Clean City, Decent Work
An inclusive and innovative solution for managing waste
Self Employed Women’s Association, Bharat (Sewa Bharat), Katihar Town, Bihar
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Waste management is a critical issue in India especially in rapidly expanding towns and cities where existing infrastructure and systems for dealing with waste are non-existent or inadequate. Faced with rapid population growth, poor governance, a lack of public awareness and limited funds, cities are struggling to find a way to responsibly manage ever increasing amounts of waste.

Waste dumped in streets, on common ground and in drains is a common sight, particularly with the increased use of plastic. In many towns, waste from households, industries and public offices, is causing pollution which is leading to health and environmental problems. The build up of waste is destroying communal spaces and intensifying other problems such as inadequate drainage and sanitation systems.

Although not viewed as a critical development issue like food or health - living in a squalid, polluted and dirty environment is dangerous and lowers people’s quality of life. As citizens and communities become overwhelmed with vast quantities of waste, rather than try and resolve the problem the tendency has been to ignore it. The majority of citizens pay taxes to municipal corporations - this reinforces a culture where individuals do not feel an obligation to take responsibility for the waste they generate.

Each municipality is responsible for organising waste management in the areas of: waste segregation and storage at source, primary collection, street sweeping, secondary waste storage, transport of waste, treatment and recycling options for solid waste and final disposal. At each stage in the majority of municipalities there are major problems, oversights and inefficiencies.

Issues of urban poverty are inextricably linked with waste. In India over a million people find livelihood opportunities in the area of waste as these jobs require minimum investment from workers. Popularly known as ragpickers they are engaged in waste collection, sorting, recycling and composting through well-organised systems.
According to a recent report from the Indian Supreme Court most cities spend 70-75% of their waste management budget on street sweeping, 25-30% on collection processes and 0-5% on disposal. This illustrates the lack of investment and long term planning in relation to waste treatment and disposal.

Investment and policy response in this area has been slow, patchy and inadequate. The majority of government waste management schemes that have been implemented have been unsuccessful and many any schemes have collapsed because municipal corporations have not been able to cover the costs. Furthermore municipal corporations have developed a tendering process that favours public private partnerships and excludes existing waste collectors groups and co-operatives from the process. As a result the majority schemes have not benefited the local area and have lacked any environmental or recycling component. Tenders for waste management are usually invited from large companies based outside the city or region - who are therefore unaware of the area’s specific needs. These companies often exclude or displace local people who have traditionally worked as waste collectors - creating unemployment and poverty.

Innovative and affordable solutions are desperately needed.

It is in this context that the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) Bharat have developed and supported an inclusive and effective waste management scheme that is currently working in Katihar Town, in the state of Bihar. Providing employment and reducing poverty. SEWA Bharat is providing a door-to-door waste collection to households and keeping the streets clean. Meeting the needs of both workers and citizens - the model is financially sustainable and has the potential to promote waste segregation and recycling. Although at a relatively early stage, the SEWA model has already led to remarkable improvements in urban areas and in changing attitudes and behaviours towards waste.

The initiative started in March 2010 and is being funded through user fees and external funding from SEWA Bharat. As a result of the impact and success of the model to date, in February 2012 SEWA Bharat secured a contract with the Katihar Municipal Corporation to implement a one year pilot project for all households in 9 wards.

The Government of Bihar is currently developing a solid waste management policy and system to roll out in urban areas across Bihar. It is critical that this system is inclusive, provides employment to local citizens and is environmentally sustainable - learning from the mistakes of the past.
This report - in presenting a model that is sustainable, scalable and replicable - is therefore particularly timely. It is hoped that this model and the lessons it provides will inform and enrich current debates and policy solutions towards developing appropriate waste management solutions both in Bihar, and across India.

This report is intended for policy makers and practitioners involved in waste management and urban governance. It aims to document the current challenges in Katihar, provide an overview of the SEWA model that has been developed in response to these problems, to outline the strategies and process they have deployed and to give an honest account of the challenges they have faced. It ends with an overview of future plans and with wider policy recommendations for waste management solutions.

Part of the team of SEWA Waste Collectors.
2. The Problem

Katihar is located in Katihar District in the north east state of Bihar - it is an important trade centre and railway junction. In 2011, due to its increased population Katihar was upgraded from a Municipality to a Municipal Corporation. Under the Indian Constitution’s (74th) Amendment Act, 1992, Municipal Corporations are responsible for numerous functions, including:

- Urban planning
- Regulation of land-use and construction
- Planning for economic and social development
- Roads and bridges
- Water supply
- Public health, sanitation and solid waste management
- Provision of urban amenities and facilities
- Street lighting
- Slum improvement and up gradation
- Protection of the environment
- Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society
- Urban poverty alleviation
- Primary education
- Primary health care
Katihar City at a glance…

2011 Census Figures

Population: 243,323
Area: 25.5 sq kms
Wards: 45 wards-approx 45,000 households
Current annual growth rate: 2.7% high migration from countryside
Sex ratio: 897 women for every 1000 men
Literacy rate: 87% (men) 68% (women)
Average household size: 6
Percentage living below poverty line: 25%
Scheduled Caste (Dalit) population: 10%

Average waste generated per person per day: 0.13 kg (0.00013 tonnes)
Comprising - 60% organic component, 35% inorganic substances and 5% inert material
Total waste generated per day: 32 tonnes
Total waste collected: 15 tonnes (47%)
Number of Municipal Dustbins: 45

Municipal resources for collection
3 sweepers per ward, 7 tractors, 11 hand carts, 11 hand trolleys and 3 tempos

Waste Projections

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Waste Generated (tonnes per day)</th>
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<td>96</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
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\(^1\) Katihar City Development Plan 2010-2030, Urban Development and Housing Department, Government of Bihar
\(^2\) As above
Inadequate waste management system

‘Solid waste management is the responsibility of Katihar Municipal Corporation and is currently in a very poor state. Collection, transportation, treatment and disposal are non-functional. The collection efficiency of solid waste is alarming. All commercial areas and markets are congested, overcrowded and lack basic infrastructure like water, drainage, and waste collection.’

Katihar City Development Plan 2010-2030,
Urban Development and Housing Department, Government of Bihar

Katihar has no proper infrastructure or system for collecting, transporting and disposing of the 32 tonnes of solid waste it produces every day. A rapidly growing population is putting increased pressure on an already fragile and inadequate system.

There is no door to door collection, and so waste from houses, hotels, markets, schools, transport services, hospitals and offices is thrown onto the streets, into drains, is dumped on communal or vacant ground, or is burnt. Of this waste, the Municipal Corporation collect around 15 tonnes every day - 47% of the total waste produced.

In each ward the waste that is collected is swept up by municipal sweepers (3 per ward) and then stored at a common point unattended by the roadside. This waste is then collected by tractors in open carriers. Waste is not segregated, is untreated and is then dumped along roads on the outskirts of the town. Although there are two disposal sites (11 acre site at DS College Road and 12 acre site at Dumri, Manihari Road) these are not currently used. Waste from household industries regularly remains uncollected and hospital waste is not incinerated. There are not enough municipal sweepers and collections are sporadic and unreliable. Although each ward is allocated 3 sweepers poor attendance is also a problem and there are rarely 3 sweepers on duty at any one time.

The 53% of remaining waste that is not collected is left on streets, in drains and in communal areas, leading to foul smells, and water and air pollution, particularly during the summer months when temperatures can reach 45 degrees. In highly populated areas this waste is unhygienic, dangerous and unattractive. It prevents communal areas from being used as public spaces or children’s play areas. It is also a health hazard - creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes and preventing people from sitting outside, particularly in the evenings.
Kaithar has an open drainage system and no sewer system. Sewage is disposed of in open drains and low lying areas or water bodies. This is a major source of ground water contamination particularly as the land beneath Kaithar is saucer shaped. Spillage of water mixed with sewage in low lying areas is a major problem, leading to the formation of cess pools that again smell foul and encourage mosquitoes. 30% of households in Kaithar have no toilet and open defecation is common. Household and industry waste regularly choke drains and leads to water logging. In some places drains are constructed above road level and as a result dirty water enters houses.

The Municipal Corporation currently lacks the resources, administrative will and capacity to deal with the challenge of planning and providing waste management services. Taxation is not properly collected and in the absence of industries sources of taxation are limited.

Poverty, Inequality and Unemployment

‘The challenge of development in Bihar is enormous due to persistent poverty, complex social stratification, unsatisfactory infrastructure and weak governance; these problems are well known but not well understood. An effort is needed to change this perception, and to search for real solutions and strategies to meet Bihar’s development challenge.’

World Bank Report: Bihar - Towards a Development Strategy, 2005

Bihar is the 12th largest state in terms of geographical size and 3rd largest by population. Almost 58% of the population of Bihar are aged below 25 which is the highest proportion of young people of all states. Poverty is widespread and in February 2012 Abhijit Sen a member of the Planning Commission declared that

“It is a matter of serious concern that there is no decline in poverty in Bihar despite a high growth rate and development.”

Since 2005 governance reforms in Bihar have focused on economic development with a special focus on city development. However small and medium towns in the state lag far behind in development indicators and their citizens experience high levels of poverty and often desperate living conditions. This is the situation in Katihar which has widespread poverty and inequality. Many families face a daily struggle to survive. The state is failing to provide adequate basic services to its citizens. It is poor households, who face the brunt of this poverty and lack of investment in the provision of basic minimum services (health, housing, education etc). There is systemic inefficiency and virtually no participation from the community in the planning or delivery of services.

1 Indian Census 2011
2 The Economic Strangulation of Bihar, Guruswamy, Mohan and Kaul Abhishek (December 2003), Centre for Police Alternatives, New Delhi, India.
Katihar used to be a hub for industries related to jute, flour, biscuits and paper, however, only one paper mill and a few very small industries now survive. Unemployment and underemployment are major issues and growing numbers of people are seeking work in the informal sector. For example there are around 5,000 street vendors in Katihar. Estimates vary but a recent study indicates that 75% of the population are in casual/informal labour with only 3.8% of the population in regular formal employment.

51% of the population in Katihar lives in 131 slum pockets in dilapidated or temporary houses with irregular water supply, no drainage, sewers or solid waste collection mechanism. In the wake of massive unemployment and lower literacy level, their living conditions are getting worse.

Participant from focus group discussion

Women, particularly single women and women from lower castes and Dalit communities, face multiple forms of discrimination, vulnerability and violence. Patriarchal social systems pervade and all types of freedoms are limited. Many girls marry young and women are often unable to leave their homes without being accompanied. Girls’ education is not prioritised and many drop out of school at a young age. The dowry system means that girl children are often viewed as a burden. Women usually have no financial independence and little choice about who they marry. The value of men over women is illustrated in the sex ratio figure for Katihar which is below average for India.

