal authorities. The reason why reforms by the government in SWM failed, according to Dr. Kiran Walia, is that the “ reforms are not guided by political will but by bureaucratic will...reforms have not been institutionalized, they have just been ritualistic in nature and instead of letting things progress have acted as a stalling force to maintain the status quo.”²¹⁷ “Lack of proper implementation of reforms”²¹⁸ is the opinion held by Waste 2 Wise Society when asked about the reforms introduced by the GOI.

To the question of as to what is the driving force behind reforms in SWM, while one NGO was of the view that there was no driving force behind SWM

²¹³ Interview with Dr. Iqbal Mallik the Founder and Executive Director of Vatavaran on 25th March, 2010.

²¹⁴ Interview with Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur the Senior Programme Officer of Toxics Link on 30th March, 2010.

²¹⁵ Interview with Ms. Malati Gadgil of Chintan on 5th April, 2010.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Interview with Dr. Kiran Walia the President and CEO of ACORD on 8th April, 2010.

²¹⁸ Interview with Mr. Vijay the General Secretary of Waste 2 Wealth on 10th April, 2010.

reforms, two NGOs said it was a face saving measure on the part of the government and was not driven by considerations of urban residents' welfare, much less that of the people who are engaged in managing waste. The upcoming Commonwealth Games in Delhi were identified, by one NGO, as a reason for reforms in the form of privatization of SWM.. Pressure from urban residents to have cleaner surroundings, health concerns and burgeoning pressure from NGOs were seen by another NGO as the driving force behind SWM reforms. The fact that most reforms come about without much thought is also characteristic of reforms in SWM which have been few and far from satisfactory with the pace of change being quite slow.

When questioned about if the MSW Rules had brought about any changes in the way wastes are managed, one NGO was of the opinion that there was no change, whereas the rest of the NGOs felt the changes are minor but they are as follows:

- Awareness about the need to manage waste and appreciation of the merits of recycling in a proper manner at the community level, less from the side of the governmental agencies. In terms of Delhi there have been measures on the part of the government for awareness generation with Chief Minister of Delhi Smt. Shiela Dixit along with the Department of Environment offering Rs. 20,000 to Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) interested in having decentralized waste management on June 5th 2008. However such measures suffer from a problem of 'marketing' hence the success rate is quite low.
- In terms of Delhi the city is comparatively cleaner with more door-to-collection being practised by some RWAs, better storage points and transport facilities for wastes. The main driving force behind change have been the RWAs and not formal municipal agencies

The reason for the relatively small changes, despite the the MSW Rules, is due to the fact that there is no "continuous momentum to change as the municipal authorities don't take ownership of the changes with most changes being

brought about by RWAs²¹⁹ and with the general notion being “ its ok for me to litter.”²²⁰ The general view held by all NGOs in terms of the main lacunae in SWM in India was that the reforms were based on a very narrow understanding of the problem of management of wastes. The issue of waste management was only seen as a technical issue and the social dimension attached to it was ignored. Even when reforms were brought about there was, as one of the NGOs believed, “ no push factor to take the reforms further, incidents of stalling reforms was more prevalent than incidents of progress.”²²¹ Lack of linkages between the municipal authorities and the urban residents and lack of any monitoring of the work of the municipal waste workers was seen by Toxics Link as reasons why the SWM system in the country was in a dismal state.

Ragpickers and SWM in India

The role of the informal sector was seen as being very significant by all five NGOs as it was this sector which brings about segregation of wastes and recycling, neither of which is performed by the formal sector or the municipal authorities. The contribution of ragpickers who form the bottommost link in the informal sector involved in SWM are seen to play a very crucial role; it is because of them that the city is clean and the amount of waste which goes to the garbage dump is reduced, saving the municipal authorities time and money to care of the waste. According to Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur “ragpickers recycle 15 to 20 percent of waste reducing Rs. 200 from the Rs. 1000 per ton that takes the municipal authorities to take care of wastes, whereas the private waste management companies charge Rs.750 per ton of waste for just transportation of waste and no segregation thus the work done by ragpickers has double benefits for the municipal authorities.”²²²

According to Chintan, the role played by ragpickers was significant due to the following reasons as enumerated by Ms.Malati Gadgil:

²¹⁹ Interview with Dr. Kiran Walia the President and CEO of ACORD on 8th April, 2010.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Interview with Mr. Vijay the General Secretary of Waste 2 Wealth on 10th April, 2010.

²²² Interview with Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur the Senior Programme Officer of Toxics Link on 30th March 2010.

- Feeding themselves- Ragpickers could have been a burden on civic agencies in urban centres but they are not. They are earning their livelihood. They are self- entrepreneurs.
- Skilled people- Ragpickers are a resource to society and not a liability. The skills that they possess are different from others. For example they can segregate waste into fourteen different categories with each category have a different way of being recycled. Thus the skills to segregate waste makes their role in the SWM chain an important one.
- Recycling- They recycle 25 percent of the waste and do it free of charge
- Carbon- saving- Ragpickers save 3.6 percent times more than any waste to energy plant. Since ragpickers do not use any motorised transport they also save carbon in that respect as compared to the motorised machines.
- Save land- Since ragpickers reduce waste by recycling, the amount of land which is required for disposal of waste is also reduced.

Despite the role which is being played by ragpickers, the conditions under which they perform their work has been described as hazardous and the attitude of urban residents and the municipal workers towards them and their work hostile. Since ragpickers rummage through pathogen laden waste the chances of their getting health problems is quite evident, however ragpickers themselves are not aware of these health hazards.

Another aspect which was pointed out by both ACORD and Toxics Link was the involvement of children in this field. Children are made to work by their parents and when they see they can make money by taking up this profession they become reluctant to go to school.

Ragpickers also face harassment by municipal workers, police and private actors providing waste management services. Here it is interesting to note an input that was given by one NGO, that even though municipal workers do not recognise the work done by ragpickers, ragpickers are paid a paltry amount by municipal workers to do their job, while municipal workers moonlight by

taking up jobs such as of maids. Another source of harassment of ragpickers comes from the people (referred to as 'mafia' by an NGO) who bring people (mostly Muslims) from villages on the pretext of better jobs. Once brought to the city, they are kept in sheds by 'gang overlords' and are made to get recyclable material to the shops daily. The amount of money paid to them is quite paltry and the living conditions are also sub-human. Moreover, they are also brought into the habit of taking drugs. Eventually the ragpickers become drug addicts (the gang overlord being the main drug supplier) and have no choice but to continue with the profession even if they wish to leave.

With regard to the attitude of urban residents towards ragpickers, the NGOs were of the view that ragpickers were looked upon with utter disdain in rich neighbourhoods because of the way waste is viewed by this strata in society, that is, as something which should be done away with and is to be left to servants. Handling waste is seen as a prestige issue. Conversely this is not the situation in middle income neighbourhoods which do realise the value that waste could generate when handled properly, which makes them more open to the idea of involving ragpickers for collection of wastes.

Despite the hazardous nature of their work and the harassment that comes along with it, ragpickers take up the profession chiefly due to a lack of choice when it comes to earning a living. The views of the NGOs on the reason why ragpickers do what they do were quite varied. One view which was shared by all NGOs was that it was poverty which led ragpickers take up the profession. The other reasons given were firstly, that since ragpicking has a low entry point, requiring low investment and very little skill, it seen as an easy way to make money. Secondly, the people who are involved in ragpicking are mostly migrants who come looking for work or are brought in the city by agents due to abject poverty back home, and have no option but, to take up this work to survive or face torture from the agents. Thirdly, since most of the ragpickers belong to the backward castes and are considered dirty the profession of ragpicking is the only profession they can take up. Fourthly, rag picking occurs due to mismanagement of waste by civic authorities and the apathetic attitude of the urban residents who throw waste onto the streets in the belief that ragpickers

will clear up the garbage, hence the impetus to ragpicking to a great extent comes from urban residents as well.

Despite the significant role played by ragpickers when it comes to SWM, there have been no significant measures on the part of the Indian governmental agencies for improving their living conditions, a view which was shared by all NGOs. It was pointed out by Vatavaran that since there has been no effort on the part of the government to even determine as to how many people are engaged in the profession of ragpicking how can there be measures. Since the Indian governmental agencies have not been able to bring about any measures for improvement of the condition of ragpickers, there are now efforts by actors from abroad who are trying to bring in some provisions for this group, with one such group being GAYA. One recent measure on the part of the governmental agencies is called Mission Convergence²²³ under which two categories of workers have been recognised, that is construction workers and ragpickers. The programme is like a one window system where many schemes have been clubbed together for the benefit of the selected workers. However the success rate of the programme has not been gauged due to lack of any study on the progress of the programme.

Thus the ragpickers who work freely for the state have not been given any special attention by the state. This non- recognition of their work is reflected in their absence from the MSW Rules. The reasons given by the NGOs interviewed as to why ragpickers have not been recognised in the Rules was mixed. One view was that the work done by ragpickers is not taken seriously by governmental agencies thus the lax attitude when it comes to giving space to ragpickers in the MSW Rules. Another view was that since the ragpickers are huge in number the governmental agencies have not been able to understand as to how they are to provide employment or cater to the demands of this section. One NGO was of the view that since policies and rules for SWM are made by a panel consisting of doctors and scientists, the solutions that they prescribe are

²²³ Mission Convergence – An initiative of the Delhi Government to bring together various social welfare schemes for the poor through a single window system. The Samajik Suvidha Sangam which is a registered society is the main agency which is to facilitate this initiative. For further information visit sss.delhigovt.nic.in/scf.html

scientific in nature ignoring the social side of the problem. Another NGO was of the view that policy makers lack creativity and are guided by their own ideology thus making the plight of the ragpickers seem minuscule in the face of bigger problems.

Since ragpickers get minimal support from state agencies due to the nature of their work, which is seen as being hazardous and illegal, the question of whether their rehabilitation is a viable solution was put to the NGOs. The response was mixed. Two NGOs said they had no knowledge about the viability of rehabilitating ragpickers. One NGO believed that rehabilitation was not a good idea as ragpickers carry an image of being dirty due to the nature of their work and at times caste, hence it might not be easy for them to find employment elsewhere. Two NGOs were of the view that though recognition of their work and giving it a legal status can lead to a better life for them, but for future generations to be emancipated from this profession, they should be trained in different skills.

Impact of privatization on ragpickers

One of the major reforms which have been brought about by the municipal authorities in Delhi for the better management of waste has been the contracting out of waste management to private companies. When asked about the impact of privatization on ragpickers, the response took extremes with some NGOs totally opposed to the idea whereas some were in favour of it. Dr. Iqbal Mallik of Vatavaran who was totally opposed to the idea of privatization of SWM had the following to say:

What is the need to bring in people from outside (private actors) when there is enough workforce (ragpickers) to carry out SWM in Delhi...if properly trained they (ragpickers) can be used to manage wastes on their own. Instead of privatization there should further decentralization of waste management. The municipalities should give work to the colonies as the colonies are very much capable of handling their own wastes. There is no need for the government to interfere. Private actors are not interested in learning the indigenous situation. They believe the problem of waste management can be solved by technical methods instead of bringing in more labour force. They are

purely business minded. They are paid according to the weight of the wastes they collect so they would not try to segregate as that would mean less money for them but that would be mismanagement of waste.²²⁴

Privatisation of SWM is seen by two NGOs as being a failure because firstly, it is just a replacement of the MCD waste workers as they perform no segregation of wastes with the greater focus being on transport and storage of waste. Further, with no mechanisms to monitor their working, private actors have a free hand when it comes to waste management. Secondly, private actors are not concerned with the livelihood issue of ragpickers, entailed by SWM. Thirdly, private actors do not recycle wastes; it is still in actuality done by ragpickers but private actors take credit for it. The only merits that NGOs could see in terms of privatization of SWM was a marked improvement in the transportation and storage of wastes.

