



RESOLVE Trash 2 Cash narrative report

Name of the organization: South Asian Forum for Environment for RESOLVE Trash 2 Cash

Reporting period : 12 November 2014 to 4 May 2015

Enterprise program : Resolve Trash to Cash

Pattern : Funding

Funding Agency : Match International Women's Fund

Prologue: 'Resolve Trash to Cash' is the story of street dwellers of Kolkata metropolis, who turned out to be the most successful entrepreneurs in this rapidly changing world of economies and environment, social structures and infrastructures in the whirlpool of urban development and climate change. Nobody knows much about the women in the shanty towns of urban metros or the children in the footpath except the fact that they survive as the 'citizens of dirt' and that they are the most unwanted of all. Before we open the window to this unknown world, let us listen to Mrs. Sonar More from Mumbai, who in her forty's earns her livelihood as a rag picker in the streets of Mumbai and also attended the Earth Summit on climate change in Durban to represent her community with a city based NGO. She says, "Society generally sees us waste-pickers as thieves. So, when we women go to look for work, homeowners ask where we have worked before. The moment they hear we were waste-pickers they either refuse to give us work or pay us far lower wages. So most women make only half of what they would have earned as rag-pickers."

But what she believes is different. She wants to portray her as a waste worker who keeps the city clean, a recycler who can amplify resources through recycling and reuse, a woman who cares for her children and expects the dignity of a woman from the society. She clarifies, "Though some of us work for the municipality, most are free roaming rag-pickers who pick up waste from every corner of the city including the city dumping grounds. But increasingly the dumping grounds are privately owned. The companies who are setting up new landfill and recycling projects are asking us not to use their dumping grounds any more. We do not have any others means to support ourselves. At the climate summit, we are asking governments to recognize our work as waste managers and recyclers and create a small fund that would help us continue our job."

'Resolve Trash 2 Cash' discovered great entrepreneurs in these women of dirt, who just needs technology cooperation and seed resources to be an entrepreneur like any other person from this generation. The program envisaged a mammoth change in the urban perspective for the urban poor and the rich as well which would have a sustainable solution for the city's waste so that it is climate adaptive, pro-poor and economically viable. Thus the 'Theory of Change' became the lifeline for this program 'Resolve Trash to Cash' which banks on Integrated Municipal Solid waste management' through recycling, reusing and thereby reducing landfill and pollution. The mission of this women led enterprise has ever been that 'Recycling is an art that sustains life and livelihood'. It empowered women not just to earn their bread but to earn the dignity of a mother who rears her children for a better tomorrow. The present article tries to encrypt this journey from the shanty towns and streets of Kolkata to the dais of the world in COP20 climate summit in Lima, Peru.

Background

The study on rag pickers and its findings reiterates the fact that the perpetuation of child labour and exploitation of women is inextricably linked to the slow pace of poverty reduction. Intersection of poverty with other forms of disadvantages such as social abuse, trafficking, drug abuse and flesh trade etc. complicate its effects on the incidence of women abuse and child death. Thus acute poverty, which is advanced as a reason for sending children and women for Rag picking, can also be viewed as human deprivation. It relates to many factors that cannot be quantified. Deprivation relates to exclusion, vulnerability and ignorance as much as to physical weakness and lack of assets. Children living under such conditions, especially when a shock event has torn normal family life apart, work in order to survive. By working, they find an individual answer for calamities of which the society does not take any responsibility. If they were not working, the survival of the entire family could be at a stake.

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In the days of grounding of the 'Resolve trash to cash' program, the survey findings based on the data elicited from 836 households in the slums of Kolkata were startling. The sample with the total population of 4315 constituting 2407 males and 1908 females, children below 14 years comprised of 1393 male and 952 female, of which 925 children were in the age group of 5-14 years working as rag pickers. Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and some key informant interviews revealed that

- Preponderant majority of households in the study area belongs to schedule caste, indicating that the Schedule Caste women and children are more vulnerable to become Rag picking in particular.
- The average family size of the households surveyed is 5.16. There is no significant difference in average family size of households belonging to various social categories.
- The proportion of women in the age group of 6-18 is the highest (27.76 %) of all the age groups. The population above 40 is around 13% of the total population. The fact that the proportion of population above 60 constitutes less than 1% reflect the early morbidity among the population
- Study showed that 97% of households with rag picking women and children are migrants. Almost all the households migrated after 1970 when the city was being constructed. Poverty and unemployment has been reported as the most common reason for migration.
- Rag pickers usually originate from the families where negligible percent of the adults are involved in Rag picking. Nearly one third of them are self-employed. They are either rickshaw-pullers or have set up petty shops. Some of them are construction workers. This shows that many of these children are first generation rag pickers.
- Nearly two third of the households have reported monthly income ranging between Rs.1001-3000 and the remaining one-third between Rs.3001-5000. Only a negligible proportion (2.64%) of households has reported monthly income above Rs. 5000.
- Living conditions of the ragpickers are extremely poor which hardly have any basic amenities. Though majority of the households surveyed reported to be residing in their own houses, observation during the field survey reveals that barring a very few, many live in dilapidated structures made of cheap building material and these 115 structures have only temporary ceilings which are highly vulnerable to vagaries of weather.
- A substantial proportion of the earnings go for the expenditure on food and fuel. Education, health, clothing, recreation etc. are given low or 'no' priority. Literacy rate of the sample population is 18.32 per cent with Literacy rate among males is relatively higher as compared to that of females.



RESOLVE : T2C volunteer interacting with waste workers



Children of women waste workers studying in temporary school developed by community, runs without trained teachers.