7 Katihar City Development Plan 2010-2030, Urban Development and Housing Department, Government of Bihar

Temporary housing along railway lines
3. The SEWA Bharat Model

SEWA Bharat wanted to create a sustainable model through community contributions in the form of user fees - to ensure an efficient service, innovation and community participation. The model creates sustainable livelihood opportunities for local people and has the potential to develop waste segregation and recycling. Participant from focus group discussion

Six days a week from 6am till 12pm, 31 Community Waste Collectors or Saundarya Sathis make door to door collections from 2400 households in Katihar. Collectors earn Rs 125 per day and their wages are adjusted to meet minimum wage standards.

A team of 3 (2 women and 1 man) is assigned to a particular area. The team collects waste from approximately 200 households each day, aiming to call at households around the same time each morning. Two women collect from households while the man loads waste into a larger dustbin and is responsible for transporting waste on a tricycle cart.

The waste on the cart is then deposited at a central point and collected by a truck that takes the waste to a landfill site. Currently waste is not being segregated by households. The Community Waste Collectors pull out recyclables from the household waste and sell this on for extra income (earning around an additional Rs 100 per month).

SEWA Bharat is currently operating in 14 wards (out of a total of 45), and collecting from approximately 10% of households in each ward with new households joining every day.
The Basics of the SEWA Bharat Model

Employing Community Waste Collectors to make door to door collections of household waste. Households pay Rs30 a month/Rs1 a day for this service, (approximately $0.6 a month). Collectors are paid each month and are given a uniform, training and access to other SEWA services (e.g. crèche/saving schemes).

Community Waste Collectors sweep the road and where feasible clear waste that has been dumped in communal areas.

The waste they collect is picked up by truck and dumped with the other waste collected by Municipal Corporation.

Advertising the scheme is done through citizen’s meetings (attendance is usually around 40 people for each meeting), distribution of publicity leaflets, and on billboards and posters across the city. A helpline (6am-5pm) has been set up to register new households and address any queries or complaints.

The scheme is anchored through field organisers who are responsible for particular areas – tasks include explaining the scheme, recruiting new households, collecting fees and monitoring.

The scheme is currently funded through a grant from SEWA Bharat and through user fees.

*It is clear that the citizens of Katihar and even some officials have had enough of empty promises, of large scale ambitious infrastructure programmes that fail to deliver, that never materialise or that lead to corruption. Citizens deserve reliable basic services and for this to happen they are happy to contribute themselves.*

Participant from focus group discussion
Timeline

- Project inception & development
- Consultation with workers, members and households
- Initial meetings with councillors

March – May 2010

- Collections start in 3 wards
- Nov - Expansion to 6 wards
- Dec - Environmental Festival in 20 schools

June – July 2010

- Project expansion across 14 wards
- Ongoing publicity – collecting from 2400 households
- Expansion & team consolidation

Aug – Dec 2010

Jan – March 2011

- Interference & problems from municipal sweepers/union-collections stop in some wards – issues

April – Dec 2011

Jan – Feb 2012

Submission of 9 Ward MOU to Municipal Corporation

Key Stakeholders

- SEWA Staff
- Citizens and Residents
- Workers / Saundarya Sathis
- Municipal Corporation
- Councillors
- Municipal Sweepers
Project Phases

Consultation
Project Design
Pilot Projects

Streamlining
Consolidation
Feasibility

Scaling Up
- Widespread
  Attitude Change
- Waste
  Segregation
- Financially
  Sustainable

Phase 1 - Past
Phase 2 - Present
Phase 3 - Future
A Win – Win Solution for Workers, Citizens and the City

Providing dignified employment

Nobody would give us a respectable salary; we now have a model that we own and run ourselves. Through SEWA and this model we now have the possibility of a better life.

Community Waste Collector

The SEWA Bharat model is organising and employing waste collectors - giving them a dignified job, a reliable income and bringing them into the mainstream. For the majority who previously worked in the informal sector in dangerous and exploitative work it is the first time they have been paid a regular, living wage.9

I have been part of SEWA for one and a half years. I have a husband and kids. He works sometimes and earns around Rs750 per month. Now I can sign my name because of the adult education classes and I can now provide two square meals a day for my family.

Rekha, Community Waste Collector

SEWA Bharat provides a uniform (green shawls, sweaters and shoes) and tools/equipment (gloves, scrappers and baskets) so they can carry out their job safely and cleanly. Training gives them confidence and life skills. SEWA’s longer term aim is for these workers to become a valued and respected part of society.

SEWA Bharat is a trade union organisation of women working in the informal sector. However for the first time, through this model SEWA Bharat have included men who are responsible for driving and managing the carts, tricycles and trucks that collect and dispose of the waste. This decision was taken as no women were willing to take on these roles. However as women increase their skills and experience SEWA Bharat expect that women will have the confidence to take on these tasks, so challenging traditional gender stereotypes about what constitutes ‘women’s work.’

9 In public policy, a living wage is the minimum hourly income necessary for a worker to meet basic needs (for an extended period of time or for a lifetime). These needs include shelter (housing) and other incidentals such as clothing and nutrition.
The model is scalable - it can be expanded to cover more households and increase numbers of wards whilst covering costs through user fees and maintaining a good service. As the scale and reach increases it can also absorb a significant number of more workers.

An efficient waste management solution

Rather than being burnt or dumped in the street, in drains or on communal grounds waste is collected each day from its source. This avoids waste building up, polluting the environment and becoming a health and environmental hazard. Areas covered by SEWA have been visibly transformed - they are cleaner and there is less dumping.

I live here with my brother, mother and father. SEWA Bharat have been collecting the waste from our house for three months, 6 days a week, at the same time each day. They provide a good service. For the past three months it has been a pleasure because all the households have joined and no one litters anymore so when you step outside the house it is a clean environment.

Sharat Kumar, Resident

The model has shown that citizens are more than happy to pay for an efficient and reliable service.
Reducing poverty and inequality

Women’s empowerment and self reliance is at the heart of this model - giving women skills, confidence and dignified employment. As a result of this initiative 31 workers are now better able to provide for their families and already have experienced tangible improvements in their lives - for example children are now in school, families are able to afford adequate food and healthcare, and families are improving their houses.

I have been working with SEWA for one year and collect in Burrabazar, I used to work in an office earning Rs 500 per month. My husband died so I look after our son. I also look after my mother. Now I am able to look after her and my son is going to school. I am improving the quality of our lives as there are no male earning members in our family.

Basanti, Community Waste Collector

As well as a regular wage the model also enables women workers to access other SEWA Bharat benefits. These include:

- A crèche for workers children (currently 50 children aged 0-6 years use the crèche which runs every day during workers hours – children are given basic education and nutritious food)
- Vocational training and literacy classes
- Financial services-saving through joining SEWA Bharat self help groups
- Health and safety training
- Registration and linkage to government benefits and schemes (e.g. pension, food subsidies, educational scholarships for women and child welfare schemes).

The model is also tackling behaviours and attitudes associated with caste discrimination. Traditionally in India waste collecting and cleaning is done by ‘Dalits’ (formerly known as untouchables). In Katihar this work has traditionally been done by a particular Dalit sub-caste called Dom. People from this community experience caste based discrimination and related poverty, segregation, violence, and economic, social and political exclusion. Degrading untouchability practices are still widespread in Katihar (for example denial of drinking water from upper caste water sources, prohibited entry to religious places). People from this caste also lack access to justice, resources and political representation at all levels.
Discrimination based on work and descent is any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on inherited status such as caste... that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This type of discrimination is typically associated with the notion of purity and pollution and practices of untouchability, and is deeply rooted in societies and cultures where this discrimination is practiced.

United Nations Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent

The SEWA Bharat model is providing people from the Dom community with a dignified job and is tackling issues of untouchability in relation to waste collection and disposal. For example, when households verbally abuse Community Waste Collectors, SEWA field organisers intervene and negotiate with households to try and resolve the issue.

We enjoy the work but discrimination and untouchability is an issue. Some people are very fussy and avoid touching us - they tip the dustbin so rubbish falls out. Sometimes we are not allowed past their gate or to touch their gate. Some people wash their gates or courtyards after we have been there. We sometimes get upset and tell people, ‘aren’t we also human? We then lodge a complaint in the office. If discrimination isn’t rectified then we stop collecting.

Rekha, Community Waste Collector

Changing attitudes and contributing to greater civic responsibility

This model has shown that it is possible to change things. If people see it then they get convinced.

Kaithar Resident

In the areas where the SEWA Bharat scheme is operating there has been a dramatic transformation - the streets are clean, the drains are not blocked and there is no waste being dumped. People are able to use public spaces, to sit outside and to enjoy their environment. Once an area is clean people are less likely to dump waste and take more responsibility for its upkeep.
Changing behaviours and attitudes towards waste is not easy—but this model has shown that it is possible for people to become more responsible for their waste. SEWA have combined a practical model with community education programmes and outreach to encourage wider cultural changes and to increase environmental awareness and responsibility. SEWA Bharat organise Environment Festivals that have so far involved 30 schools - these received widespread media coverage and have helped change people’s opinions. Green Ambassadors - both school children and resident women - have been recruited who encourage new households to sign up to the scheme and encourage collective action on local environmental issues.

SEWA have established an environment festival to create a platform through which young people can become involved in environmental issues in a creative and participatory way. Students are asked to express their understanding and concern on issues affecting their surrounding, neighbourhood and families through debates, essays, paintings, drawings and exhibitions. A marked transformation has been seen in students who are willing to incorporate this learning into their daily lives.

Participant from focus group discussion

An inclusive model for future urban governance programmes

To develop and implement this model SEWA Bharat have regularly met and extensively engaged with many policy and parliamentary stakeholders at community, municipal, district and state level. This has been essential for developing and inclusive and workable scheme.

This model provides insights into how future urban development programmes can be funded and managed, leading to wider policy changes and improved governance.
5. The Process - You Only Learn By Doing

Background

The Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) is a trade union organisation of women working in the informal economy. Their goals are full employment, decent work and self-reliance.

SEWA was the initiative of Elaben Bhatt in 1972 when a handful of women came together to protest against their unfair treatment by local merchants. SEWA now has over one million women members across Gujarat, Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

SEWA’s members work in the informal economy and the majority are poor, illiterate and marginalised women - home-based workers (e.g. embroiderers weavers, incense rollers), agricultural and construction labourers, service providers (e.g. waste collectors, domestic workers), small-scale producers (e.g. salt and cattle) and street vendors.
SEWA establish member based organisations of informal workers (e.g. self help groups and co-operatives). SEWA’s programmes have enabled tens of thousands of women workers in the informal economy to organise, escape grinding poverty, and secure better lives for themselves and their families.