Out of the five NGOs interviewed four were of the opinion that the privatisation of SWM had a negative impact on the livelihood of ragpickers, as now it was difficult for them to gain access to waste because the private companies have total control over waste. Further, since private companies have been recruited by municipal authorities such as the MCD in the case of Delhi, they have more power and it becomes more difficult for ragpickers to access wastes as the private waste management companies now have legal rights over waste. One NGO believed that privatisation would only enhance the livelihood of ragpickers and not harm them as the area of SWM is labour intensive and therefore ragpickers would be eventually be incorporated by private agencies. However, the NGO neither had any knowledge about the rate of incorporation of ragpickers nor did it know of ragpickers who have been given jobs in private solid waste management companies, suggesting that the NGOs belief that privatisation has had no negative impact on ragpickers was based on a general assumption and not on any particular observation.

²²⁴ Interview with Dr. Iqbal Mallik the Founder and Executive Director of Vatavaran on 25th March 2010.

The level of incorporation of ragpickers into private companies was quite low²²⁵ with only skilled and literate ragpickers being preferred. The working conditions for ragpickers who had been incorporated was pretty much the same as they still worked in hazardous conditions, the only benefit that they seemed to be having was in terms of the income level which was much higher as compared to when they would work on their own. These assertions were made without the NGOs having an proper data on such claims.

Recognition of ragpickers by policymakers

The general answer which was given by all NGOs as a reason for the non-recognition of ragpickers when it came to formulating policies on SWM was the apathetic attitude of the bureaucrats to the condition of ragpickers. One NGO was of the view that since most of the ragpickers are illegal migrants and carry a temporary identity, it makes no sense to bureaucrats to formulate policies for them or as Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur of Toxics Link said “ they (ragpickers) are not seen a good investment”²²⁶ . He goes to elaborate his point by saying:

As long as there is no visible benefit in economic, environmental and sociological terms there would be no measure. If the recurring cost is high and the value generation is low there would be no investment. Thus if there is to be sustainable SWM there should be a proper measuring of the economy involved. This was possible in terms of private companies, which is why the Delhi government decided to privatise. However such a situation is not visible with ragpickers so they do not seem to be a viable option to invest in hence no move to have policies for them or move to incorporate them into the formal process of SWM.²²⁷

²²⁵ These assertions were made by the NGOs without being able to produce proper data to authenticate the claim.

²²⁶ Interview with Mr. Mohammad Tariq Gaur the Senior Programme Officer of Toxics Link on 30th March 2010.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Demands of ragpickers

Despite the fact that ragpickers are very much a part of SWM, what prevents them from making their demands known according to the NGOs interviewed was their illegal status and lack of unity amongst them. They are not able to organise as a force to be heard by the state due to fear of the state, the general perception that people have about them and poverty have been the main reasons why ragpickers have not been able to make their demands known, according to the NGOs.

NGOs recommendations for measures that may be adopted by the Government for ragpickers

- Education and better health facilities for ragpickers.
- Recognise the work done by ragpickers.
- Make sure that children are not involved in ragpicking.
- Change the perception of ragpickers as being illegal migrants as this is not the case for all ragpickers.
- Give vocational training so that they can develop more skills and take up an alternate profession.
- NGOs should be involved more as they can help to get feedback from the ragpickers.
- Access to waste and space to segregate waste.
- Decentralize SWM to the level of colonies.
- Policy makers to be sensitized to the needs of the ragpickers thus serious thought needs to be given to ragpickers and they should not be victims of an after- thought.

4.3.2 All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh (AIKMM)

In the second stage of the fieldwork, to ascertain the impact of SWM reforms on ragpickers, the researcher established contact with an organisation called the All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh (AIKMM) (previously know as Harit Recyclers Association, under which the organisation is still registered) which

described it itself as a Union working towards giving a voice to *kabaadiwallahs* and ragpickers as well. Though described as an NGO in the print media, the organisation's main leader Mr. Shashi Bhushan described his organisation as not an NGO per se, as it works more in a "union mode." The main aim of the organisation is to help ragpickers and *kabaadiwallahs* to carry out their job without a threat of being forcefully removed and harassed by central or local authorities and the police. The organisation's aim is to make SWM become more people-oriented, that is to say that reforms in it should be such that it does not lead to the displacement of people working in the area. With this aim in mind, the organisation had helped to organise protests over the harassment of ragpickers by private companies. One of the results of the protests was that ragpickers were given aprons by the Delhi Government which ensured that workers were not harassed by the police.

With regard to the state of SWM in India Mr. Shashi Bhushan was of the opinion that it is dismal. The reason for this, he explained, was the way SWM was carried out by the municipal agencies. In the absence of door-to-door collection of wastes, urban residents were required to dump their wastes in the communal bins which were provided by the municipalities. Many people did put their waste into these bins, but since such bins were few in number and not located in all colonies, people found it more convenient to dump waste in the streets or drains. The waste in the bins which were un-segregated was collected by the municipal trucks and dumped into the landfill sites. Thus the lack of any significant efforts on the municipal bodies is one of the reasons for the bad state of SWM in the country. It is here that the ragpickers and *kabaadiwallahs* filled the gap – of segregation of wastes - and helped to reduce the amount of waste which went to the landfill site. However their role was never recognised by the state agencies. The state agencies felt that the only way to solve the problem of waste was to bring in private actors. The displacement of the informal sector in SWM entailed by such a move was not considered. This, according to Mr. Shashi Bhushan, goes to show that

Reforms are nothing but well thought out corruption plans- the policymakers are not interested in knowing what goes on the ground.²²⁸

The consequence of reforms being ill-informed leads to the failure of reforms. Giving the example of the setting up of waste-to energy plants in Timarpur – which eventually had to shut down because the wastes in India are more biodegradable in nature so they are not able to produce much energy as compared to the wastes in foreign countries which have a high calorific value – shows that reforms being brought about without any in-depth study are bound to fail. Reforms in SWM in India have been described by Mr. Shashi Bhushan as ‘knee-jerk reactions’, the MSW Rules being an example of such a reaction.

When asked about any measures for ragpickers, Mr. Bhushan averred that there has been no specific policy for them. There have been efforts to provide security to people who work in the unorganised sector by registering them to get benefits from the government. However, he calls it a “bogus policy”²²⁹ as the provision is for medi-claim and that too for people who fall in the below poverty line category. The measure is a mix of many previous policies like the Rajiv Gandhi scheme, LIC etc, so no particular attention to the needs of the ragpickers per se.

The reason given for the non-recognition of ragpickers in policy documents and in measures of SWM was, according to Mr. Bhushan, high levels of corruption. The private companies have strong links with the municipal authorities as well as policy makers, so they prevent any decision to be taken for ragpickers as it would mean a loss for them, and stall measures to include ragpickers in the formal system of SWM. Privatisation of SWM added an extra burden on ragpickers and junk dealers as well. Private companies get ragpickers to work for them and also terrorise *kabaadiwallahs* into handing over the recyclables materials collected by them, citing that the contract that they have entered into with municipal authority’s states that all waste is to be under their control. He goes on to say:

²²⁸ Interview with Mr. Shashi Bhushan of AIKMM on 2nd April 2010.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Privatisation has totally displaced ragpickers as they (private companies handling solid waste management activities) have total control over the wastes. The suggestion of the governmental agencies to incorporate ragpickers in to their fold has been completely disregarded as private companies believe in reducing the labour force and mechanisation of labour. In the long run the ill-effects of privatisation would affect the municipal workers as they would be gradually phased out. The sense of job insecurity is now increasing within the formal sector as well. There has been no change in the problem of waste as well so all in all privatisation of SWM has negative effects from all quarters.²³⁰

When asked about the viability of the rehabilitation of ragpickers, he had the following answer:

No, such a measure would only show that the government is not in touch with reality, as such a measure would make them (ragpickers) go jobless as it would be difficult for them to find alternative jobs due to the social stigma that is attached to them...such a move can lead them to take up illegal or criminal activities...so *iss tarah hamari sarkar he criminalization ko badhaava de rahi hai aur protect kar rahi hai.*²³¹ (So in this way it is our government itself which is giving an impetus to criminalization and is protecting it as well)²³²

When asked about the problems that ragpickers face Mr.Bhushan gave the following points:

- Double identity crisis- Since most ragpickers are illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Assam and the work that they do is also considered to be illegal, it becomes difficult for them to have an identity in society due to which they are seen as a menace to society making it easy for justifying harassment and torture towards them.
- Have no basic amenities- like water, shelter or food or access to health services.

Since the AIKMM is a Union which works towards giving a voice to the demands of ragpickers and *kabaadiwallahs*, when asked as to what might

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

enable ragpickers to make their demands known, the answer of Mr. Bhushan was that ragpickers due to their sheer size could become a big union but their voices are not popular in the urban scenario. Moreover, some NGOs (which he declined to name) work towards the cause of ragpickers have become very lax with the level of commitment going down. Some NGOs, according to him, had now become service providers and were utilising the services of the ragpickers to make money.

4.3.3 Ragpickers

In the third stage of the fieldwork the researcher conducted interviews with 40 ragpickers from an area called Karol Bagh which is one of the 12 zones which comes under the MCD. The interviews were conducted by the use of semi-structured questionnaires with a mix of open and close ended questions totalling to 32 questions in all. The main objectives of the interview were to find out about the following:

- Socio-economic profile of the ragpickers.
- The nature of the work that ragpickers perform and their relations with the various actors that they come into contact with.
- The opinion of the ragpickers on their own work and their demands.
- Assess the impact of reforms on ragpickers on the basis of the interviews.

The researcher had to conduct the interviews in the early morning hours at around 5 o'clock when the ragpickers would start their work or make their rounds or *pheeri*. The ragpickers were not confined to any one area however; they were mainly found at *dhalaos* and in *galli's* (streets). At the beginning of the survey the researcher could only find 4 ragpickers. However, as the days progressed, the numbers increased, with the main factor contributing to this change being the ragpickers themselves who gave the researcher directions as to where other members of their profession might be located. Almost all ragpickers were cooperative in answering questions, barring a few who had to

be convinced. It did not take the researcher more than 20 minutes to conduct a single interview but at times it increased when the ragpickers had extra information for the researcher. The questionnaire that was prepared for the ragpickers by the researcher was in English so the researcher had to be prepared to translate it into Hindi which was spoken by most ragpickers who were interviewed and for one ragpicker in Tamil.

Results of interviews with ragpickers

The informal sector which is involved in SWM comprises of various levels. The sector is labour intensive and comprises a chain constituted by recyclists (ragpickers), recyclable dealers (small, medium and large) and finally the recycler units at the top. It has a hierarchical structure, with increasing specialisation and decreasing numbers as we move upwards as shown in Figure 2.11.

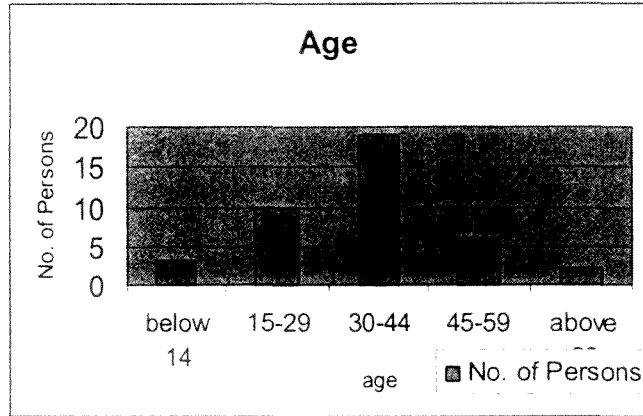
Figure 2.11: Waste Recycle Hierarchy in Delhi



Source: Agarwal et al (2005).

