

# JAHAN-E-KABADI

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## The world of the waste recyclers

Jahan-e-Kabari is a platform for sharing ideas and news about the informal recycling sector, on issues that impact informal waste recyclers- wastepickers, pheriwallas, thia walas, kabaris. Despite the crucial services they perform in terms of segregating and recycling waste, their work remains unrecognised or poorly recognized almost everywhere globally. This newsletter will knit ideas together to share with both the sector and the larger world of practitioners and interested persons and organizations.



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*Jahan-E-Kabari* means the world of the waste recycler, in Urdu. Urdu is a heady mixture of several languages with Persian, Turkish, and Arabic influences. It developed in South Asia during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire (1200-1800 AD). We've chosen an Urdu title because it's own diverse origins remind us that it's possible to create a common voice and language replete with the richness of many partnerships

# Waste Rules

There are many reasons why waste recyclers find themselves marginalized in global cities. One is that they are not legally recognized as legitimate service providers. In India, we totally lack the imagination to integrate indigenous private service providers with the needs of our expanding cities and simultaneously addressing poverty. At least, that is what policy making has historically done. Now's a chance to wipe the slate clean and work with new opportunities.

The Municipal Solid Waste (Handling and Management) Rules 2000, are up for revision. When they were formed, they acknowledged recycling and mandated it. Given that the informal recycling sector in India provides most of the recycling services, not explicitly including them by name appeared to imply tacit inclusion.

Seven years later, we are all wiser. We realize that the sector must be clearly named if it is to flourish. Moreover, there is a policy foundation now. The National Environment Policy 2006 has also stressed in its 'Action Plan' to counter soil pollution that the informal sector systems of collection and recycling must be given legal recognition and their access to institutional finance and relevant technologies enhanced.

Meanwhile, there's a crisis brewing. All over the country, there is a space

crunch for landfills, which increased by 20,000 % from 1947 to 1997. Urbanization is making land more expensive and communities are disputing waste being dumped near their homes. In Chennai recently, a public hearing with both wastepickers and residents, (both living on the perimeters of Chennai's waste dump), showed how explosive the garbage wars have become. There is an urgent need to reduce waste. One way is to

their work is one way - by no means the only one - to use both land and resources optimally.

Having rules that clearly acknowledge and promote the work of the sector is a first step to safeguarding an intelligent waste management system that works.

Performance standards that safeguard worker safety come next. Waste

shops. Preceding this was a policy that encouraged junk shop and declared them legal in some sites.

It's important to push for the first step, if only to build upon. We need the new rules to include the poor, not merely crave their labour.

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recycle what can be recycled. In most countries, this is impossible without the cooperation of the generators. In India, households scarcely bother with segregation. It's the waste recyclers who do that. By diverting from landfills, they are adding to the list of their services to urban India. Augmenting

recyclers will have to participate in setting standards they can follow and everyone must help develop monitoring and capacity building mechanisms. There is a lesson for us all here from the Philippines, where the local government in Quezon City is working to develop these standards for junk

Although Chintan takes the responsibility to bring out this newsletter, we can only do so with your diverse inputs. Please write to us at Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group 238, Siddharth Enclave, New Delhi 110 0 14 or email us at: [bharati@chintan-india.org](mailto:bharati@chintan-india.org)

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