**SEWA works to:**

- Increase economic and social security for poor informal women workers, and greater recognition of their rights and entitlements from employers and municipal authorities.

- Organise and train women to increase their collective bargaining power and provide a platform to present their problems and demands, so protecting their welfare and livelihoods.

- Develop effective women leaders who are able to represent common issues to stakeholders.

- Help women to access financial services (e.g. loans, savings, credit, insurance schemes etc)

- Create employment generation through skills development, securing and market linkages and employment opportunities.

- Improve women’s lived environment through improved housing, sanitation and facilities.

In 1982 to expand the SEWA movement, SEWA formed SEWA Bharat, the Federation of SEWA’s across India, based in Delhi. SEWA Bharat helps develop SEWA in new states and strengthens smaller or newer SEWAs. SEWA Bharat raises the visibility of informal economy women workers both nationally and internationally and advocates for their support, protection and recognition.

SEWA Bharat has been working in Bihar since 1984 in Munger and Bhagalpur. In 2009 programmes were initiated in Katihar. Activities have mainly focused on organising workers, livelihood and health programmes. SEWA have established a Co-operative that is supporting women to produce incense and ice cream sticks. SEWA have around 4000 members in Katihar with around 17 Self Help Groups that provide financial services, saving schemes and advice to members.
Strategies and Process

In early 2010 in response to the extreme poverty and unemployment of women workers in Katihar, to the cities waste management issues and the problems facing waste collectors SEWA started researching the idea of organising waste collectors looking at different waste management schemes. In March 2010 they launched a pilot house to house collection scheme.

During the first phase (March-May 2010) senior SEWA staff co-ordinated a series of meetings to discuss their proposal with three major stakeholders:

- SEWA members and waste collectors/cleaners
- Municipal Corporation including District Magistrate, CEO, Councillors and the Mayor,
- Citizens and households

It was essential to positively engage with councillors who are responsible for waste management and for cleaning their wards. Their support to the SEWA scheme was critical to its success.

SEWA approached councillors in 3 wards - selected because these councillors were younger and potentially more progressive who had previously declared their commitment to making positive changes in Katihar. The 3 wards chosen were also more affluent where people were more likely to be able to pay for a waste collection service.

SEWA received positive and encouraging feedback from workers, households and officials and as a result were increasingly convinced of the feasibility, need and benefits of their proposed scheme. As a result plans for a pilot project were developed and refined. From May-July a project team was recruited, three pilot wards were selected and community outreach and publicity began in those wards to sign up households.

SEWA held a series of Citizen’s Meetings to galvanise support. These were extremely positive with citizens expressing support for the model and the proposed change.

There were two main reactions from people. Firstly those that said this scheme won’t work; it can’t function and will die down in 10 days time. The second was enthusiasm. People who said that it could work and let’s make it work! We were initially extremely doubtful about whether people would be prepared to pay for this service, but during the citizen’s meetings it became clear that they would. We now feel that it was a mistake to charge Rs 1 per day and that it should have been Rs2 per day.

Puja Kumari, Field Organiser
In August collections began in Mirchaibari, Amlatola and Rajhata with the cooperation of local residents. Publicity and outreach continued in these 3 wards - signing up around 400 households in the first few months. In November collections began in 6 additional wards - Binodpur, Baniatola, Nayatola, High School Para, Durgasthan, Mirchaibari and Officers Colony.

Over the next year and a half SEWA Bharat consolidated, expanded and streamlined the scheme improving the system through trial and error. This involved:

Recruiting a strong and committed team - with clear roles, responsibilities and geographic areas. Field organisers and Community Waste Collectors learn the job through mentoring or accompanying more experienced staff. SEWA Bharat also organise regular staff trainings. Each field officer is responsible for around 500 households each - their target is 900 households but no one has yet achieved this number.

Using different methods to advertise the scheme - designing billboards, leaflets and a sticker for households to put on their front wall or gate to show that they are part of the scheme. The most successful way to recruit households has been going door to door to meet with residents. SEWA have found it much easier to recruit households where there are no communal dumping grounds.

Establishing a help-line (6am - 5pm) to help register new households and to deal with complaints and queries.

Trying to secure a critical mass of households in any particular street or area to make collections worthwhile, otherwise SEWA collections make no tangible difference to the environment and people continue to dump waste in communal grounds.

It did not prove cost effective to collect from individual households so SEWA took the decision that the minimum number to start collections in a particular street or area is around 50 households.

A team of two women and one man go door to door and visit households between 9 - 5pm; we spend about 10 minutes with each and usually meet with women. We tell people about the scheme, a bit about SEWA, about our wider plans and encourage them to participate. We get a success rate of about 80%. We also have a pamphlet about the scheme endorsed by the supportive CEO of the Municipal Corporation.

Participant from focus group discussion
Current SEWA Bharat Field Team

- 31 Community Waste Collectors
- 1 Project Director
- 1 Operations Manager
- 1 part time Data Entry Operator
- 8 Field Organisers
- 1 Deputy Project Coordinator
- 1 Accountant
- 1 part time Phone Line Operator

In February 2012 the Corporation agreed to award SEWA Bharat a contract to implement a one year pilot project co-ordinating house to house collections, road sweeping and drain clearing in 9 wards. This was a competitive tendering process and is a major achievement, illustrating formal recognition and endorsement of the success of the project to date.

Details of the process and tender with the Municipal Corporation

A tender notice was published in the local daily newspapers on the 3rd of February, 2012 and a letter of confirmation was procured from the Corporation on the 3rd of March, 2012. The tender was for the implementation of solid waste management (door to door waste collection, road sweeping and drainage cleaning) in 9 wards (Ward numbers 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37 and part of 20). The tender comprised a technical bid, financial bid and agreement to a 50% cost sharing.

A comparative chart was prepared by the Corporation’s Purchase Committee detailing the 3 organisations who bid for the tender and their eligibility against set criteria that included: existence, presence of the organisation in Bihar for at least 3 years, proven experience in the upliftment of poor and underprivileged women and percentage cost sharing for the project.

SEWA won the tender and the Municipal Corporation has now engaged SEWA Bharat for 1 year to carry out door to door waste collection, road sweeping and drainage cleaning in the 9 wards.

I co-ordinate from the office, the whole team checks in around 6am. Field Organisers call in and confirm where they are and I also check punctuality and attendance of Community Collectors. I confirm attendance with the Operations Manager so that he can rearrange teams if necessary. I then take 2-3 calls a day - mainly complaints, or people who want to join the scheme.

Phoneline Operator and Co-ordinator
Details of the agreement include:

The Corporation will pay a monthly amount of Rs.166,666 to SEWA Bharat against the invoice submitted by the latter.

The Corporation will authorise SEWA Bharat to collect user fees as per the rate chart mentioned in the agreement from households as well as commercial establishments.

The Corporation will provide dustbins for secondary waste collection and a one acre plot in their designated dumping ground for final disposal of waste.

SEWA Bharat will organise needy and poor women and men especially those with some inclination or experience of handling waste previously for the above activity and provide them with a steady source of livelihood.

For maintaining better quality of work a Coordination Committee will be formed in each ward with the Ward Councillor as the head including 5-6 eminent citizens and SEWA Bharat representatives as members of the committee. This committee will meet once every month.

SEWA Bharat along with the Corporation will build public awareness on no littering, storage of segregated waste at source and appropriate waste management at household, shop and establishment level and motivate people to segregate biodegradable and recyclable waste at source.

Monitoring of the work will be done by SEWA Bharat and the City Development Manager, who in turn will submit a report to the Mayor/ CEO.

Annually the Corporation will contribute Rs 2,000,000 out of the total budget of Rs 6,000,000 proposed by SEWA Bharat. The remaining Rs 4,000,000 will be covered by SEWA Bharat.

The label given to households who have joined the scheme - both to advertise the scheme and to let waste collectors know where to collect.
Challenges and Set Backs

*SEWA have faced resistance and challenges but through perseverance, commitment to their model and through constantly prioritising the needs of women workers and the community they have overcome these challenges and now have a workable and scalable model.*

Participant from focus group discussion

1. Involvement of Municipal Corporation

The initial response from the Municipal Corporation to SEWA Bharat was positive and they were pleased that SEWA Bharat was trying to help with waste management problems in Katihar. However this changed once SEWA Bharat started to talk about practical aspects of the model such as pamphlets, dustbins etc. At this stage the Corporation backed away and distanced themselves from SEWA Bharat claiming that they did not have the funds.

*Once the Corporation realised SEWA Bharat were trying to challenge deeply entrenched systems and relationships that many in the Corporation benefited from and did not want to change they were less supportive of the model.*

Participant from focus group discussion

During the initial stages when SEWA Bharat were first researching and developing the scheme a public litigation case was filed that contested the outcome of the Municipal Corporation elections. As a result the Board (Councillors) were suspended for one year. This made any engagement with the Corporation during this time very difficult and time consuming.

A senior official told SEWA Bharat,

*I am very happy that I don’t have to do anything - the moment the Board is formed I will have to work.*

This is illustrative of the complacency which was systemic amongst all levels of the Corporation.

However SEWA Bharat did not let a lack of proactive support derail their efforts. They took the approach that they should carry on with their plans to see if results would motivate and convince the Corporation. SEWA Bharat felt that as long as the Corporation did not directly block the initiative and gave it their moral support that it would be possible to proceed, particularly as the scheme was not dependent on Corporation funding.
This strategy worked well with only one case where a councillor was so hostile he managed to stop SEWA Bharat operating in his ward.

With a new administration these issues have now been resolved and the District Magistrate and the CEO of the Corporation are much more supportive. The new Corporation Board has 45 Councillors, 22 are women and the average age is 26-36 making it a young, diverse and enthusiastic Board. SEWA Bharat meets regularly with all officials including the Mayor and councillors. The new District Magistrate, Ms. Ashwini Duttatreya Thakre is a relatively young woman who has been particularly supportive of SEWA Bharat and her administration has ensured smooth discussion between SEWA Bharat, the Municipal Corporation as well as local administration.

In 2010 SEWA took 22 Councillors to visit SEWA work in Gujarat. This visit was a great success and in 2011 SEWA organised a second exposure with the backing of the District Magistrate. This time the District Development Commissioner, CEO of Municipal Corporation, 3 Block Development Officers and 5 LEO (Law/Local Enforcement Officers) visited.

During the visits officials visited work in Gujarat and Delhi – enabling them to see first hand the results of inclusive community initiatives and the role they can play in providing basic services such as housing, sanitation, waste management and livelihoods and positively influencing urban governance. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor having seen the results in Gujarat are keen to model Katihar along similar lines.