Ragpickers are the actors at the bottommost level in the informal sector engaged in SWM. They collect recyclable material from garbage which is generated from households, commercial establishments, etc and sell off the recyclable material to the junk dealer and earn a livelihood out of this job. In the study that was conducted the following were the results:

Figure 2.11: Age of ragpickers



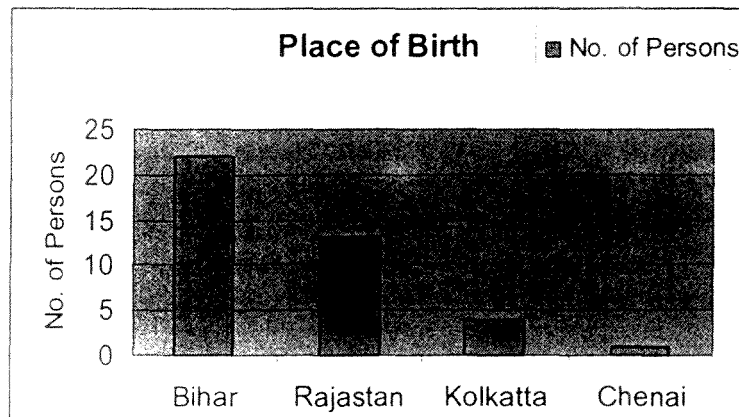
Sex, age, caste, religion and place of birth

In the study, it was observed that ragpickers consisted of men, women, children of all age groups. The percentage of men working as ragpickers was 75 percent and women stood at 25 percent. With regard to the age of the people engaged in ragpicking (refer to Fig 2.11), the study showed that people ranging from 80 years to children as young as 8 years were engaged in the profession. The reason why such young children were involved was that the parents had no choice. The parents who themselves were barely able to make ends meet were in no position to send their kids to school. The kids would first start out by accompanying their parents to work and gradually they would also be inducted into ragpicking. Although the researcher could not come across many children, she was told by *kabaadiwallahs* that it was mostly kids who were involved in ragpicking and that these kids were drug addicts and also described as petty thieves.

Out of the 40 ragpickers who were interviewed, only 13 respondents disclosed their caste stating that they belonged to a caste group called *nabad jati*, 8 respondents who belonged to the age group of 8 to 20 were not aware of their caste, 12 respondents did not answer the question and 7 respondents told the researcher that they belonged to the '*neech jati*' (low caste) and when they were asked to specify as to which low caste did they belong the ragpickers asked the researcher to write any low caste that the researcher was aware of. One ragpicker responded by saying that "*Jo kaam hum kar rahe hai usse aap*

andaza laga sakte hai ki hum neech jati ke hai...is gande kaam ko Brahmin thodi na karega?" (By looking at the work that we do you can figure out that we belong to a low caste...you do not expect a Brahmin to do this work do you?).

Figure 2.13: Place of birth of ragpickers



Out of the 40 ragpickers who were interviewed, 36 belonged to the Hindu community and only four ragpickers were Muslims. Most of the ragpickers had migrated to Delhi from four states in India, that is Bihar, Rajasthan, West Bengal (Kolkata) and Tamil Nadu (Chennai) (refer to Figure 2.13) . When asked about the profession they followed back home, 22 respondents said that they were engaged in agriculture and left their homes due to abject poverty. They had come to Delhi for better prospects. Even though their families in the village were involved in agriculture, which was considered to be a better job, they could hardly survive on that income. The profession of ragpicking was not something that they took up by choice but due to lack of any other alternative. “*Yeh kaam hum majboori mein kar rahe hai*”(we are engaged in this job due to lack of any other alternative) is what one ragpicker responded. The respondents who belonged to Rajasthan stated that they had come to Delhi as artisans making statues (‘moortis’) but eventually had to give up that job due to a low income and difficulty to survive.

Education, residence and income

None of the respondents were literate. When asked if they would like to learn how to read and write, they were not very enthusiastic about the idea; instead they preferred that their children be educated as they did not want them to continue in the profession. In the case of ragpickers who were below 15 years of age, when asked if they would like to study, some said yes and if given a chance would like to study further, whereas others did not want to pursue studies and felt it was a waste of their time. When asked as to why they thought that studying was a waste of time, their response was that if they studied, then how they would earn money to buy food.

In terms of residence, 26 ragpickers said they stayed in jhuggis or *dhalaos*, 13 said they slept on the street and 1 said he slept outside the shop of the *kabaadiwallah* for whom he works.

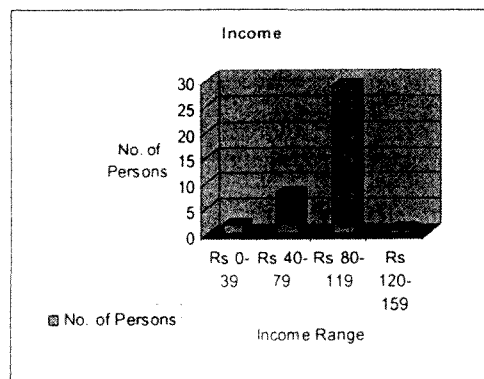


Figure 2.14: Income of ragpickers

In terms of income there was a wide disparity (refer Figure 2.14). Male ragpickers earned more than female ragpickers, the earning being even less if she was old. Children earned quite little, the highest earning being Rs.30 and some earned nothing. The maximum a ragpicker could earn was Rs. 100 per day. Since the earnings were so low and they had to send money to their families back home, it was difficult for ragpickers to get food on a daily basis. They also faced problems when it came to the issue of water for drinking, bathing and washing of clothes. The problem was more acute for those staying

on the streets, as they had to use the communal bathrooms provided by the MCD. The female ragpickers complained that it cost them a lot to take a bath, with the washing of clothes being even more expensive, as each item of clothing would cost them Rs. 30 to wash.²³³ The ragpickers living on the pavements had to move out before the shops opened in Karol Bagh, and had to find space elsewhere. The ones who had managed to make temporary shelters on the streets were under the constant threat of being evacuated by MCD officials in the event of which they had to run with their belongings into the *gallis*. Such a move at times became difficult due to opposition from the urban residents but over time residents have become more sensitised to the plight of the ragpickers and do not create a fuss when such incidents occur. All this goes to show that the life-condition of the ragpickers is highly vulnerable.

Working conditions of ragpickers

When asked as to how many years they have been involved in ragpicking, the response varied from 4 months to 40 years. The oldest ragpicker was a woman of 80 years who said that she has been working in this field for 40 years but had not seen much change in the working pattern or the social stigma that is attached to the work that a ragpicker does. Most ragpickers used a *bori* or a sack which they carry on their backs to collect wastes, whereas some have cycles and even tricycles.

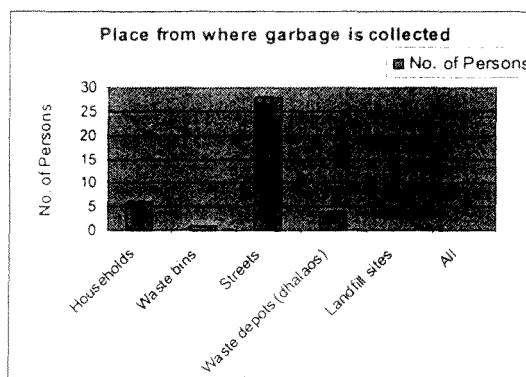
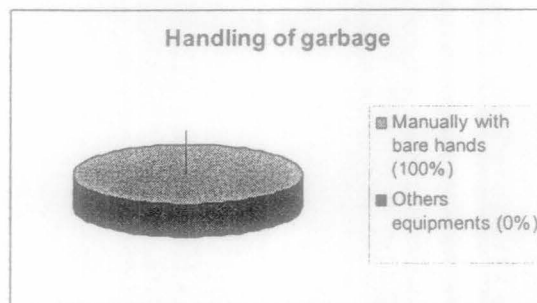


Figure 2.15

²³³ This amount could not be verified by the researcher.

The recyclable wastes were picked up by ragpickers from streets, *dhalaos*, and municipal waste bins (refer to Figure 2.15). Four ragpickers also said that besides getting waste from the above-mentioned sites, they also collected waste from households and hotels. The waste was handled by ragpickers with bare hands leading them to be prone to many diseases (Figure 2.16). However when asked about whether they had health problems as they handled wastes without any protective gear, surprisingly all respondents said they had never faced a health problem per se, all that they faced were cuts and bruises from glass shards and sharp metal objects in the garbage. Women complained of back ache and the difficulty of working in the sun and rain. This finding goes on to show that ragpickers are not aware of the health risks associated with their job.

Figure 2.16: Handling of garbage



All ragpickers worked on all seven days of the week, and on an average worked for 9 hours per day. The work of ragpickers starts quite early at around 4 am in the morning as that is the time when good recyclable material or '*malai ka maal*'²³⁴ is found after which it is swept off by the MCD waste workers. In terms of work done, some ragpickers were employed by MCD workers to only sort garbage called *koode ka chataai ka kaam*²³⁵ at the *dhalaos* where as there were also others who did collect garbage from hotels and households and later sorted the wastes to get recyclable material. Then again, there were some ragpickers who in addition to the work of ragpicking also cleaned the street sides for MCD *safai karamchaaris* to be allowed to sleep there.

²³⁴ Good recyclable material such as paper, cardboard, metal and plastic bottles and plastic covers.

²³⁵ The act of sorting garbage into recyclable and non-recyclable materials.

Relationship with the MCD, urban residents and *kabaadiwallahs*

Ragpickers while performing their work do come in to contact with a variety of actors, *kabaadiwallahs* being the first in line. The relationship with the *kabaadiwallah* is a complex one. On the one hand, the junk dealer is the one who buys the recyclable materials of the ragpicker, creating strong links between the two. During the interviews, 21 ragpickers claimed that the junk dealer was cooperative and did not pose any problems. 10 respondents said that the *kabaadiwallahs* were not cooperative and elaborated by saying that they were corrupt as they did not pay the right price for the recyclable material that they brought to the shop. Two respondents were of the view that the *kabaadiwallahs* were indifferent towards them, and the relationship was more business like with no personal attachment. However all respondents did have a relationship based on trust with the *kabaadiwallah*.

The second set of actors that the ragpickers had to deal with during their work was the MCD waste workers. Fifteen respondents were of the view that MCD waste workers were cooperative. When asked to elaborate the ragpickers said that they were employed by the MCD workers to segregate waste at the *dhalao* and were paid a small amount for doing so, in return the MCD waste workers who brought the waste to the *dhalao* gave them the right to stay inside the *dhalao* or in the premises around the *dhalao* by paying rent. During one of the interviews, the researcher was witness to a incident where a MCD waste worker who had dumped the waste in the *dhalao*, instead of segregating the waste, left the work to the ragpickers and left for his second job of working in a house. The ragpickers who did not have access to *dhalao* and gathered wastes from streets and municipal waste bins, were more vocal about the hostile attitude of the MCD personnel who harassed them to no avail and had to be bribed to let them do their work. One of the respondents said "*committee walon* (MCD waste workers) *ko thoda chai-pani de do toh pareshan nahi karte hume* (If you give the MCD waste workers some money in terms of tea, refreshments or money they do not trouble us)." When asked if the MCD had ever tried to contact them for any benefits for them the reply of all respondents was negative. One ragpicker said that the MCD officials would at times when they were not able to

pay a bribe would take the recyclables that they collect and dump it the *khatta* or *dhalao*. By the time the recyclable items were recovered by the ragpickers the items would have lost some of their value especially if they were made of cardboard or paper. The police also harassed them in a similar fashion at times. Especially targeted were small children who were physically assaulted and called thieves. It was observed by the researcher that the ragpickers who lived on the street were much more vocal about their discontent about the MCD than ones at *dhalao* who had a close proximity with MCD waste workers and were dependent on them for survival.(Refer to Figure 2.17).