There was a very positive and successful exposure visit to Gujarat where they saw SEWA’s work and other SEWA programmes in relation to livelihood, creation of employment, organising, housing and urban services. Because of this exchange we trust SEWA and think that this model is replicable in the rest of the city - however we need to follow the rules. In the government system we must work within the proscribed rules, regulations and procedures so we need facilitators and negotiators like SEWA in areas of livelihood and poverty alleviation. The major problem in Katihar is the huge population and there are many irregularities which need to be rectified. It was previously a sub-division and therefore there has been a lack of planning and many things are faulty.

Ms. Ashwini Duttatreya Thakre, District Magistrate
As previously highlighted, in February 2012 the Corporation agreed to award SEWA a contract to implement a one year pilot project co-ordinating waste management in 9 wards. This illustrates the growing support of the Corporation towards SEWA Bharat and the model.

Effective advocacy is based on good communication and building relationships of trust. Despite the current support frequently changing officials at all levels and a related lack of institutional memory undermine advocacy efforts. For example although the prescribed term is 3 years the average term served in office for the CEO of the Municipal Corporation is 6 months. Although SEWA currently have many strong allies within government institutions, if commitment to the scheme and to their approach is individual rather than organisational then this expertise and support is lost when these allies move on.

There are high levels of infighting and tensions between political groups in Katihar. Although Councillors are political SEWA have managed to maintain neutrality throughout, consistently reaffirming their aims (women’s empowerment, worker centred model), their independence and ensuring that political interaction is with all parties. For example the exchange to Gujarat was cross party so this neutrality was made visible. In 2011 Councillors did try to politicise their involvement in the exchange and so as a result SEWA only selected civil servants and officers not in political positions for the second exposure visit to Gujarat.

2. Municipal Sweepers and Municipal Corporation Union

In December 2010 SEWA Bharat held its first environment festival with 10 schools, where it showed a short film which showed the streets before and after SEWA started cleaning. Then all hell broke loose. The Municipal Corporation sweepers felt that this was insulting them. As a result the municipal sweepers started collecting solid waste from houses in two of our wards and so the model lost many of households. This went on for about two months but then they stopped collecting, some stopped just after a few days, and so in March 2011 SEWA came back and restarted the model. During the ruckus with the Union of Municipal Cleaners Sewa Bharat prioritised other wards and were advised by the District Magistrate to lay low in the 3 initial wards or to file a complaint. The Superintendent of Police advised “that we had enough without dealing with lots of police enquiries so don’t take this on and just lay low.” So for two months waste was collected from houses but SEWA Bharat didn’t scale up during this time but from March/April collection started in all.

Participant from focus group discussion
The major challenge and resistance to the SEWA Bharat's scheme has been from municipal sweepers and members of the Sweeper's Union under the Municipal Corporation. Although currently performing different functions the sweepers are worried that SEWA Bharat are undermining their work and threatening their jobs and position.

There are three municipal cleaners/sweepers assigned to each ward. Around two thirds are men, one third women. Their main duties are to collect waste from collection points, clean the drains three times a year and sweep the roads. They are paid Rs 125 per day and they are also from the same Dom caste whose traditional occupation is cleaner/sweeper.

Since SEWA Bharat began there have been various problems from the Municipal Corporation Sweepers Union, including verbal and physical attacks on SEWA workers (for example a tractor driver was badly beaten). Although the authorities were asked for help they have not been able to resolve the issue. During one incident someone was sent to negotiate but he was not able to help.

The situation has been particularly tense during strikes. Municipal workers often strike for an increase their salaries. In October 2011 they took an advance on their salaries before the festival season. However they then protested about this deduction from their salaries and organised a strike for an increase in pay.

During municipal strikes the municipal sweepers try and physically stop SEWA collectors. That year (2011) things got very nasty and uniforms were torn. They snatched our tricycles and broke dustbins so we couldn’t continue with our work. We stopped for 15 days. Households stopped subscriptions because of this strike. When this happens SEWA lost faith and trust from the households.

Tuna Devi, SEWA Waste Collector

One solution suggested by the District Magistrate is for SEWA Barat to absorb women municipal sweepers into the scheme – this was welcomed by SEWA once the scheme is expanded and on the basis that they attend SEWA run trainings.
3. Challenges in Changing Behaviours

The tragedy of the commons is a dilemma arising from the situation in which multiple individuals, acting independently and rationally consulting their own self-interest, will ultimately deplete a shared limited resource, even when it is clear that it is not in anyone’s long-term interest for this to happen.

Garrett Hardin, Ecologist, 1968,

Both a major challenge and success of the scheme has been in changing mindsets and behaviours towards waste. There has been some resistance to people taking responsibility for their own rubbish and the upkeep of their own community. It has required SEWA to undertake intensive community engagement programmes - talking to residents, holding meetings, environment festivals and perseverance to shift attitudes.

The most successful strategy has been when residents see first hand the difference that the SEWA Bharat model has made. Residents have given very positive feedback and have become the strongest advocates for the scheme. People are now able to use communal spaces, to sit outside in the evening and to enjoy walking in their neighbourhoods.

4. Default rate for payment

Although the user fee is affordable for the majority of people there is still a relatively high delay/default rate in payment. Although people say they are willing to pay they make constant excuses and put off paying for as long as possible.

At the moment SEWA Bharat keep collecting from people who haven’t paid – even if its six months. They have decided that the priority is to reach as many households as possible to build trust in the scheme and therefore it is worth the risk of letting some households default their user fee.

While the scheme has some external funds this is not an urgent problem but in the longer term this issue will need to be addressed to ensure the model can be sustainable.

The collection process is time consuming with field organisers often having to make several calls to one household. Therefore the collection process will need to be streamlined as the number of household’s increases. Direct payments online, through banks or by phone are all options that could be explored although these would be new methods for the majority of households.
5. Wards need to be clearly targeted

SEWA have found it challenging to get the right balance between wanting a high density of households in a particular ward and wanting to reach out across as many wards as possible – to increase wider awareness of the scheme.

SEWA started with 3 wards and this expanded slowly to 14. As Field Organisers shifted around they didn’t know which houses they covered and some households dropped out of the model as a result. As a result of this Field Organisers are now much clearer about their area of responsibility and which households they cover. SEWA now realise the importance of clearly targeting wards with clear targets for each.

As a result of the recent contract with the Municipal Corporation in 2012 SEWA will concentrate solely on these 9 wards – reaching more households in each ward and ensuring this model is a success.

6. Time waiting

One of the concerns expressed by the Community Waste Collectors is the time spent waiting for people to pack up and bring out their waste. They currently collect from approximately 200 houses a day but this could be higher if the time spent waiting was reduced which slows up the overall process. This is compounded by the fact that houses are often quite far away from each other, unlike in bigger and more crowded cities where waste can be collected in less time.

Possible solutions to this – for example leaving waste at the gate in a dustbin have been suggested but problems with stray animals and dustbins being stolen need to be properly thought through.
7. Drainage and Communal Dumps

Although outside the remit of the SEWA Bharat scheme the amount of waste that has built up in communal areas is undermining the success of the collections. Although SEWA Bharat have made some efforts in clearing certain areas the problem will require more systematic and concerted efforts particularly larger sites were waste has been dumped over many years. Although in some areas where SEWA Bharat are co-ordinating house to house collection the roads are much cleaner – large communal waste grounds near by are detracting from this success and waste from these areas is blown into cleaner areas.

The lack of sewers and a proper drainage system also continue to undermine any waste management solutions in Katihar. Again SEWA Bharat has made some attempts to unblock drains and remove waste but they do not have the equipment, time or remit to undertake this systematically. Investment in this area is critical.

In Gujarat SEWA Bharat’s sister organization, Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) is working to transform the physical environment in which informal sector workers live, by providing a package of seven infrastructure services including paved roads, individual toilets, water and drainage connections and street lighting. The package is provided on an equitable cost sharing basis with the community residents contributing one-third of the cost. The project is implemented by a people’s registered body, ‘Community Based Organisation’, which represents the interests of the residents as well as maintains the newly acquired infrastructure. In Katihar MHT is implementing a sanitation model based on self investment through loans. This is done by extending loans to members through community based groups. The group is then responsible for the repayment of the loan. The loan is provided for construction of hand-pumps and toilets. While MHT extends a loan amount of Rs5000 for hand pump construction and ensures its construction, Rs12000 is provided for construction of toilets. Any additional amount over this figure is met by households. As a result many poor households have been able to build wells and toilet facilities.

8. Supplementary Education Classes for Community Waste Collectors.

SEWA Bharat is co-ordinating adult education classes for Community Waste Collectors including basic literacy and life skills. Although classes were initially warmly welcomed to date there has been relatively low uptake (only around 5 women have participated and learnt to sign their name). SEWA is currently researching what changes can be made to increase attendance – for example change timings or where classes are held.
Since it started this initiative has been supported by SEWA Bharat who have committed funds to the project up until the end of December 2013. As previously mentioned in February 2012 SEWA secured a contract with the Katihar Municipal Corporation to implement a one year SEWA model for door-to-door waste collection, road sweeping and drain clearing in 9 wards.

Based on the outcomes of this pilot project it is hoped that the Municipal Corporation will scale up their contract with SEWA Bharat to cover additional wards from 2013 onwards.

SEWA are keen to consolidate, replicate and expand this scheme to benefit more workers especially women and improve more neighbourhoods. To this end SEWA Bharat are developing plans and projections to achieve the following:

• To extend the scheme to all 45 wards, employing 331 waste collectors and drainage cleaners.

• Registering and establishing a Waste Collectors Co-operative owned and managed by Community Waste Collectors.

• To recruit external support, research and advice – looking at longer term projections, business plans, use of technology, and potential for waste segregation and recycling – to understand how can recycling can generate funds.

• To develop infrastructure and procure equipment to streamline the current process and make SEWA more competitive in future waste management bids.

• To document and communicate the SEWA Bharat model to ensure the model is replicated in other towns and cities as an alternative to existing waste management systems that are currently being developed or implemented.
Establishing a Co-operative is essential to the longer term sustainability of the initiative. A co-operative would ensure:

- Ownership for workers –
  ensuring they are in control of their own labour;
- Equality and equal ownership;
- Prevention of future exploitation;
  
  That they can apply directly for tenders for which a for-profit co-operative or company is required.

Owning their own cooperative will also empower women workers - illustrating that workers have the potential to deal directly, and negotiate with the Municipal Corporation. Women workers are best placed to value and to promote their work and skills. Through owning the cooperative they will also become experienced in project management and enterprise – rather than more passive recipients of potentially exploitative work at the lowest end of the waste management chain. A Co-operative will also ensure that profits are used to expand the model, to support community education and training of more workers. Co-operative collecting would also mean that other waste collectors/sweepers/Saundarya Sathis could come and work and distribute profits to members so improving the lives and benefiting more workers.