The relationship between the ragpickers and the MCD workers is a rather complex one. The response of ragpickers show that the MCD waste workers were not doing their job of segregating waste delegating that work to the ragpickers. By such an arrangement the MCD workers were getting multiple benefits. Firstly, they were getting a regular income for work which was not even being completely done by them, that is the segregation of wastes, while the ragpickers had to pay MCD waste workers to be able to make a livelihood. Thus the MCD workers were getting double monetary benefits. Secondly since the MCD waste workers did not segregate waste they were not directly engaging with waste which could prove to be detrimental to their health whereas the ragpickers were manually handling waste putting their health at a big risk. Ragpickers were totally at the mercy of the MCD waste workers if they wanted to survive. Hence it can be concluded that the relationship between the ragpickers is an exploitative one because the MCD workers were exploiting the vulnerable situation in which ragpickers are.

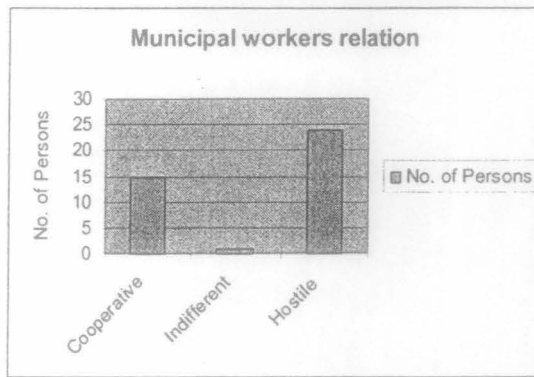
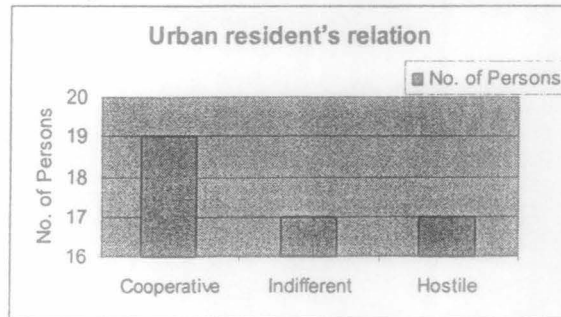


Figure 2.17: Attitude of Municipal waste workers

Figure 2.18: Attitude of urban residents



With regard to the attitude of urban residents towards ragpickers, the study showed that this was a mix of cooperation, indifference and hostility. 19 ragpickers stated that urban residents were cooperative towards their work and did not create any problems for them. The rest of the respondents said that the urban residents were indifferent as well as at times hostile towards the ragpickers. When asked to elaborate on any particular incidents of hostility, one ragpickers response was that they were not allowed to enter the colonies, and if they did manage to then they were beaten up by the security guards. Another point made by a ragpicker was that residential areas did not provide much recyclable materials so the amount of interaction with urban residents was quite low.

The effect of privatisation of SWM

When asked about what they felt about privatisation of wastes all respondents stated that they were not aware of it. When the researcher explained to the ragpickers that it is a process by which private companies would have total

control over wastes, they responded that if that was to happen then would lose their livelihoods. In the current situation they had to face many hurdles to gain access to waste, so if private actors were to come in then it would become impossible for them to work. During the study the researcher also came across a *dhalao* which was under the private company A G Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited. The people working inside the *dhalao* told the researcher that they were paid by the private company to segregate garbage but were not official employees of the private company. The reason why ragpickers in this area are not aware of privatisation of SWM services was due to two reasons:

- Unlike South Delhi where most of the NGOs working towards upliftment of ragpickers were operating, no such NGO existed in Karol Bagh helping ragpickers to become aware of the various changes which were brought about in SWM in the city.
- Since Karol Bagh is one of the major shopping areas of Delhi, the condition of ragpickers would not be the first on the agenda of the civic authorities; rather, catering to the needs to shopkeepers would be their first priority.
- Most of the residents in Karol Bagh were not aware of the plight of the ragpickers in the area due to no information. Since the researcher has herself lived in the area for well over 19 years, the absence of any information on the plight of the ragpickers can be vouched for.
- Another reason why ragpickers were not aware of the privatisation of wastes could be due to the fact that the private company which has been given the control of waste in Karol Bagh, A G Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited, was only involved in the collection of waste from the *dhalaos* and transporting it to the landfill sites, hence the total control of wastes did not apply in the area of study as a result of which ragpickers were not affected yet. However as section 4.3.4 would show the private companies even though presently allow ragpickers to have access to waste, but have no concrete plans to do so in the future which can jeopardize the condition of ragpickers.

Interaction with the state agencies

The only interaction that the ragpickers had with state agencies according to them was during elections when prospective candidates would come promising better conditions if they would vote for them. Even after these candidates won, the promises were hardly kept. One ragpicker narrated an incident when they were issued election IDs as promised but later were taken away from them by the MCD without giving any clear reasons. None of the ragpickers had come across any scheme for their betterment over the years. One ragpicker said that even if they were to avail of any scheme they could not do so due to lack of any proof of residence and absence of documents like an ID or a ration card. The only help they got was in the form of some school children who had come to teach their kids but this was of a temporary nature which lasted for only two months.

Demands on the government

The demands from the state varied with regard to the gender of the ragpicker and also age. A permanent job was the number one demand of both males and females in the age group of 18 and 45. When asked what kind of job would they like, the response of male ragpickers was a government job like that of the MCD *safai karamcharis*, whereas females wanted a job which would allow them to work from home like sewing or being employed as maids in households. The next demand was for provisions by which the children belonging to ragpickers could be well educated. Female ragpickers also wanted a house, drinking water and water for bathing and washing of clothes, toilet facilities, birth certificate and a ration card. When children were asked, some wanted to study whereas others wanted better food.

Reasons for lack of measures and demands

When asked as to why they thought that there have been no measures or insufficient attention being paid to their work and conditions, the general answer given by all respondents was poverty. Since they were poor nobody

would be bothered by their conditions. Moreover, the work that they do was dirty in nature so very few people would like to even interact with them. One ragpicker said “...*garib hai kaun sunega aur dekhega...ganda kaam karte hai gandagi mein rehte hai usi gandagi mein khaate hai kaun aana chahega humare paas aur sunana chahega humari takleef.*”(We are poor, who would listen to the poor or even bother with the poor...we do dirty work, live and eat in the filth that we work in, who would like to come to us and listen to our plight) Poverty was cited as yet another reason why they were not able to make demands, along with lack of education and absence of unity amongst ragpickers.

4.3.4 Private companies involved in SWM in Delhi

In the fourth stage of the study, the researcher conducted key informant interviews with two private companies -A G Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited and SPML- to whom SWM activities in some zones in Delhi were contracted out by the MCD. with both open and close ended questions. The interviews which lasted for 45 minutes with each private company had the following objectives:

- The view of the company on SWM.
- The kind of contract that they had entered into with the MCD and its duration.
- The general profile of the employees of the company who directly engaged with waste, their working conditions and benefits.
- SWM services provided by the company, the area they served, experience of working in Delhi and experience of coming into contact with other actors involved in SWM.
- View of the role of ragpickers in SWM and space for them in the company.

Both the companies were cooperative in terms of answering questions posed by the researcher, but were apprehensive about answering questions on financial matters and about the contract that they had entered into with the MCD. One of

the companies, though it agreed to meet the researcher for the interview, was very apprehensive before the interview started and wanted details about how the information would be used. Even after the researcher assured them that the information so collected is purely for academic purposes, the company did not seem to be convinced and in the process did want to skip some questions.

A G Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited²³⁶

The company deals purely with the aspect of SWM with many branches across India and abroad as well. All the companies come under the name of Anthony Waste Handling Private Limited. The company which operates in Delhi is known as A G Enviro Infra Projects Private Limited. The company began its operations in Delhi when the MCD decided to contract out SWM to private actors in six zones of Delhi. The company was given the control of two zones in Delhi that is the Karol Bagh Zone and Sadar Pahar Ganj. Mr. Rajesh Pujari the Project Manager heading the operations was interviewed by the researcher.

The MCD contracted out SWM to the company in 2005 for nine years and the contract which was entered into was of the BOT (Build Operate and Transfer) type. When asked to elaborate on the aspect of BOT the respondent did not wish to divulge further information. The general motto of the company is to handle waste using the best technology so that waste is disposed off in a scientific manner without harming the environment. When questioned about the main steps involved in SWM Mr. Rajesh Pujari stated that it involved the collection of waste from the source, transfer of this waste and lastly disposal of the waste in the landfill.

At the top of the waste management operations of the company in Delhi was the General Manager of Operations, then came the Side Officers, the next level comprised of the Fleet Manager, then came the Waste Storage Department, and at the bottom were the waste workers who were controlled by a contractor recruited by the company. The general profile of the workers who directly

²³⁶ For further information on the company visit www.anthony-waste.com/

engaged with waste was that all of them were males above the age of 18, mostly uneducated and did not consist of municipal workers or ragpickers. All employees of the company were provided with benefits such as enumerated in the Employees State Insurance Act.²³⁷ The wages paid to the waste workers was in accordance with the minimum wages with no specific number being revealed to the researcher.

After getting a contract from the MCD, the company got control over 80% of the *dhalao*s which were previously under the MCD in Karol Bagh. Everyday wastes are brought to the *dhalao* by the waste workers of the MCD and also by small mini-trucks of the company who collect waste from the various bins which have been placed by the company. This waste which is collected in the *dhalao* is then loaded into trucks by the waste workers of the company manually but using protective gear provided by the company like gloves, masks, boots and protective uniforms. After wastes have been loaded into closed trucks they are transferred to the landfill sites for final disposal. There are constant checks throughout the day by the MCD over the *dhalao*s. If the *dhalao* or bins have not been cleared then the company is fined.

Mr. Pujari was questioned about the company's experience in terms of working in Delhi and his responses were as follows:

- **Accessibility of the area they are serving-** This has been smooth because to get to congested areas in places Karol Bagh and Pahar Ganj they use small or mini trucks to collect wastes.
- **Attitude of residents-** This has been mixed for while some residents are cooperative, others have raised objections over the issue of placement of waste bins with people not wanting bins to be placed in the close vicinity of their homes. Even though the company has provided separate bins for bio-degradable and non- bio degradable waste people still dump

²³⁷ Employees State Insurance Act- aims “ to provide certain benefits to employees in case of sickness, maternity and employment injury and to make provision for certain other matters in relation there to.” For further information visit <http://esic.nic.in/>

waste in a mixed fashion and at times throwing the waste outside the bin.

- **MCD waste workers-** When the company first started its operations in Delhi there for two months was widespread protest against the company with threats to burn the vehicles being used by the company. However now the situation is under control as the MCD waste workers do not interfere in the work of the company.
- **Ragpickers-** The Company claims that it has not faced any problems from ragpickers as they are given access to waste, and this is borne out by the interviews conducted with the ragpickers themselves.