**Future funding for the initiative can come from three main sources:**

- Government funding through Municipal Corporation
- User fees from households
- Money generated from recycling and waste segregation

Mr Surajrai, Councillor, Rajhata Ward Katihar, who has been very supportive of the SEWA model and its expansion throughout Katihar.
Other future plans include

Enforcing waste segregation and developing and implementing a systematic recycling scheme.

To computerise the process – registration of households, collection of fees etc. Increased advertisement of the scheme, community engagement and public education - through billboards, radio and TV adverts, announcements from rickshaws, folk and street theatre. SEWA Bharat currently holds monthly citizens meetings at their office but at present they are poorly attended as people don’t want to travel to attend meetings. Citizens Meetings that were held at the start of the scheme were very popular and these need to be repeated to enable SEWA to reach out to new audiences.

Increased schools programmes and outreach – scaling up the already successful annual environment festival. Changing behaviours and attitudes towards waste and the environment through teachers and working with young people.

A field organiser making her daily morning rounds
In 1996, public interest litigation was filed in the Supreme Court against the government of India, state governments and municipal authorities, claiming they were failing to fulfil their waste management duties in an acceptable manner.

A committee was appointed by the court to investigate. After speaking with city authorities, sanitation workers and citizens, the committee delivered to the Supreme Court a report with detailed recommendations. As a result, the Supreme Court advised India’s states and city officials to take the necessary steps to resolve these issues.

As a result in 2000, India’s Ministry of Environment and Forests issued the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules instructing Urban Local Bodies to put into place systems for managing solid waste and Urban Local Bodies were given until December 2003 to incorporate these rules into their current systems.

The key points of the Rules are for Urban Local Bodies to:

- Set up waste processing and disposal facilities,
- Monitor the performance of processing and disposal every six months,
- Improve existing landfill sites,
- Identify landfill sites for future sites and make the sites ready,
As a result over the last decade many cities, particularly in Western and Southern Indian states have evolved their own systems involving:

- Door to door collection to collection bins or trucks.
- Transport of waste from collections points around the city to a central dumping point or landfill.
- Managing and treating waste at the land-fill sites, more recently this has involved Waste to Energy schemes.

However the majority of waste management systems have not benefited local citizens or companies, have excluded traditional waste collectors and have been based on principles which undermine recycling.

Despite these systems it is estimated that 94% of waste is still disposed of unsafely, either burned in an uncontrolled manner or dumped in untreated landfills, where contaminants leach into groundwater. Waste is not being responsibly incinerated or undergoing mechanical-biological treatment. According to a 2008 report by The World Bank, if an efficient system were in place, roughly 15% of India's waste materials such as paper, plastic, metal and glass could be recovered and recycled. If the 35 to 55% that is organic waste could also be recovered, that would leave only 30 to 50% to be sent to landfills.

The majority of waste management schemes actually promote solid waste production, paying companies on the basis of how many tonnes of waste they collect. These schemes are creating huge landfill sites with related environmental problems – waste to energy schemes are not properly regulated and are also causing massive amounts of pollution.

The Bihar Government is currently formulating its own waste management policy in collaboration with the Central Government and international donors – it is vital that this policy is inclusive, sustainable, and environmentally sound and doesn't make the same mistakes.

Concerns with proposals and options that are being considered and replicated by state governments include:

- Their exclusion of poor citizens who have traditionally been waste collectors.
- Despite extreme poverty and high levels of unemployment the proposals do not encourage local work or local companies. Tenders are only invited from large companies. For example to apply companies have to meet certain criteria – they need a large security deposit, turn over and assets over a certain amount. These companies are usually based outside the city or state - unaware of current systems and profits will not benefit the city or local people.
• That they are based on a tonnage model promoting generation of solid waste. The tonnage model is also being promoted and pushed by donors such as the UK Department for International Development. This model undermines environmental principles and provides no incentives for waste segregation or recycling. This also undermines thriving recycling industry which exists in cities. In Katihar for example there are a large number of waste collectors, 11 small godowns, 3 bigger recyclers and some small factories. If the Municipality offers to pay the company between Rs. 700-900 per tonne for collection and disposal the company will collect as much waste as possible—both recyclables and non-recyclables and dump this in the land fill. People interviewed in the research and preparation of this report indicated that companies who are making money from waste management are doing so not through generating profits from recycling but through contracts and corruption.

• One size fits all - replicating systems that have been developed for large cities (that have in many places failed) to smaller towns without any understanding of needs, contexts and complexities of these towns is not appropriate. Systems must be based on research and understanding of local contexts and current systems operating.

• In most tenders the total cost of collection is paid by the Urban Local Body. This means that the city has to pay for all expenses from its own budget. Although this is the ideal and municipalities have the responsibility to deliver this, unfortunately most towns in Bihar are chronically stretched for funds, and will have to rely on state and central funds. There is therefore concern about the sustainability of models-funded by municipalities which area already facing severe budget cuts and reliance on external funding. Exploring other funding options (e.g. citizens or community contributions have not been explored).

Recommendations for future tendering of waste management schemes

• Make it a condition to be a local company or co-operative.
• Equipment required should reflect what is needed rather than requesting a security deposit and assets that are unrealistic for small scale operations.
• Tenders should mainstream recycling and waste segregation techniques.
• Tenders should allow flexibility to explore creative funding options to ensure schemes are sustainable and viable.
• Tenders should give due recognition and protection to existing waste pickers.
Support Programme for Urban Reforms in Bihar (SPUR)

SPUR is a major six-year £60m partnership programme (2009-2015) between the Government of Bihar and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID, UK). It aims to enhance ‘urban local bodies’ capacity to deliver efficient urban services and attract private investment. SPUR has supported the Government of Bihar to initiate an urban reform programme to enable holistic development of urban areas and to address the lack of basic urban services, issues in local governance and the high incidence of urban poverty. It includes infrastructure, water and sanitation, solid waste management, financial management and social development, such as livelihood programmes in slums.\textsuperscript{10}

The programme is based on the premise that effective urban centres play a significant role in economic growth and poverty reduction for providing the catalyst for greater economic activity and services. In Bihar the programme covers 28 urban centres and aims to include the quality of services received by 6.36 urban citizens. Areas include:

- Urban Governance and Planning
- Municipal Finance and Procurement
- Municipal Infrastructure
- Local Economic Development
- Social Development, Poverty and Livelihoods\textsuperscript{11}

SEWA Bharat encouraged the State Government and SPUR to include Katihar as one of the cities/towns to be included in the list for Solid Waste Management intervention. With the continued efforts of SEWA, the Mayor took up this issue with SPUR and SPUR has agreed to include Katihar on this list. This will hopefully enable the Municipal Corporation to leverage funds and SPUR officials have committed to support a waste programme in Katihar on a decreasing basis for three years.

SPUR officials have been supportive of the SEWA model and encouraged the Municipal Corporation to expand and scale up the current model to cover all 45 wards. SEWA Bharat welcomes this support and involvement but also recommend that SPUR focus on developing and strengthening the financial management and capacity of the Corporation. It is essential that any programmes are sustainable and can be funded directly by the Corporation without reliance on SPUR in the longer term.

\textsuperscript{11}SAMVARDHAN, SPUR Bihar http://spurbihar.in/Default.asp
During the course of the research to inform this report many stakeholders both from civil society and local government expressed their concerns with the perceived long delays, the lack of tangible progress of SPUR programmes so far and in the lack of information available on SPUR activities, particularly in relation to tenders. These problems seem to be causing confusion amongst all stakeholders involved in urban governance and a lack of trust in the process.

Within SPUR there is supposed to be a sanitised landfill site every 50 km but two years have passed and nothing has happened. No commitments are being met and they are making huge claims. There have been no benefits yet in Katihar - they promised technical know-how, ingenious plans, plans to help and at the bare minimum then computerisation but even that hasn’t happened.

CEO Municipal Corporation
8. Policy Context

The development of waste management schemes should be viewed in the context of the wider national and international commitments and policies of the Indian government. These include the following:

**Millennium Development Goals**

In 2000, leaders of 189 countries including India, signed the Millennium Declaration, agreeing to do everything in their power to end poverty. They promised to do this by achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a roadmap set by the UN to end extreme poverty by 2015. In India a parliamentary committee of 30 MPs was formed in 2008 to ensure that the MDGs are met. The following Goals are of particular relevance:

**Millennium Development Goal 1:**
**Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**
- Target 1.A: Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day.
- Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive and decent work for all, including women and young people.

**Millennium Development Goal 3:**
**Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

**Millennium Development Goal 7:**
**Ensure environmental sustainability**
- Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
Eleventh Five Year Plan

The Indian Government’s national plans, and economic and development priorities are set out in five year plans. The plan is developed, executed and monitored by the Planning Commission. The priorities of the current 11th five year plan (2007-2012) are: inclusive growth; reforms for a vibrant private sector; better access to essential services in health and education; infrastructure; environmental sustainability; special attention to disadvantaged groups; and good governance at all levels.

The current plan includes the following objectives:

Income and Poverty:

- Accelerate growth rate of GDP from 8% to 10% and then maintain at 10% in the 12th plan in order to double per capita income by 2016-17.
- Create 70 million new work opportunities.
- Reduce educated unemployment to below 5%.
- Raise real wage rate of unskilled workers by $20.
- Reduce the head-count ratio of consumption poverty by 10%.

Women and Children

- Raise the sex ratio for age group 0 - 6 to 935 by 2011 - 12 and to 950 by 2016 - 17.
- Ensure that at least 33% of direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government schemes are women and girls.
- Ensure that all children enjoy a safe childhood, without any compulsion to work.

Environment:

- Attain WHO standards of air quality in all major cities by 2011 - 12.
- Treat all urban waste water by 2011 - 12 to clean river waters.
National Common Minimum Programme

The National Common Minimum Programme (2004) sets out the priorities of the current Congress-led UPA Government. It identifies the need to give greater importance to social sector expenditure to promote development with social justice, in particular for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the development of this Programme, employment generation emerged as the most pressing issue for political concern and the breakdown of rural employment generation was a major cause of public dissatisfaction illustrated in the outcome of the last general election. The Government recognised that further efforts are needed to promote vocational training schemes, entrepreneurial activity, occupational safety and health and social security for workers.