On the issue of ragpickers and their role in the system of SWM, the company official took the view that the work done by the ragpickers was beneficial and not a hindrance, as they are the ones who help in the segregation of wastes. He further added that at present there is no clause in the contract that they have entered into with the MCD which states that they have to recruit ragpickers into the company to carry out SWM activities, but the company does use the ragpickers to segregate waste at its various *dhalaos*. Ragpickers are not permanent employees of the company and hence do not enjoy benefits like the other waste workers of the company. They are only given access to the wastes, but do not get protective gear to do the job of segregation like the other employees of the company. When asked if the company would be open to the idea of recruiting ragpickers as permanent employees, the answer was there was no plans at present.

Delhi Waste Management Ltd

The second private company dealing with SWM in Delhi was SPML (Subhash Projects and Marketing Limited). Under the department dealing with environment, the company had undertaken a waste management project in Delhi called the Delhi Waste Management Ltd. The goal of the company is to evolve new technologies to handle waste. This was one of the companies which was contracted by the MCD in its drive to privatize SWM activities in the city.

The company was given charge of two zones in Delhi that is the South Zone and the Central Zone. Mr. Subodh K. Dhiman, the Deputy General Manager of the department of environment along with his superior who wished to remain anonymous, were interviewed by the researcher.

The MCD contracted out SWM services to the company in 2005 for 9 years under a contract which comes under the PPP (Public Private Partnership) model of contract. The goal of the company is to “evolve new technologies to handle waste.”²³⁸ When questioned on what are the main steps involved in SWM the response was transportation and segregation.

At the top of the waste management operations of this company in Delhi was the Project Manager followed by the CFO and people looking after the accounts of the company, and at the bottom level were the waste workers of the company. The general profile of the waste workers was that they were all males between 20-25 years of age mostly belonging to Delhi, having completed the matriculate level of education. The work of the waste workers was overseen by a Supervisor who was a male between 30-40 years of age and educated upto the high school level. The waste workers handled wastes manually using protective gear such as gloves; boots and uniforms (separate for summer and winter). All waste workers employed under the company were given benefits under ESIA and were also given Provident Fund.

The mode of operation was that the wastes were collected from the *dhalaos* and was transported to the landfill site by trucks. The selling of the recyclable material which was recovered from the wastes was not handled by the company. No further information was provided to the researcher on this aspect.

When questioned about their experience of carrying out SWM in Delhi, these were the responses:

- Accessibility of the areas being served- There was only the problem of traffic when the wastes were being transported.

²³⁸ Visit <http://www.spml.co.in/business/bootppp/environment.htm>.

- Attitude of the residents- The response of the residents has been positive with the people asking the company to place bins in their area. The RWA has also cooperated in the operations of the company. The company also has a system by which regular feedback is sought from residents through surveys, and the company also provides for a complaint cell to redress any problems faced by the residents.
- Municipal workers- There have been no interaction with municipal workers.
- Ragpickers- No interaction with ragpickers.

On the issue of ragpickers the response of the company was that they do play a significant role in the SWM . However they believe that these should be gradually phased out. They believed that there were powerful groups present who wanted ragpickers to exist as their absence would lead to big losses for them. The company believed that the problem of ragpickers was being blown out of proportion for the benefit of a few individuals and organisations in society who seemed to be working for the ragpickers, but in reality were working towards their own security. When asked if there was a clause in the contract that they entered with MCD suggesting that they should try to incorporate ragpickers into their fold the company declined to comment on the topic.

4.3.5 Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO)- Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) , Government of India (GoI)

In the fifth stage of the study, the researcher interviewed an official (who wished to remain anonymous) from the Ministry of Urban Development under the department called CPHEEO, which is a sub-organisation under the Department of Public Health and Environment (PHE). CPHEEO is the department which is responsible for formulating policies for SWM at the central level. It is the PHE which brings out the policy based on the inputs given by the CPHEEO. The interview was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire

with both open and close ended questions. The interview which lasted for an hour was conducted with the following objectives:

- To find out about the state of SWM in India.
- The role of ragpickers in SWM.
- Privatization of SWM and its effect on ragpickers.
- Measures taken by the MoUD for improving the conditions of ragpickers.

The MoUD is one of the prime bodies which handles the issue of SWM in the country. In 1998 the MoUD was one of the members of the committee formed by the Supreme Court of India to review the condition of SWM in Class I cities in India. In 1999, under the Supreme Court's directions, the MoUD setup a Technological and Advisory Group for reviewing SWM in India. Based on the draft MSW Rules, the MoUD came up with a manual on MSWM to provide guidance to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). The CPHEEO was one of the members coming from the side of the MoUD.

The initial part of the interview was an attempt to understand the view of the CPHEEO on the way wastes were viewed and what the state of SWM in India is. According to the official, waste was an item of no significant value but when it came to urban services the management of wastes was second in terms of priority, the first being the provision of clean drinking water. In terms of management of waste in India the steps were segregation, storage, collection, transport and finally disposal. The official stated that one of the main reasons for the bringing about change in the way waste was managed in the country was the outbreak of bubonic plague in Surat in 1994, and the filing of a PIL in 1996 directing the various departments to take immediate action to counter the dismal state of SWM in India. When asked about how waste management has fared in Indian cities with the advent of the MSW Rules, his response was that there was zero compliance. The reasons he offered for such a situation was lack of finances, expertise and institutional capacity building within the ULBs.

When questioned about the role of the ragpickers in the informal sector handling SWM, he responded that ragpickers formed an integral part of the system of SWM as it is due to their work that wastes are segregated, a function which is not performed by urban local bodies. However, despite the contribution that was being made by ragpickers to SWM they were not consulted when the MSW Rules were being drafted and were eventually absent when the rules came out. The reason for this, he stated, was that the people who drafted the Rules in the MOEF were doctors and scientists, and it is possible that their background inclines them to look at the technical aspect of the problem at hand also making them unable to grasp the social dimension of SWM in India, especially its being a livelihood issue. Another reason which could explain the absence of ragpickers from the Rules was that the MSW Rules were just rules and it is not possible to incorporate all dimensions in rules. He said this is the reason why the CPHEEO under the MoUD came up in May 2000 with a manual on MSWM to provide better guidance to the ULBs. According to him ragpickers and their role in SWM have been mentioned and directions have been given to the ULBs to utilise their services in the SWM services in their areas in the manual. However the ULBs did not integrate the ragpickers into the formal system of SWM. With the notification of MOEF in September 2000 of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000 making it mandatory for ULBs to improve the management of wastes according to the rules, the absence of ragpickers in the document made the prospect of ragpickers being included in municipal SWM services bleaker. It was at this time that the NGOs who had been working for ragpickers began to rally to give space to ragpickers. As a result of the struggle by the NGOs on 22nd March, 2010 the MoUD sent a letter to all State level governments to direct their ULBs “ to protect the rights of waste pickers to access, collect and sell recyclable scraps and to put it as a clause in all waste collection contracts.”²³⁹ The letter further stated that

Sustainable and integrated solid waste management requires the inclusion of the informal sector into the process of solid waste

²³⁹Letter No: D.O. No.Z-14013/3/3/2009-PHE.II dated March 22, 2010 sent by the MoUD to Chief Secretaries of All the States and/UT's. p. 2

management, keeping in mind the larger goals of an environmentally sustainable and decentralized waste management practice. It is imperative that the waste management plan of each urban/rural, semi-urban local body should incorporate an inclusive approach for the waste collectors who are engaged in the collection, transportation and conversion of waste into various products and depend on recycling of waste for their livelihood.²⁴⁰

When asked about privatization his answer was that he had no knowledge about the situation.

4.3.6 Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Karol Bagh Zone

Providing SWM services to urban residents is one of the obligatory functions of the MCD. The composition, structure and working of the MCD in terms of SWM have been outlined in section 4.2.2 of this chapter . The interview with the MCD official who wished to be anonymous was conducted by the researcher to get a general picture of the way wastes were handled by the MCD, the changes which have come about with privatization of SWM in general and the role of the ragpickers in the SWM chain and the relationship of the MCD with them.

The official stated that waste was an item of insignificant value. In terms of urban services, the management of waste was the lowest priority with the provision of clean drinking water being the first. The official was not ready to reveal how much the MCD spends on SWM, saying only that a significant amount is spent. With regard to SWM in Delhi, the general problem that MCD faced in every colony was the indifferent attitude of people when it came to waste management, with people throwing wastes on to the streets and not using the bins provided by the MCD. According to him the management of wastes have been better with the coming in of privatization of waste management. A G Enviro is the private company which has control over SWM in Karol Bagh having control over almost 85% of the *dhalaos* in Karol Bagh. The MCD believes that the problem of SWM can be resolved through the use of better

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 2

technology as opposed to integration of the formal and informal sector involved in SWM.

When asked about ragpickers the official responded that ragpickers do contribute in some measure to SWM in terms of segregation of wastes but not much. When asked if the MCD had ever tried to contact the ragpickers his answer was negative, the stated reason being that there was no need to do so, and so there have been no measures to incorporate ragpickers into the MCD. When asked as to why ragpickers were not included in the formal system of SWM, the official said he had no answer for this and that the researcher should talk to the policy makers about this question. As of now there are no directions, according to the official, for the MCD to incorporate ragpickers or any policy to deal with them. When questioned as to what can be done to improve the condition of ragpickers, the official responded that it would be better to rehabilitate them as they often turn out to be a nuisance and were involved in illegal activities such as stealing. Poverty was seen as reason why ragpickers did what they did. They should be made to take up an alternative profession but when asked about the viability of such a move he had said he had no idea about it.

4.4 Discussion of the results of the fieldwork

The results of the fieldwork undertaken by the researcher show that even though the Indian state has constantly striven to bring in reforms in SWM policies, there has been no evident impact on the lives of ragpickers in this case study of Delhi. Ragpickers continue to live and work in hazardous conditions with no affirmative measures on the part of the state to improve their lives. The main points which have emerged from the fieldwork conducted by the researcher are as follows:

- **SWM services and the ragpickers' lives-** During the interviews it was not clear if the state of SWM was better in the city due to clashing opinions of the actors who were interviewed. Except for one NGO, all others

believed that there has been some change in the management of wastes in the city. However this change was not due to the efforts of the MCD but had come about due to the efforts of the NGOs who were able to generate better understanding of the problem of mismanagement of wastes. However, when the official from the MOUD stated that measures to improve the state of SWM had failed due to lack of effort on the part of the municipal authorities then the claim of waste in the city having been managed well comes into question. There is reason to believe that wastes are still being mismanaged. This can be ascertained from an incident of radiation suffered by scrap dealers in Mayapuri in Delhi due to contact with a radioactive material called cobalt 60 while dealing with waste. (that occurred during the fieldwork of the researcher on 5th April 2010).²⁴¹ The incident once again puts a question mark on the state of SWM in the city. It can however be concluded that the issue of better management of waste has been now given considerable attention but the issue of ragpickers is still largely neglected. The fact that SWM activities in the city had improved at the cost of ragpickers was confirmed from the interviews conducted with the NGOs ragpickers and the MCD officials. Ragpickers in the city have continued to work in a hazardous environment with all those interviewed stating that they handled garbage with bare hands, with no effort from the MCD to improve their condition. Of the 40 ragpickers interviewed, 24 said that they have had a hostile relationship with the MCD and described how they have to bribe the MCD officials to carry on their work and also to ensure that they are not evicted from their make-shift homes. The precarious relationship between the MCD and the ragpickers in the city could also be seen in the response of the MCD official that the department had never tried to contact the ragpickers. Although the effect of privatisation of SWM on ragpickers does not seem negative when ragpickers were interviewed, as they still have access to waste, the response of the private companies to the issue of ragpickers does not seem promising. While one company does

²⁴¹ For further information refer to Payal Saxena , “Radiating Error,” *The Week*, June 12, 2010.

involve ragpickers in its activities to segregate waste, that is on purely temporary basis with no measure to make them permanent employees, the other company does not involve ragpickers at all in its activities and even stated that it has plans to innovate technology by which waste could be segregated without using any manual labour. The response of the private companies shows that if the possibility of employing ragpickers in their activities is very minimal at present, it would be even bleaker in the future. Thus the reforms brought about in SWM have only translated into sparse improvement in the management of waste and have not been able to bring about a change in the lives of the ragpickers as they are not included.