The National Common Minimum Programme includes the following six principles for governance:

- To preserve, protect and promote social harmony and to enforce the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements who seek to disturb social amity and peace.
- To ensure that the economy grows at least 7-8% per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more and in a manner that generates employment so that each family is assured of a safe and viable livelihood.
- To enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector and assure a secure future for their families in every respect.
- To fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally.
- To provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Other Backward Castes and religious minorities.
- To unleash the creative energies of entrepreneurs, businessmen, scientists, engineers and all other professionals and productive forces of society.

The following commitments are particularly relevant:

Employment

- The UPA government will immediately enact a National Employment Guarantee Act.
- The UPA government will establish a National Commission to examine the problems facing enterprises in the Unorganised, informal sector. A National Fund will be created.
Women and Children

- The UPA government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservations for women in vidhan sabhas and in the Lok Sabha. Legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination will be enacted.

- The UPA government will ensure that at least one-third of all funds flowing into panchayats will be earmarked for programmes for the development of women and children. Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition.

- Complete legal equality for women in all spheres will be made a practical reality, especially by removing discriminatory legislation and by enacting new legislation that gives women, for instance, equal rights of ownership of assets like houses and land.

- The UPA government will bring about a major expansion in schemes for micro-finance based on self-help groups, particularly in the backward and ecologically fragile areas of the country.

- The UPA government will protect the rights of children, strive for the elimination of child labour, ensure facilities for schooling and extend special care to the girl child.

Unorganised Sector Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008

94% of the labour force in India works in the informal economy. They work in often dangerous conditions and lack any benefits or social protection. The Unorganised Sector Workers’ Social Security Act (2008) aims to provide social security and welfare for unorganized workers. The Scheme envisages to provide three basic necessities to the workers in the unorganised sector (i) old-age pension, (ii) personal accidental insurance and (iii) medical insurance.

Despite this raft of commitments and policies tackling the poverty, inequality and exclusion faced by women working in the informal economy is still a low political priority and monitoring is weak. There is a major gap between policy and practice. More needs to be done to implement existing legislation, to resource social protection programmes and to ensure informal workers have legal recognition, access to rights, social security and decent working conditions.
Law and Policies in Relation to Waste-pickers and their Families

Estimates for the total number of waste pickers in India are not easy to ascertain. However, some city studies have been conducted, for example in Ahmedabad there are an estimated 30,000 waste pickers and in Delhi 100,000 - the majority are women and children.

As previously mentioned the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules passed in January 2000 mandates a comprehensive policy for collecting, handling and managing solid waste. Although the Rules do not make specific mention of waste pickers, they are explicit in offering a wide range of choices to municipalities in the systems that they may want to adopt depending upon local conditions. As has previously been noted contracting out the system, partly or fully, to national or multinational operators is usually the most popular due to a strong lobby that believes that privatisation of waste collection is cheaper and more efficient. However as mentioned these systems often displace waste-pickers as they give the contracting party direct control over the waste and its disposal.

Legal Regulatory Framework for Waste Pickers

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<td>Right to life and livelihood</td>
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<td>No effective protection of wages or working conditions.</td>
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<td>Environmental Regulations on Solid Waste Management</td>
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<td>Municipal laws vest primary task of waste management in Municipalities. Tendering of waste collection determine access of waste pickers to waste</td>
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12 http://wiego.org/informal_economy_law/waste-pickers-india
The National Environment Policy, 2006 attempted to integrate waste pickers into the waste collection system stating, “Give legal recognition to, and strengthen the informal sector systems of collection and recycling of various materials. In particular enhance their access to institutional finance and relevant technologies.”

However despite these developments there is still no clear policy for waste pickers or efforts to legislate to protect the rights of the waste pickers. A holistic solid waste management system that gives due recognition and protection to waste pickers is needed.

An integrated waste management system, in which segregation at source enables better management of waste and provides employment with better working conditions to waste pickers, needs to be mandated by law for all local bodies across the country.

To this end, in 2008, Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) prepared a draft policy for the alliance of waste picker organisations entitled, ‘National Policy for Ensuring Decent Livelihoods in the Recycling Industry: A policy for inclusion and integration of the informal recycling sector/industry in the process of solid waste management.’

The objectives of this policy are to ensure a sustainable, decentralised, integrated solid waste management policy. It seeks to envision the formal and informal sectors in waste management as being a part of the integrated whole.

The key objectives of the policy are:

- Primary responsibility of waste management and disposal shall be with the local government.
- Primary thrust is to reduce, reuse and recycle, striving ultimately towards a ‘zero waste’ model.
- Develop and use appropriate local technology for treatment and disposal of waste.
- Ensure an environmentally safe and sustainable approach to waste collection, processing, treatment and final disposal. (e) Acknowledge and legalise the primary role played by the recycling industry in reducing and managing waste and contributing to a cost effective and sustainable waste management system.
- Recognizing waste and recycling as an opportunity for generating livelihoods for workers in the informal sector and as national saving through recycle, reuse and composting. Minimal diversion of waste to secondary storage and landfills.
• Acknowledge the traditional rights of waste collectors to waste and recyclable material.
• Encourage active participation of the primary stakeholders – safai karmacharis, waste collectors and local bodies.
• **Primacy to workers organizations, cooperatives, NGOs and RWA collectives in awarding the Solid Waste Management contracts.**
• Awareness, education and capacity building of primary stakeholders in scientific methods of waste handling and disposal.
• Ensure that units generating biomedical waste separate the contaminated waste at source for collection and treatment as per the BMW M&H Rules. Mixing BMW should lead to stringent punitive measures.
• Ensure that all industrial units that use hazardous materials chemicals adopt appropriate treatment and disposal techniques.
• Ensure effective implementation to eliminate the employment of child labour in solid waste management processes.
• Primacy and subsidies to composting and recycling technologies for organic wastes and ensure that sanitary land filling be resorted to as the last option.
• Acknowledging at all levels the contribution of the waste recycling sector/industry in subsiding the society, at large.
• Ensuring equity of services in waste collection and disposal to all citizens residents, across the country.\(^\text{14}\)

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\(^\text{14}\) National Policy for Ensuring Decent Livelihoods in the Recycling Industry: A policy for inclusion and integration of the informal recycling sector/industry in the process of solid waste management.
Interviews with Community Waste Collectors

Murti Devi - I have worked with SEWA for one year and collect waste in Mirchaibari. I used to make about Rs 500-800 doing ad hoc cleaning for shops and private homes. This is my first full time job. I am a single parent and have a son. I am 28 years old.

Apart from untouchability practices I like working in this job but certain people become very nasty at times. For example some people don’t wrap up their sanitary napkins or nappies and don’t dispose of them properly - sometimes they purposefully put them on the floor and ask me to pick them up. When I tell the field organisers about what happens they support me. If households continue to do this then we stop collecting from them. However some have changed after the field organisers have talked with them and then they rejoin the SEWA scheme.

I have joined other SEWA schemes-through this I opened a bank account and have saving Rs 100 a month and I try to save extra when I can. Most money goes into my son’s education. He is 12 and in 6th grade. I am divorced and live alone away from my parents. Now I have enough money to survive.

I wish for something better for my son. To have a respectable job and for him not to be in the same business as me—to be a teacher, or in the railways—not my life.

He does not experience any discrimination even though his friends are from other castes.

I live on encroached government land in a makeshift home made from bamboo. As a squatter I have to get electricity illegally so I pay someone for this. I have to go around ½ km to collect water for drinking and washing. Often the well breaks so for few days at a time we don’t have water and then we all have to chip in and get it fixed.
The work is hard and sometimes I feel tired but I don’t have anyone to share this with. I don’t have hopes for my own future - I think very little about myself, my thoughts are with my son - I hope that he can care for me in my old age.

I was married when I was 12 - it was arranged and forced by my father. Soon after I was married, my husband invited another woman into our house, so I divorced him when my son was 2 months old. If a woman goes astray no one will forgive her but if a man goes astray it is acceptable. I wanted to show my husband that this is not acceptable and that I wouldn’t share him. I don’t get any maintenance money from ex-husband or money from his family and have no contact with him now.

I do vote and before elections politicians come and canvas. They make false promises and when they come to power they do nothing. I am from Dom caste; there is one councillor from this caste but he doesn’t help us.

The biggest difference in my life would be a better job-to become a tailor and to set up a small business.

**Tuna Devi** - I have been with SEWA since the project started. I collect in Durgasthan. Previously I was unemployed and only my husband earned money. He worked as a sweeper for A-Z. I have three children and we only used to have enough money for one meal a day. Now all my children are going to school and have additional tuition. I am also a member of a SEWA micro-finance Self Help Group (SHG).

**Tara Devi** - I have worked with SEWA for one year and collect waste from Mirchaibari. I previously relied on my husband who was a rickshaw puller. This is the first time I have worked. I have three children and am also supporting my mother and father. However we are no better off now because my husband has stopped working.

**Pulwar Devi** - I have worked with SEWA since the project started and I collect in Mirchaibari. I used to make earn money making products from bamboo and earned Rs 1500 per month. I am a single mother and support my 3 daughters. I live with my parents.

**Pinky Devi** - I have been working with SEWA for one year, collecting in Officers Colony. My husband died so I am supporting my 2 children and this is the first time I have had a job.

**Runam Devi** - I have been working with SEWA for one year collecting in Binodpur. My husband also works in A –Z Corporation as a sweeper. I support my 5 children and this is my first ever job.
**Rajni Devi** - I have been working with SEWA for one and a half years and I collect in Amalatolya. I used to live with my sister but she died so now I look after my nephew. My husband is a driver but this is very seasonal work.

**Lourik** - I have been working with SEWA for fourteen months and collect in Mirchaibari. I used to work ad hoc work with a medical clinic earning Rs1500 per month. I have one son and a wife who is not working.

**Chandan** - I have been working with SEWA for two months and I collect in Lalkthi. I used to pull a rickshaw, making Rs 100-200 per day but this is very fluctuating. I have children and my wife doesn’t work so I support my whole family.

**Basanti** - I have been working with SEWA for one year and collect in Burrabazar, I used to work in an office earning Rs 500 per month. My husband died so I look after our son. I also look after my mother. Now I am able to look after her and my son is going to school. I am improving the quality of our lives as there are no male earning members in our family.

**Ramchandan** - I have been working with SEWA for one and a half years and collect in Binopur. I used to do private work but this work was never regular.

**Basanti** - I have been working with SEWA for one year. I am supporting 3 sons and 1 daughter and my husband works in an office earning Rs 1,000 per month. I am also saving money in a SHG.

**Rekha** - I have been working with SEWA for one and a half years. I have a husband and kids. He works sometimes and earns around Rs750 per month. Now I can sign my name because of the adult education classes I have been attending and I now have two square meals a day for my family.