- **Dubious provisions-** During the study another pattern which could be observed was the lack of coordination between the various agencies which were involved in SWM which could be seen as one of the reasons ragpickers have not been involved in the formal process of SWM. The interview with the MoUD revealed that even though ragpickers have not been mentioned in the MSW Rules their role has been recognised in the Manual on MSWM which was to act as a guidebook for the municipal authorities. The MSW rules are to be enforced according to the needs of a particular municipality. However, this has not been the case in Delhi where there has only been an attempt to adhere to the Rules and no reference has been made to the Manual which gives enough 'space' to the municipalities to involve ragpickers in the formal system of SWM. Moreover, due to the pressure put by NGOs working for ragpickers, an effort has been made by the MoUD to send directions to all state authorities asking them to make sure that their municipalities take measures to incorporate ragpickers in the process of SWM. However, when the MCD in Delhi was questioned as to whether they had received any such circular, there was denial and it was also stated that the MCD has no policy for ragpickers so it cannot take any initiatives for this section without any orders from the centre. Two possible implications of this are: one, that there is a communication gap between the central authorities and the urban local bodies; or secondly, that there is a certain

laxity among the MCD officials to take relevant action for ragpickers. The relevant plans are being formulated for ragpickers at the centre but they there is a total lack of implementation of these plans.

- **Ragpickers working for the state but work not recognised-** In the present scenario of SWM in Delhi the act of segregation of waste is not being done by the MCD but by the ragpickers, though this work is performed gratis most of the time. During the interviews, it was found that if the ragpickers got access to waste at *dhalaos*, it was because they had been employed by the MCD waste workers to do so. In return for the work done by the ragpickers, they were at times paid by the MCD waste workers or ragpickers had to pay to get access to waste. The only job that the MCD waste workers were doing was of collecting wastes from the colonies and then dumping them at the dhalao which was also at times delegated by the MCD workers to the ragpickers. So it can be observed that even though the MCD does not recognise the work done by ragpickers, its workers are utilising the labour of ragpickers to do their work. Such a practice is also being followed by one of the private companies handling waste in Delhi. The company does incorporate the ragpickers into their fold but does utilise their services and takes credit for the work done. Hence what can be deduced from the situation is that though the role and work done by the ragpickers is not being recognised by the state or private companies, but both are utilising ragpickers for waste management activities. According to NGOs, the reason for this situation of 'utilisation of labour with no recognition' with local municipal waste workers is due to fear of disruption of status quo amongst the employees of the state who do not wish to part with the multiple benefits that they are now enjoying (that is they are being paid by the state, paid by the ragpickers to have access to waste, and have enough time to do moonlighting and be paid for that as well). The private companies do not highlight the fact that they utilise ragpickers because they do not want to show that it is a lucrative job. Another reason why private companies do not want to formally incorporate ragpickers in their fold is that it would mean higher labour costs for

them, which was highlighted by one of the private companies when it stated that it is trying to develop technologies by which waste can be segregated by using machines. So it can be concluded that even though the local municipal waste workers and private waste management companies utilise the services of the ragpickers, they make no attempts to formally recognise the work and role of the ragpickers due to certain vested interests which are better served only when ragpickers remain unrecognised.

- **Inability of ragpickers to voice their demands** – On the basis of the fieldwork conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that one of the reasons that ragpickers are not given space when reforms are introduced in SWM is because their voice is not so vibrant in the public arena which makes them almost invisible in society. Of the 40 ragpickers that the researcher interviewed, none were satisfied with the work but they had to continue in the profession due to lack of alternatives. However they could not make their grievances public, with poverty and low self-esteem being crippling factors. The NGOs which are working for ragpickers however have been able to bring forward their issues but the efforts have not been able to catch the imagination of the public and the media in a big way. The work done by the NGOs has had some effect but there seems to be no utilisation of their knowledge by the MCD. Another reason why ragpickers have not been able to raise their voices is due to the apathetic attitude of the urban residents. When ragpickers were asked about the attitude of the urban residents towards them and their work, they replied that it varied from being indifferent and hostile as ragpickers were seen as being dirty and thieves. The public perception of ragpickers is not very positive, which can result in little attention being paid to them when efforts by organisations like NGOs are made. Hence, due to all these factors, ragpickers voices lack popular appeal which can make them invisible when policies for SWM are formulated.

4.5 Conclusion

The study carried out by the researcher to assess the impact of SWM reforms on ragpickers shows that the municipal agencies in their effort to improve waste management activities in the city of Delhi have done so without taking into consideration the work done by the informal sector in SWM management. As a result of such action on the part of the municipality, or more specifically the MCD which was taken up for study by the researcher, ragpickers have seen no improvement in their lives even though they do the actual work of segregating waste for the MCD. The work of segregation of waste, though vital in the proper management of waste, has not been given relevant attention by the MCD. Instead, the privatisation of waste management is seen by the MCD as a more viable solution to solve the burgeoning problem of waste in Delhi. Such a step to reform the system of SWM in the city has now further marginalized ragpickers who had already been overlooked in the MSW Rules which prevented official recognition of their work and role in SWM. The study shows that reforms which were brought about to improve services has led to marginalization of an important but voiceless section of the population.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter concludes the research carried out by the researcher to assess the impact of reforms in the area of Solid Waste Management on ragpickers in the city of Delhi. By examining and analysing the manner in which these reforms have been initiated and implemented in India and specifically in Delhi, this study has sought to evaluate the place accorded to ragpickers in SWM policy. The main aim was to understand and explain why such minimal attention has been focussed on ragpickers when they are a central part of SWM. To this end, interviews were conducted with key actors in SWM, including the ragpickers, NGOs, a Union of waste recyclers, private companies handling SWM activities, and the local municipal authority dealing with SWM in Delhi. Apart from this, the researcher also undertook an extensive review of secondary data and published work on ragpickers, to help situate the problem in a wider framework. The following chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with general conclusions emerging from the study. The second section puts forward the researcher's policy recommendations.

5.2 Conclusions

This study was carried out to assess the impact of reforms in SWM, with the city of Delhi being the study area. The study showed that although the contribution made by ragpickers is acknowledged by all and ragpickers are not invisible, their interests have however been neglected when reforms are introduced in SWM. Recognition of their presence is made only in the form of lip service, as policy has shifted towards the privatization of SWM in the city, which is likely to bring about a further deterioration in the condition of ragpickers. The following are the general conclusions of the study:

5.2.1 High modernist approach

One of the prime conclusions which the study has been able to bring forward is that when reforms are solely informed by the 'high modernist' agenda, resultant consequences are quite harmful to certain sections in society. Reforms which are solely seen through the lens of rationality fail as they only take into consideration what is seen as being the appropriate and not what is actually needed. This argument is discussed by James Scott when he states

The danger of the high modernist state is that it sees too much. It engages in simplifications that have dangerous if often unintended effects for the citizenry. The high modernist state is distinguished not only by an administrative ordering of nature and society, or by an ideology that evinces a muscle bound faith in the virtues of reason, progress and industry; it is also defined by its hubristic ability to see a better future for all of 'the people'. It is in this weaving together of the sight in its temporal and spatial dimensions that announces the high modernist era, and which paves the way for interventions that are 'potentially lethal'.²⁴²

The danger of the high modernist state as expressed by Scott can be seen as the root cause for the failure of initiatives, interventions or reform by the state. When reforms are conceived exclusively within the rubric of high modernism, designed to lead to instant and 'visible' outcomes, it can have negative effects, as the formulation of the reform is informed by only a singular dimension. Such is the case of SWM in India. The various measures taken so far to reform the management of waste have been only guided by technological solutions and have tended to overlook the social dimension of SWM in India. The informal sector involved in SWM makes a significant contribution when it comes to waste management, by manually segregating waste. However, their role has been neglected and ragpickers remain the invisible bottom layer of the SWM pyramid. The absence of any study conducted by the governmental agencies on the role played by ragpickers makes it difficult for the governmental agencies to see the importance of the work done by this group. Another reason for the

²⁴²Stuart Corbridge et al, in *Seeing the State Governance and Governmentality in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 16

neglect of ragpickers would be that ragpickers do not have a very high social standing due to the nature of their work and are stigmatised by their identity, perceived as being filthy and dirty. The work done by them is seen as being temporary and illegal, far removed from the status of 'proper citizens', which serves to further entrench the belief that measures for them would prove to be futile. Such beliefs are also driven by the way policy makers are trained, due to which they have an inadequate appreciation of the sociological dimension. At times, as is well known, reforms are informed purely by their success in another country, without always understanding their ramifications or applicability in another area. This is evidenced in the case study carried out by the researcher in Delhi, in which measures to reform SWM in Delhi were overly guided by the desire to find technical solutions. For example, the move to bring in more waste to energy plants as a way to dispose off garbage may work in developed countries where waste has a high calorific value, but this is not the case in India. Hence, the amount of energy generated by the waste is not sufficient, and the cost to run an energy plant when the waste is dense is much greater. Thus waste to energy plants fail to generate the sufficient energy and they are also not able to justify the investment in them.

A second reason to suggest that the search for a solution to the better management of wastes has been driven by technological innovation, and oblivious to the need of studying indigenous conditions, is the decision of the Delhi government to privatize SWM. The move to privatize appears to have been brought about without fully comprehending the consequences of such an action. The move was made without any consultations with the various stakeholders who would be affected by such a move. Since participation by the ragpickers is not possible, the various NGOs which had been working in this field were also not consulted, showing that the government was looking for a quick solution to the problem of waste in the city, especially in the backdrop of the Commonwealth Games that the city is to host very shortly.

Another point to be noted here is that privatization has been chosen as the path without any in-depth study and this is made amply clear in the discrepancy between garbage collections in different parts of the city of Delhi. Though it is

claimed to be uniform for all areas in Delhi, this is a somewhat exaggerated claim, as the research found that it is not possible for garbage collection to be carried out in certain localities with the elaborate machinery which is used by the private companies, and as a result garbage is still thrown on streets in these areas.

The study also shows that the expectation that ragpickers would be eventually incorporated into the practices of private waste management companies has also been belied, as the two waste companies who were interviewed were not keen to recognize the contribution of the ragpickers. This shows that the trickle down effect, as expected by the municipal authorities in Delhi, is not materializing. Lack of commitment on the part of municipal agencies to pressure private companies to include ragpickers into their fold, and just resorting to advising the private companies to do so, lessens the chance of ragpickers to be involved in the work of private companies handling waste in Delhi.

It is clear that solutions to problems need to go beyond mere technological innovations. Just because a section is seen to contribute, but its contribution is not measurable or visible, does not mean that it can be overlooked. High modernism has emerged as one of the key points in the study. Solutions need to be more imaginative and are not to be dictated purely by technological definitions. The contribution of all the stakeholders needs to be considered, a high modernist approach can prevent that from happening.

5.2.2 Reforms in SWM and ragpickers

Though the role of the ragpickers in SWM is acknowledged by policy makers, the municipal authorities and private companies, they are not given any space when it comes to the formal system of SWM, despite the continued utilization of their services in the segregation of waste. Some of the reasons which can be delineated for such denial are as follows. Firstly, the denial of municipal waste workers and private companies that they are using the labour of ragpickers is indicative of their reluctance to reveal that they are not performing their duty fully. Secondly, ragpickers are generally viewed as being people who are

involved in anti-social activities such as stealing, so this can also act as a deterrent when it comes to admitting that their services are being utilized, as was seen when kabaadiwallahs vehemently denied conducting business with ragpickers. The private companies also recruit their services but would like them to be phased out and recruit their own people when it comes to sorting of garbage, or have machines do the same. These two factors can translate into non-recognition of their work because of which ragpickers who were interviewed stated that no action has been taken by the state authorities for them, nor has there been any effort by officials to determine their pathetic condition

5.2.3 Reasons for the present state of ragpickers

The urban residents have a complex relationship with ragpickers. One of the explanations for such a situation is due to the attitude of people towards waste; it is mostly guided by notions of culture. Waste is seen as something to be discarded and not an issue which requires much attention. This leads to apathy when it comes to waste and the people who are dealing with it. Or in other words since waste is to be discarded with and not to be given an after thought the same goes for people who engage with waste. This point is discussed by Emma Maldausky who writes about “the debate between the domestic space and ‘the outside’.”²⁴³ The debate brings forward people’s attitude of being indifferent towards all places which do not come under their domestic space. It is such an attitude which is reflected when it comes to waste. Since the ‘domestic space’ is considered to be important it is to be kept clean, but the outside space is of little importance so it becomes an area which can be polluted by way of throwing wastes. What happens outside the ‘domestic space’ is of little concern.

It is this apathy which is also reflected in the intense efforts by urban residents to demand better waste management without any attention being paid to people such as the ragpickers who form an important part of the waste hierarchy. This

²⁴³Emma Mawdsley, “India’s Middle Classes and the Environment,” *Development and Change* 35(1) (2004), p. 89

also points towards a growing tendency of “bourgeois environmentalism”²⁴⁴ which encourages the urban residents to take up issues but only those issues which are seen as being ‘appropriate’. Ragpickers do not fall in the category of people who could be described as ‘proper’ citizens, which makes taking up their cause not so attractive. It is this “bourgeois environmentalism where middle and upper classes push their concern with visual beauty, entertainment, cleanliness and safety in an organised way to shape a metropolitan space of their own vision, while the urban poor are unable to articulate their own agenda for the city.”²⁴⁵

Thus inability of the ragpickers to raise their own voice is not rectified by the ability of the urban residents to do so and bring attention to the plight of the ragpickers who have been made worse off when reforms formally de-recognise their work to accommodate the interests of the urban middle classes. Thus the civic apathy towards ragpickers, coupled with cultural notions and a lack of awareness about the work that they do, leads to the issue having no popular appeal. It cannot accomplish what a vibrant civil society could do.

5.2.4 Suggestions for change ill-informed

During the course of the study many suggestions were given by various actors to improve the condition of ragpickers. On the issue of the rectification of the condition of ragpickers, the suggestions given by NGOs seem to be much more in tune with the current situation of ragpickers, than the suggestions made by formal governmental agencies. The solution which was suggested by the latter was the phasing out of ragpickers. However when it comes to the feasibility of this solution it does not hold much merit because, as suggested by NGOs it would not lead to new jobs because, due to the kind of work they did before, it would be difficult for them to find a job. This was also reinforced by the interviews with ragpickers when all respondents stated that though they were

²⁴⁴Kaveri Gill, “ Bourgeois Environmentalism, the State the Judiciary, and the Urban Poor: The Political Mobilization of a Scheduled Market,” in *Of Poverty and Plastic Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs In India’s Urban Informal Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 191

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

not satisfied with their job but did not want to move away from the job completely, and had made no attempt to do so as it provide them with a livelihood, even if in all the years they had worked they had seen no progress for ragpickers. This point is also made by Medina when he states “scavenging in developing countries is caused by chronic poverty, high unemployment, industrial demand for recyclables, and by the lack of a safety net for the poor. None of these factors is likely to disappear in the foreseeable future and scavenging is likely to continue to exist.”²⁴⁶

Chronic poverty clearly stands in the way of phasing out ragpickers. If they have chosen this profession due to poverty, it is not entirely possible to phase it out so long as poverty persists, and the low investment and low skills which make this profession acceptable to people who are poor. The same is pointed out by Medina when he observes that:

Efforts to eliminate scavenging and to encourage scavengers to engage in other occupations usually fail. Authorities often ignore scavengers' opinions. Studies have found that when scavenging is tolerated or supported, scavengers can earn higher incomes than unskilled, formal sector workers ... Furthermore, an important percentage of scavengers would be unable to find a job in the formal sector, due to their low educational level, their young or advanced age –many children and older individuals survive by scavenging– and to the difficulty for mothers to perform a paid activity while taking care of their children. Consequently, scavengers may be reluctant to adopt changes that affect their income, working and living conditions. Even if some scavengers get a formal sector job or another occupation, other poor individuals are likely to replace them, given the widespread poverty and unemployment prevalent in developing countries.²⁴⁷

The example of Bogotá, Colombia can be given to show the consequences of banning of ragpickers. When scavenging was prohibited in Bogotá the scavengers were forced to rummage through wastes on the street. Street scavenging was not an easy task as the scavengers had to walk a lot which lowered their ability to collect recyclable materials leading to a lower income as compared to their earlier situation when they worked at the landfill. The ban which was seen as an “advance and success by some” had a serious negative

²⁴⁶ Martin Medina, “Scavenger Cooperatives in Asia and Latin America,” *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, Vol 31, No 1, (December 2000), p. 21

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 21- 22

impact on scavengers' income and standard of living. Similar experiences have been observed in other Asian and Latin American cities.”²⁴⁸

The example of Bogotá goes to show that formal governmental agencies are not in tune with the problems associated with ragpickers as they are not aware of the problems that they face, and their mere inclusion in formal private agencies is not only difficult, but also would not have the desired effects of providing them with better living conditions.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

The success of reforms can be guaranteed when they are based on a holistic understanding of the problem at hand. Lack of this can severely affect the shelf life of a reform and can also result in severe negative consequences for certain groups in society who are not made a part of the ambit of the reforms. Based on the study conducted, the following recommendations are suggested for improving the condition of ragpickers.

5.3.1 Solutions should be well- informed

An intensive study must be carried out to find out about the living and working conditions of ragpickers before formulating policies for them; this is a necessary precondition for solutions that can materialize into better condition for ragpickers. Such a study would enable policy-makers to assess the magnitude of the problem and also help in identifying the vulnerable sections involved in this profession such as young children, and help to bring in specific measures for their betterment. Efforts should be made to get a better understanding of the problems faced by ragpickers by interacting with NGOs who have been working for the upliftment of ragpickers. Solutions should to a great extent be able to predict the kind of reaction that would come about, as that would help in making modifications to policies for the betterment of ragpickers before the actual policy is put into action which would ensure a higher success rate.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 22

5.3.2 Organise ragpickers

Ragpickers with the help of NGOs should form cooperatives which would help them to organise and build a platform to make their demands. Cooperatives would also help ragpickers to get a better sense of how to manage their finances by helping them to get access to banks. Cooperatives can also help ragpickers to have better access to health care facilities and also to generate awareness about the hazardous conditions within which they perform their work. All in all, it would help to seek out ways to carry out their work in a much more organised and safe manner. The use of ragpickers should be confined to the collection of garbage from door to door, its segregation, and the bringing of it to the dumpsite which would not only be able to serve more sections of the population but also reach areas which are difficult to access. This would enable not only better management of waste but also a better standard of living for ragpickers as it would provide them with a permanent job and also help them to earn a regular income. The proper segregation of waste would also mean less pressure on the already overfilled landfills which would also lead to less land being needed to dispose waste. Since the recyclable material is removed from waste it would be more organic in nature which can mean that the waste could be used for composting

5.3.3 Greater involvement of NGOs

More NGOs need to be involved in the whole process of waste management and work on the conditions of the ragpickers. However, it is important to ensure that the NGOs do not become service providers and utilise the work of ragpickers for their own benefit, as was observed by the researcher during the study.

5.3.4 Sensitive bureaucracy

It is the bureaucracy in many developing countries which makes crucial decisions for citizens, hence if the bureaucracy is more committed to a certain issue, then it would become easier to solve problems. If the bureaucracy is more

involved in the process of SWM, it can lead to a better life for ragpickers. If a full study is conducted with the help of various NGOs and their experiences with ragpickers, it would prove to be beneficial. In its absence, the bureaucracy may not be able to access such information. Another point which needs to be made here is that the bureaucracy should be more involved at the stage of implementation so that the dictates given by it are properly carried out and are not left to the local authorities alone.

5.3.5 Responsible municipal authorities

The study has brought forward the issue of gross negligence by the municipal authorities when it comes to SWM and the ill-treatment of ragpickers. The municipal authorities should conduct regular spot checks to ensure that their workers are not using the labour of ragpickers and then taking credit for it. If they were to do field visits, they would get a better picture of how municipal waste workers are delegating their work to ragpickers and themselves getting paid for it. If such a study is carried out, it would be beneficial as it would lead to a better understanding that ragpickers can be useful and not a nuisance as is generally perceived.

5.3.6 Awareness generation

There is a need to generate awareness about the work done by ragpickers and to dispel the general notion of this group so that they are not harassed or beaten up. Awareness needs to be generated about the plight of ragpickers, as also about the issue of better management of waste. This can lead to a better outlook when it comes to waste, which in turn can also translate into a better outlook for the people who handle waste such as ragpickers. Such activities are to be entrusted to NGOs. Such an activity would also lead to the building of trust between the ragpickers and the urban resident.

5.3.7 Re-assessment of privatization of SWM

The failure of municipal authorities to handle the problem of waste effectively has led many cities in India to resort to measures to privatize SWM activities, Delhi is one such city. The move to privatize waste collection can be seen as a knee jerk solution especially in the context of the looming Commonwealth Games. However there has been no in-depth study in this regard to assess the success rate of the measure. Privatization has affected or will affect the livelihood of ragpickers in the near future as the companies do not allow ragpickers to access waste and have no immediate plans to accommodate them in their fold. The full effect of privatization has not been felt as yet, because private companies are to a large extent only concerned with the collection of waste from dhalaos and not involved in the collection of wastes or the sweeping of streets. However, when this materializes, it would not only have a negative impact on the ragpickers but also affect the municipal waste workers as well. Hence it is imperative that the municipal authorities before contracting out SWM activities, make sure that they put in clauses in the contracts which would ensure the involvement of ragpickers and not just restrict themselves to giving mere advice to private companies to involve ragpickers in their work.

Thus, it can be concluded from the study that there needs to be a holistic understanding of the concept of ragpicking. There needs to be a better understanding of the conditions under which people take up ragpicking. This would show that it would be very difficult to phase out ragpicking as it is a survival strategy of the poorest sections and cannot easily be dismissed. A careful assessment of ragpicking would show that the activity is environmentally and socially useful. However, the contribution made by this section is often overlooked when it comes to policies for SWM. Measures to improve the condition of ragpickers get stuck due to cultural reasons, a lack of commitment on the part of planners and municipal authorities, and non-involvement by the urban residents. Hence, changing the lens with which ragpickers are viewed would help various sections of society to understand that ragpickers are not obstacles when it comes to the management of waste but can be part of a viable solution.