**Guriya** - I have been working with SEWA for one year. I collect in Amlatolya. My husband died and I have one daughter. We have been provided with a uniform - green shawls, sweaters, shoes etc. We have been to the best hotels in town with SEWA for trainings which wasn’t possible before.
Puja Kumari - I have been with SEWA for a year and a half since the project started. My role is to convince people to join the scheme and to monitor day to day collections and workers in my area. I am currently responsible for 289 households.

First we identified three wards - Mirchaibari, Amlatola and Rajhata. We went door to door and told people about the scheme, a bit about SEWA and that SEWA were planning to come and collect their solid waste. We told them about our wider plans and encouraged them to participate. We started this campaign in July and then started collecting on 1st August 2010. We also asked people to segregate their rubbish. The first reaction of most people was to laugh because no one has done this before and so they thought why should we segregate! When we told them they would have to pay 99% agreed. There were two people in Vishwanath - Mukim (BJP party official) and Akeelakhter (lawyer) that said that what you are doing is not acceptable and that if you try to collect a fee then we will put you in jail! However we managed to persuade them and now they are paying and are part of the scheme.

The main objection from people is that they are already paying taxes so why should they also pay SEWA. There is no culture in India of thinking you should clean your own waste.

There were two main reactions from people. Firstly those that said this scheme won’t work; it can’t function and will die down in 10 days time. The second was enthusiasm. People who said that it could work and let’s make it work! We spent about ten minutes with each household.

We visit households with a team of three women and visit between 9-5pm; usually we have meetings with women and get a success rate of about 80%

We also had a pamphlet about the scheme and this was endorsed by the supportive CEO of the Municipal Corporation just before he left!

We then formed our first team. First we used a wheelbarrow but the women couldn’t push it as it was too heavy so then we started using a tricycle but women couldn’t drive it so now the team is 2 women who collect and 1 man who drives the tricycle and they all sweep the road. Women don’t ride the tricycle both because they never have and because it’s socially unacceptable. Now they have more confidence so this is something we hope they will do in future but they are not doing this at present.
In December 2010 we held our first environment festival with the participation of 20 schools. We screened a short film which showed the situation on streets before and after SEWA started cleaning. Then all hell broke loose. The CEO and DM felt that this film was insulting them. As a result the municipal sweepers started collecting solid waste from houses in two of our wards and so we lost these households. This went on for about two months but then they stopped collecting and so in March 2011 SEWA came back and restarted the scheme.

From November we started in other wards-Binodpur, Baniatola, Nayatola, High School Para and Durgasthan and Mirchaibari and Officers Colony (where DM bungalow). During the ruckus with the municipal cleaners/union we prioritised these wards and lay low in the other three but from March/April we were collecting in all.

There was also a very hostile councillor in one ward who stopped SEWA operating.

**Neelam Pandi** - I have been working with SEWA for one and a half years since the project started. Initially I was responsible for 36 households in Rajhata. One day people would give us waste but the next day they would litter again, so we had to work hard to repeatedly convince them. I then took on 140 households in Binodpur which I was able to increase to 169 households after three months. I currently look after 520 households in Amlaytola and Durgapur. This area is filled with local clinics, doctors and medical shops. Medical dumping is a big problem and we don’t currently handle medical waste. People are complaining that we are not taking action on this - now we have critical mass so we need to look into medical waste management in relatively small terms.

**Renu Kamari** - I have been with SEWA for one year. When I joined I was trained by Pushpa and accompanied her. From then on I understood how households could be convinced and how to collect subscriptions. I now look after 200 households in Binodpur and Nayatola.

**Sangita Kumari** - I also started a year and a half ago and was hired for this project. I started off with 250 households in Amlaytola but due to problem with corporation workers the work here was laid off. I then moved to High School with 22 households then moved to other Baniatola where I added 100 households and now I work in 3 areas - Marwaripathshala, Patel Chowk, and Burra Bazaar with a total of 120 households.
Munar Kumari - I have worked with SEWA since May 2011. I initially did a survey in Lalkothi, Larkania Tola and Driver Tola and was able to increase households from 14 to 102. I am now responsible for 340 households in total.

Sunita Kumari - I have worked with SEWA for one and a half years. I started in Rajatha but then moved to Mirchaibari and Officers Colony. I started with 258 but numbers decreased because field officers changed around. This meant that cleaners didn’t know which houses to go to and so households dropped off. We now have 255 so most have returned.

Suman - I have been with SEWA since May 2011. I first conducted surveys in new areas where there was a need - Lalkothi and Chaudhri Mohalla - and I am now responsible for 135 households.

Shardra - I started in March 2011 and initially Neelam trained me for one month. I initially had 108 households in Rajatha and I now have 282 households with one team. We enjoy the work. Before we used to be termed waste managers and used to be laughed at but now we are recognised and our efforts are appreciated. I like the problem solving part of the programme-resolving issues with households.

Average Day of Field Organisers - usually 8 hours but sometimes longer

Checking Collectors attendance and where necessary meet with households and find out if there are any problems.
Collecting of subscriptions-this takes a long time (defaulters/people out/people don't have change etc).
Checking and monitoring waste deposit points particularly those near houses, tractor timings and that everything is on time.
Reporting to office for daily meeting and submission of subscriptions and attendance sheets.
Interview with Keshav Kumar - Project Manager

I manage all the organisers, resources and logistics. I joined SEWA in June 2011. When I started in June 2011 we had 28 Sathi’s, 8 organisers, 900 households, 8 tricycles and 2 tractors. Now we have 31 Sathi’s, 8 organisers, 10 tricycles, 2 minivan/tractor and 2400 households.

We have 8 field organisers and these are organised by both ward and household density. Households pay monthly in cash - they pay the field organisers. We have a separate bank account and then this is used for immediate needs. Current balance from subscription collections is Rs 295,000.

The Sathi’s are paid Rs104 per day and they work for 6 days per week, 8 hours per day, they start at 6 am and finish at 2 pm. From 6 - 10 am they collect and segregate and then from 10 - 2 pm they dispose. They take rubbish to the primary point and then tractors come to collect it.

Field organisers manage day to day issues of Sathi’s. Larger issues I manage. All funding is currently from Gates Foundation.

I would estimate that the current team capacity is around 70% so we could take on more households. I think that around 75% would agree to pay higher (possibly Rs50) but I think the rest would refuse. We discussed a sliding scale but the DM said it’s a nominal fee so we shouldn’t bother with this. It need not be door to door collection for example we could have collection points on each street.

Challenges - If densely populated area with no space for littering then people are prepared to pay Rs50 but if space is available then people just dump. Some people just don’t want to take responsibility and will just dump.

What do we need to make project more successful?

- Comprehensive school engagement programme and an annual environment festival - young people can be the torch bearers for this scheme.

- Need greater public engagement and a community outreach programme - apart from monthly citizen’s meetings held at the office which are very poorly attended as people don’t want to travel across the city. We need to do what we did initially where we spoke to around 40 people at same time in community meetings. We want to do rickshaw programmes, folk programmes etc and to use the funds we are generating for this.

- We would like to establish a Co-operative but to do this legally you need 50 workers from 4 districts and we currently only have 31 from one district.
Recruitment of community waste collectors?

We approached existing cleaners, went to visit sweeper colonies. They are from the Dom caste and many people want a job as gives them regular employment.

Yes they face harassment-householders won’t allow them to touch the dustbins-this happens less now but does still happen in Marharani households. One Sathi asked for a glass of water and they said please keep the glass. Sometimes they are not let into the house or money is left on the ground. We said how will you give us the change? So now some are convinced and let them in. As household numbers increase then time waiting increases - 2% of people say we can’t leave it out as then we can’t then touch the dustbin - they said it would be OK as long as the collectors came before they took their showers.

Collectors work till 2pm-approx then go on to do other work.

Future Aims

- Public awareness and proper implementation of municipal’s solid waste management policies and rules that are not publicised-they have money allocated but not utilised.

- Increase awareness and local community engagement

- For everyone to be more disciplined-including Community Collectors to be more polite to households, increase the number of households reached, improve their time management etc

- To collect from 25,000 households in 3 years - with public notification and support from the government.

A current MOU with corporation for 9 wards is being considered-this includes cleaning drains and sweep streets-so will need to recruit new people if this is successful.
Interviews with Residents

Resident 1 - Sharat Kumar

I live here with my brother, mother and father. SEWA have been collecting our rubbish from our house for three months. They come and collect 6 days a week. They collect our household garbage and come at the same time each day. They give a good service. For the past three months it has been a pleasure because all the households have joined and no one litters anymore so when you step outside the house it is a clean environment. Someone rented a room from us and asked about waste management so it was great that we were able to offer this service, this is what people expect!

Before all the garbage was openly dumped, the wind would blow it into our house and garden. It looked very bad when you went out. We also used to dump our rubbish because we had no other option. It is no problem paying, we pay regularly because we are asked regularly. 99% have joined in this area. This is a very good scheme for the whole of Katihar.

The municipality takes taxes but doesn’t deliver. If you can achieve these results on Rs 1 a day then imagine what you could do with all the tax money. But this is wasted. There is negligence on the part of the municipal corporation. The municipality are supposed to provide street lighting, drainage, water and street cleaning—they are not delivering any of these.

We have been living here for 31 years and the municipality used to deliver services well. However with increasing population over the last ten years things have been pushed to the limit. We like SEWA they have offered a practical solution and because their services are regular and good, so we are ready to pay higher.

Does this service let the government off their responsibilities? We have continually asked them and nothing has happened. There is a lack of awareness amongst people and a lack of options. There is arsenic and iodine in the tubewells and water. The electricity board privatised connections are very poor and there is only power 4 hours a day. We still pay taxes even though they don’t provide services.

We need to raise our demands as citizens. We need to raise our aspirations—because people don’t take collective action then things don’t change. One person can’t change things so we need a residents committee or association to demand collectively.

We need the SEWA model to be replicated.
Resident 2 - Mr S.N.P. Sinha

I am a retired government officer. I am 75 years old. I live in Rajhata area. I like the SEWA scheme because the cleaners do not ask for money like the municipal sweepers. They are clever, smart and there have been lots of improvements. They care about the environment and they are changing behaviours. The municipal cleaners never come but SEWA are reliable.

Resident 3 - Manjumala

I joined the SEWA scheme a year ago. It is a nice scheme and is going well. There are no problems - I wouldn’t say the neighbourhood is clean but it is much cleaner. People are still dumping. Previously we used to dump our rubbish and now it is collected every morning. I don’t segregate the waste. The fee is no issue for us. I would also like them to clean the drains as this is a major issue. The municipal sweepers rarely come and almost everyone has now joined SEWA scheme.