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APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for ragpickers

1. Name
2. Sex (a) Male (b) Female
3. Age
4. Caste
5. Religion
6. Place of Birth
7. For how many years have you lived in Delhi?
8. Where did you live before you started to live in Delhi?
9. Household Composition

S.no	Name	Occupation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		

10. Residence (a) Rented (b) Own
11. Education (a) Read (b) Write (c) Count (d) None
12. How long have you been involved in waste picking? : Years
Months
13. How many days in a week do you work?
14. How many hours did you work yesterday?
15. What kind of activity do you perform?

- (a) Collection of garbage (b) Sorting garbage to recover materials to sell
(c) Both (d) Others

16. Where do you generally go to collect garbage?

- (a) Households (b) Waste bins (c) Streets (d) Waste depot (Dhalaos)
(e) Landfill sites (f) All

17. How do you handle garbage?

- (a) Manually, with bare hands (b) If other equipments specify

18. Do you have health problems as a result of the work that you do?

- (a) No (b) Yes, specify what kind
(i) Skin infections (ii) Respiratory (iii) Gastro-intestinal
(iv) Bites (dogs, rats, insects) (v) Cuts and bruises (vi) others

20. How much do you earn in a day? Rs.

21. What is the attitude of the municipal waste workers with regard to your work?

- (a) Cooperative (b) Indifferent (c) Hostile

22. What is the attitude of urban residents with regard to your work?

- (a) Cooperative (b) Indifferent (c) Hostile

23. How do the waste buyers treat you?

- (a) Cooperative (b) Indifferent (c) Others

24. Has the MCD ever tried to contact you?

- (a) No
(b) If Yes in which situation

25. What is your opinion on the involvement of private actors in SWM ?

26. Have you ever come across a government scheme for your benefit?

(a) No (b) Yes specify

27. Has enough attention been paid by the government to you and your line of work?

(a) Yes

(b) If No state reason

28. Are you satisfied with the work that you do? (a) Yes (b) No

29. If given a choice would it be possible for you to find another line of work?

(a) Yes (b) If No state reason

30. What are your demands from the government for your future?

(a) Recognition of work (b) Job Security (c) Better Work

Conditions

(d) Others

31. Have you been able to make your demands know?

(a) Yes (b) No, what prevents you

(i) Economic conditions (ii) Social image in society (iii)

Education

(iv) Lack of Awareness (v) Fear of losing current job

32. In your opinion what prevents active measures by the government for you?

APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for policy makers

1. Name
2. Designation
3. What is waste to you
 - (a) Item of no significant value
 - (b) Item if handled carefully can generate certain value
 - (c) Provide livelihood
4. Rank these urban services in order of priority?
 - (a) Housing ()
 - (b) Electricity ()
 - (c) Water ()
 - (d) Solid Waste Management ()
5. What are the main steps which are involved in the management of wastes in India?
 - (a) Collection
 - (b) Storage
 - (c) Segregation
 - (d) Transport
 - (e) Disposal
6. Who are the main actors involved in Solid Waste Management in India?
 - (f) Municipal waste workers
 - (g) Informal waste workers such as ragpickers
7. What is the contribution made by ragpickers to Solid Waste Management in India?
 - (h) Significant contribution
 - (i) Paltry
 - (j) No significance
8. How would you see the work done by ragpickers?
 - (a) Illegal
 - (b) Hazardous
 - (c) Nuisance
 - (d) Leads to proper segregation of wastes
9. What is the main driving force behind changes in Solid Waste Management?
 - (a) Internal crisis
 - (b) International Agencies
 - (c) Development/Modernisation
 - (d) Being Update with the latest

10. The problem of Solid Waste Management can be best resolved through
 - (a) New Technology
 - (b) Incorporating the services of both the formal and informal sectors in SWM
11. In formulating the Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000, was the informal sector in Solid Waste Management consulted?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) If No state reason
12. What is the reason for the absence of ragpickers in the MSW Rules?
13. Have there been any attempts to employ ragpickers into the Municipal Services?
 - (a) Yes . State measures taken
 - (b) No . State reason
14. Is it possible to re-habilitate ragpickers? How far is this viable?
15. What is the reason which leads ragpickers to take up the occupation that they do?
16. In terms of waste management in Indian cities what has been the result of the coming in of the MSW Rules?
 - (a) Better management of wastes
 - (b) Medium improvement
 - (c) No change
 - (d) Worsened
17. What has been the motive to privatize Solid Waste Management in Indian cities?
18. What are the demerits of privatization of Solid Waste Management?
19. What is the effect of privatization on the work done by ragpickers?
20. Are there measures to incorporate ragpickers and monitor their condition into the private agencies involved in Solid Waste Management?
21. What would deter private agencies from incorporating ragpickers into their fold?
22. What prevents the consideration of ragpickers when it comes to issues of Solid Waste Management?
23. What can be done to improve the condition of ragpickers?

**APPENDIX III: Questionnaire for Non-Governmental Organisations
(NGOs)**

1. Name of the NGO
2. Designation
3. What is the main aim of your NGO?
4. Area of solid waste management that your organisation is involved in
5. Do you work towards improving how wastes are handled (process) **OR** do you work towards improving the life of people involved at the grassroot level?
6. Contributions made by your organisation (in the past) in the area of Solid Waste Management
7. According to you what constitutes Solid Waste Management?
8. How is Solid Waste Management carried out in India?
9. What is the state of Solid Waste Management in India?
10. What is your opinion on the measures adopted by the Government of India with regard to Solid Waste Management?
11. What is the driving force behind SWM reforms?
12. How far has SWM reforms been successful?
13. Has the Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000 brought about any significant change in the way wastes are managed in India?
14. What is the main lacuna that exists when it comes to Solid Waste Management in India?
15. What is role of the informal sector in Solid Waste Management?
16. What is the significance of the role played by the ragpickers in SWM in India?
17. What are the problems that ragpickers face in their work?
18. What is the reason ragpickers do the job that they do?

19. Have you ever come across any measure on the part of the Indian Government to improve the condition of ragpickers? State reason for your answer.
20. Prior to the coming up of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2000 what was the position of ragpickers?
21. What prevents the recognition of the contribution made by ragpickers to SWM in the MSW Rules?
22. Is rehabilitation of ragpickers a viable solution to providing them with a better life?
23. What prevents ragpickers from being inducted into municipal services?
24. What is the attitude of the urban citizens towards ragpickers?
25. What is opinion on the privatization of SWM? What are the merits and demerits?
26. What has been the impact of privatization of SWM on ragpickers in Delhi?
27. Are there any methods to incorporate ragpickers by private actors engaged in SWM? If yes has it led to better conditions for them? If no what prevents it?
28. What prevents the policymakers to include ragpickers when it comes to making policies on SWM?
29. What prevents the ragpickers from making their demands known?
30. What measures should be adopted by the Government to improve the condition of rag-pickers?

APPENDIX IV: Questionnaire for Private Actors in SWM in Delhi

1. Name of the Organisation
2. Name
3. Designation
4. What are the steps involved in Solid Waste Management (SWM)?
5. When did the MCD contract out SWM to the company?
6. What kind of a contract was it?
7. What is the duration of the contract?
8. What are the various job profiles (of waste workers) recruited by your firm **OR** what are the functions performed by the waste worker employed by your firm?
9. What is the average wage paid to above workers (by category if any)?

S.No.	Category (Work Profile)	Wage (monthly) Rs.

10. Which are the areas in Delhi where you operate?
11. Describe the general profile of your waste workers:
 - (a) Age
 - (b) Gender
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Delhi/Non-Delhi
 - (e) Caste
 - (f) Privately recruited
 - (g) Municipal workers
 - (h) Former rag-pickers

10. Which step in SWM do you perform in the areas that you operate in Delhi
 - (i) Door-to-door collection of wastes

- (j) Storage of waste
- (k) Transport of waste
- (l) Treatment of waste
- (m) Disposal of waste

12. How do your employees handle waste
(a) Manually with bare hands (b) Use protective gear (c) Others.
Specify

11. What has been your experience of handling SWM while operating in Delhi:
a. Accessibility of the area
b. Attitude of the residents
c. Municipal workers
d. Ragpickers

12. The work done by ragpickers does is it beneficial to SWM?

13. Do ragpickers help in better management of wastes for you or do they act as a hindrance?

14. Does the contract that you have entered into with the MCD state that you have to incorporate ragpickers into your fold? If yes then elaborate if no explain why there is an absence

15. Are there any provisions in the contract that you have entered with the MCD that makes it mandatory for you to employ ragpickers?

(a) Yes (b) No

15. Would you like to employ ragpickers? Give reasons for your answer.

16. Do you think ragpickers would like to work with you? Give reasons for your answer.

**APPENDIX V: Questionnaire for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi
(MCD)**

6. Name
7. Designation
8. What is waste to you
 - (a) Item of no significant value
 - (b) Item if handled carefully can generate certain value
 - (c) Provide livelihood
9. Rank these urban services in order of priority?
 - (a) Housing ()
 - (b) Electricity ()
 - (c) Water ()
 - (d) Solid Waste Management ()
10. How much of the MCD's funds go towards SWM activities in Delhi?
11. What are the problems that the MCD faces with regard to SWM in Delhi?
12. What are the main steps which are involved in the management of wastes in Delhi?
 - (a) Collection
 - (b) Storage
 - (c) Segregation
 - (d) Transport.
 - (e) Disposal
13. Besides the MCD waste workers what is the role of the informal sector in SWM in Delhi?
9. What is the contribution made by ragpickers to SWM? State reason for answer.
 - (a) Significant contribution
 - (b) Paltry
 - (c) No significance
10. How would you see the work done by ragpickers?
 - a. Illegal

- b. Hazardous
- c. Nuisance
- d. Leads to proper segregation of wastes

11. What is the main driving force behind changes in Solid Waste Management in Delhi?
- a. Internal crisis
 - b. International Agencies
 - c. Development/Modernisation
 - d. Being Update with the latest
 - e. All of the above
 - f. Others
12. The problem of Solid Waste Management can be better resolved through
- a. New Technology
 - b. Incorporating the services of both the formal and informal sectors in SWM
13. What do you think is the reason for the absence of ragpickers in the MSW Rules?
14. Has the MCD ever tried to contact ragpickers when it came to bringing in changes to SWM activities in Delhi. Give reason for answer.
15. Have there been any attempts to employ ragpickers into the MCD?
- a. Yes . State measures taken
 - b. No . State reason
16. Is it possible to re-habilitate ragpickers? How far is this viable?
17. What is the reason which leads ragpickers to take up the occupation that they do?
18. In terms of waste management in Delhi what has been the result of the coming in of the MSW Rules? Give reason for your answer.
- a. Better management of wastes
 - b. Medium improvement
 - c. No change
 - d. Worsened
19. What led to privatization of Solid Waste Management in Delhi?

20. Which are the companies who are involved with SWM? What is the nature of the contract entered into and the duration of the contract?

21. What are the merits and demerits of privatization of Solid Waste Management?

20. How many areas in Delhi have been privatized and which waste management activities have been privatized? How far has it been successful?

21. What is the effect of privatization on the work done by ragpickers?

22. Are there measures to incorporate ragpickers and monitor their condition into the private agencies involved in Solid Waste Management?

23. What would deter private agencies from incorporating ragpickers into their fold?

24. What prevents the consideration of ragpickers when it comes to SWM?

23. What can be done to improve the condition of ragpickers?

xxx