Interviews with Government Officials

Ms Ashwini Duttatreya Thakre, District Magistrate

SEWA are working with the Municipal Corporation of Katihar. The Corporation is responsible and looks after waste management, street lighting etc.

I have been posted here for one and a half years. In August 2010 SEWA started the project assisting the Municipal Corporation with door to door waste collection. We first allotted them one ward. They first conducted micro-planning and then started the collections charging Rs1 per day. With this income they maintain one ward. They are also decreasing the possibility of choking drains. We did one ward on a pilot basis and we have seen good results. We are ready to scale up as long as we follow the rules. SEWA have submitted a proposal to cover 9 wards - this is currently out for tender so we can’t discuss.

There was a very positive and successful exchange visit to Gujarat with DM, DDC, LEOs and BPOs, there they saw SEWA’s work and other SEWA schemes in relation to livelihood, creation of employment, organising, housing and urban services. Because of this exchange we trust SEWA and think that this model is replicable in the rest of the city - however we need to follow the rules.

In the government system we must work within the proscribed rules, regulations and procedures so we need facilitators and negotiators like SEWA in areas of livelihood and poverty alleviation.
The major problem in Katihar is the huge population and there are many irregularities which need to be rectified. It was previously a sub-division and therefore there has been a lack of planning and many things are faulty. There are both contractual and permanent sweepers per ward.

People do not mind paying as long as services are reliable, effective and good. Segregation of waste requires a change in mindset and behaviour - this is what SEWA are trying to do. We need to outsource this model for community education. SEWA are also providing employment for poor women. Door to door collections can be outsourced because they are labour intensive. With micro-planning leading to increased cleanliness and waste disposal then the situation will improve.

**Mr R.K. Mishra, CEO, Municipal Corporation**

I think this is a wonderful project. I have known SEWA for six months and I went to Gujarat in December where I saw SEWA’s projects that are providing poor women with housing, sanitation and computer training. I saw how women were organising and village level agricultural processing.

What impressed me was that SEWA are an organisation run by women. In India women are often at the receiving end but here they have shown their metal in a predominantly male society. SEWA are helping women’s advancement in all spheres of their life.

We in government help the poor but often in a very restrictive sense. SEWA embrace the family and all their needs - this is the most remarkable thing about SEWA.

This model can definitely be replicated, for example in plans for poor housing, sanitation and waste management - there are currently tenders out for this.

SEWA are currently doing waste management in 10 wards out of 45. It is working very well and new families are joining all the time. People are very satisfied with the project and we have had very positive feedback.

It is solving problems of waste and changing behaviours. One problem is there are lots of sweepers and cleaners who drink - now with SEWA’s influence at least they are not drinking when they are on duty. This is a great achievement as many families have been destroyed through drinking. We are thinking of introducing recycling but at the moment we don’t have the funds for this. People use landfill sites owned by the corporation and sometimes burning to dispose of waste.
Within SPUR there is supposed to be a sanitised landfill site every 50 km but two years have passed and nothing has happened. No commitments are being met and they are making huge claims. There have been no benefits yet in Katihar—they promised technical know how, ingenious plans, plans to help and at the bare minimum then computerisation but even that hasn’t happened.

The main challenge is very low level of social awareness about waste management. SEWA can change habits—if they can change people’s drinking habits then they can definitely change these!

**Mr Surajrai, Councillor, Rajhata Ward**

I am very supportive of SEWA and I first met them in May 2010 when Sanjay and Pragya came to meet with me. They came to meet with me because I was a young councillor and a man of new ideas. I encouraged them and in August 2010 the project first started in this ward. I am very pro-SEWA because I support women’s empowerment.

Me and another councillor, Krishna Singh are currently trying to support SEWA to secure the 9 ward bid. Outsourcing to SEWA has been strongly opposed by other councillors because they don’t want people to pay a subscription when they are already paying taxes. However secretly I think they support SEWA but only we have been vocal!

The main difference that SEWA have made is that where they are operating it is 80% cleaner now. People are more aware and more responsible about the fact you have to clean your area.

Around 500 households in this area are under this scheme and because of joint families this is around 1134 families.

I like SEWA because they are doing something fruitful, women are inspired, and women are integrated into the mainstream which is very important in South Asia. This model can be scaled up.

Drainage is the main problem here - we have a tractor but it is not repaired regularly. There is not enough manpower. There is a systematic problem and sweepers don’t turn up for work. There are around 2 sweepers per 2500 people, 1 person is usually absent so in reality it is 1 person. They don’t come because they are indebted and poor. Once they have paid off their debts they don’t work—there are also severe alcohol problems. Issues are discipline, manpower and equipment/repairs.
Because of SEWA the load of the Corporation has been reduced because people are no longer littering or dumping and SEWA are collecting door to door. We have seen changes in behaviour, providing learning for everyone and in women’s empowerment and confidence—people have seen and experienced this change—everyone is taking notice. The subscription fee is no problem.

Habits and attitudes are changing. Because of this I earlier provided a no objection certificate to SEWA operating and now we want to take this forward with the 9 ward agreement for which I provided an excellent character reference for SEWA. SEWA will only be working in these 9 wards and our municipal sweepers will shift to other wards.

The problems in Katihar include:
- Available infrastructure
- Population increase
- Earlier money was a problem but this has now changed with new government.

We all went to Gujarat on a 10 day visit - this was a very good exposure. Out of 45 Councillors, 15 went and this was a great team - we learnt leadership from the SEWA women. In one ward SEWA were providing everything—solar lighting, water and sanitation, waste management etc—we were very impressed. I would like to request another exposure visit to an advanced state or city to see what can be replicated, perhaps an international exchange.
Is SEWA model possible to replicate across Katihar? For the time being they are working in 20 wards-lets start slowly and then scale up if it’s possible. Renana made a lasting impression on us so we look forward to future meetings, interactions and collaboration. There is more potential for SEWA in other areas of urban development.We all have a 5 year term - many of us have been councillors before or are families have been councillors for decades.

**Interview with Bela, Teacher, SEWA Informal Education School**

I teach 30 children, 4-13 years old, from 10am-2pm, Monday to Saturday.

I have been educated till 12th class and was born in Katihar. I teach the children of municipal workers and SEWA Community Waste Collectors in a one room school. I teach Hindi, English and Maths. I teach them life skills, to have good basic habits, to study every evening, to be polite and respectful. The idea is to get them ready for mainstream school.

These children have no other schooling, either the government school is too far away or they can’t get there on their own because they are too long or the timings clash with their parents work. They are on their own from 6am-10am. There is high demand but the maximum we can take is 30 children.

I have been involved in SEWA for 9 months and was recruited to be a teacher. The school has blackboard, paper, books, pens and toys-we need copy notebooks. I am paid Rs 4000 a month and I support my mum, dad and sister; her two children and my younger brother. I am the only breadwinner supporting 7 people-earlier my younger brother was working but contract ended, my sister lives separately from her husband.

I am 25 and am not yet planning to get married. I am a member of an SHG and am saving.

Before I worked in an office taking messages and earned Rs 2500 a month.

I am a role model for the girls - they want to be a teacher and the boys want to be like Keshev (Project Manager). They are all from dom caste but don’t experience discrimination.

Parents come and share their problems about their children. The government are not supporting this scheme. They have their own non-formal education scheme called Uthhan Kendra Scheme. **This is supposed to be four hours a day but in reality it is usually one hour and when money comes they buy books and then it stops.**
We have a SEWA health organiser so if the children are sick then we give her number to the parents and then she intervenes. If scheme didn't exist then kids would be at home alone and sometimes they gamble. Providing child care for workers is critical part of the overall project.

**Interview with Rajni Ben, SEWA Trainer, Fashion Course**

I co-ordinate and teach a six month course, It is 6 days a week, one and a half hours a day. There are two batches running at a time and I teach two batches a day.

I have been running the course for one year-6 women have already passed and 15 are about to take their exam. 2 have already started a business earning around Rs2000 per month and selling clothes and making copies of clothes in their neighbourhood.

Initially they didn’t even know how to speak out in public but students go back with confidence and speak out.

At the start there was a very low turnout (2 per course) but now we have 32-the course starts every 6 months. 70% are doing well-30% not so well-because families not supportive in acquiring materials, attendance is therefore low. Course includes: children’s wear, ladies wear (petticoat, blouse, salwar) menswear and basic embroidery. I teach how to make clothes - every aspect from design if they are interested but mainly how to make clothes.

I have done an ITI fashion course and I enjoy teaching very much.

The course trains women as entrepreneurs so they can start a small business and also run a family. Fashion and tailoring is a good choice because women can work from home and it doesn’t require large amounts of capital.

Admission criteria? No requisite qualification, women need Rs150 security fee and then Rs50 per month. I find students by advertising and canvassing house to house in slum areas but it is open to all. Demand has grown slowly.

One woman was abandoned by her husband so she couldn’t continue with classes because she couldn’t afford fees but we waived her fees-she now runs her own business from her house but she doesn’t have machine so she comes to use the office machine-she is hoping to join SHG to be able to purchase a machine.

We would like to start a separate course on machine embroidery and a separate batch for SEWA Community Waste Collectors.
Interview with Soni Kumari, SEWA Trainer, Computer Course

SEWA focus on increasing the employability of poor unemployed women therefore we have started vocational training. So far 39 girls have passed basic computer training course and around 50% find jobs. For example one is now working in a petrol station earning Rs 4000 per month and another is with a direct marketing company earning Rs 2500 per month.

21 are currently training in 2 batches -10 -11.30, 12 - 1.30pm.

3 month course-includes MS Office, internet, and multimedia - one and a half hours per day, 6 days a week. SEWA issue a certificate at the end which is recognised by employees.

Some have requested a 6 month course and others for a typing course.

Criteria for participants? They have to have passed 10th standard and have a photocopy of certificates, a refundable deposit of Rs 300 and it costs Rs 100 per month. Most people who approach them can meet these criteria. Most girls are poor - just above or around Below Poverty Line. We advertise the course door to door in slum areas. Demand is very high so we have a waiting list. We try to accommodate as many people as possible and balance first come first service with priority need.

We also help them to apply for jobs and prepare CVs.

There have been 6 batches so far. Average age is 20-21 years old who have never worked before but we have had students aged 14 to 30 - some do the course while still in school.

The course also helps build their confidence. Initially students wouldn’t talk to each other but as they grow and become friendly they support each other and interpersonal relationships are built.

We decided to train girls in computer skills because this is what they need to get jobs in the private sector—we talked to women and this is what they wanted.

To build confidence of women in working with computers. There has been some resistance from male family members who don’t want their daughters and wives to come out of the house.

Our aim for the next few years is to introduce a Diploma in Computer Applications with proper accreditation.
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