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- Nearly 90 per cent of the total women surveyed are either full time or part time workers. Rag picking children in the sample population comprised of 85.73 per cent female and 14.27 per cent male. A substantial proportion of the working female children falls in the age group 11-14, when they begin their menstruation and starts the horrible life of exploitation and indignity.
- Thus, despite their disliking Rag picking, forced by circumstances many continue in this occupation. 48.76 per cent of Rag picking women spends 3-5 hours and 40.43 per cent spent up to 6 hours a day. About 10% of them spent more than 6 hours a day in Rag picking and around half of the lot make more than one trip a day to the garbage dumps, walking with loads of rubbish for an average distance of 12 Km every day.
- The daily earning of 41.41 per cent women ranges from Rs. 15 to 20 followed by 26.06 per cent with daily earnings ranging from Rs. 25 to 30 per day. A very small percentage of them have daily earnings above Rs. 50. The entire earnings or a substantial proportion of their earnings spent on meeting the basic needs of their family such as food and fuel.
- Work related health risks are very common among rag picking women. Nearly 64% of the children suffer from respiratory problems and the remaining from headache, skin diseases and stomachache. Frequently occurring cuts and wounds from rusted metals make them highly vulnerable to tetanus.

Genesis & Initiation



The daily work of women waste worker without precaution before health awareness

About 86% of calculated value of urban waste in the metropolis of India has been reportedly found to be in the disorganized recycling sector making business of few crores per annum and sustaining on unscientific and unethical waste management policy. More than 50% of the urban poor are engaged in this waste trade just as collectors, segregators or suppliers being exposed to various health hazards risk earning a nominal brokerage of 2-5% in an unstructured and non equitable revenue distribution system. Notably, Kolkata generates 3,000 tons/day of solid waste at a rate of 450-500g per capita per day. No at-source-segregation arrangement exists and only 60% house-to-house collection with rest open vats is used in present collection system. Operational efficiency of Kolkata Municipal Corporation transport system is only 50%, and waste collected has a low energy value with high moisture and inert content.

Open dumping without liners and leachate management threatens groundwater pollution and huge landfill emissions as well. 57% of Kolkata slum dwellers thrive by scavenging this garbage, configuring a vulnerable social segment as victims of poverty and held convicts for rising social abuse. The future of this radically unequal and explosively unstable urban world that makes 'citizens of dirt' was the only concern of SAFE behind creating this entrepreneurial opportunity called RESOLVE for the urban poor. As a civil society organization working towards sustainable environment development and poverty alleviation, SAFE initiated this innovative adaptive economic model of RESOLVE with the slum dwellers, since every slum portrays a vast humanity warehoused in shantytowns ostracized from the formal world economy. Social audits conducted by SAFE showed that urban slums appear on municipal garbage hills increasing landfill emission, spreading pollution and diseases whereas the solid wastes recreate resources for dwellers to survive, thereby creating opportunity for handful of recyclers to make huge profit in this unorganized sector by exploiting the underprivileged in the lure of a tiny amount. SAFE took the lead to organize a couple of slum dwellers and undertook awareness development and capacity building exercises to equip them with structured processing and low-cost small scale recycling units. While SAFE converged the resources from

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CSR funding for capital expenses and seed money, the inclusive community aggregation happened through formation of Joint Liability Groups and bank linkages. This community based Integrated Solid Waste Management business model therefore addressed two prime challenges – one of mainstreaming these slum scavengers and the other - downscaling environmental hazards of open garbage dumps. In both cases 'over-the-nose' problems were human habit of surviving in wastes and attitude change in at-source-segregation of wastes respectively. This entrepreneurial effort attempts to mainstream urban poor by capacity building and creating new economic opportunities for them in the unorganized sector of solid waste management through micro production units of recycled products, developing microutility retail chain by e-marketing & selling green value products to claim a share of revenue earned in solid waste recycling for better livelihood.

Management & Governance

The deemed Integrated Solid Waste Management micro enterprise under SAFE is absolutely owned by the community members. Community members elect their representatives and they have a say in decision making. The model of the business is member centric to peer group oriented. The members own the business and this makes them work with greater dedication, while the peer groups emerge as joint liability groups for sustaining the business economics. Also when they formulate the rules and regulations they are less likely to violate them. This makes the system both strong and transparent. The mode of selection of members to attain company's portfolio is based on professional competency and vision of the candidate, which is then validated by every other member's positive consent.



Health awareness camp & distribution of health kits under Match International support

Values Respect towards human and their livelihood in general and women in particular, equity, reciprocity and transparency in operations and stakeholder engagement, Creativity and innovation in enriching delivery and augmenting professional competency.

Vision The Gandhian thought, "Be the change you want to see..." is the mandate of the organization since welcoming change in social behavior, attitude and team governance is the sole sustainability factor that increases resilience and adaptability.

Mission To organize urban slum dweller waste-workers to a legally accredited recognized civic body that is professionally equipped for protection and promotion of human rights and to foster inclusive growth toward women's social and economic empowerment as well.



Series of health awareness workshop with women waste workers in Kolkata slum under Match International support.

Objectives

- To assess and evaluate the working environment of urban women waste-workers and their professional security in both formal and informal sector

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- Create awareness towards protection and promotion of women's rights to combat exploitation and ascertain dignity of work
- Initiate actions to protect and prevent occupational hazards, health safety and professional security for women waste-workers
- Undertake capacity building on integrated waste management for alternative economic opportunities, financial inclusion and risk coverage
- Organize urban women waste-workers into place-based registered cooperatives to foster social and economic empowerment



It is observed that after health awareness workshop women waste workers using preventive gears.

Performance & Sustainability

- The enterprise started with a seed capital grant of INR 16.5 lacs in year 2009, of which 45% investment was in capital expenses for developing recycling infrastructures and 25% was spent in capacity building with the rest (approx. INR 4.5 lacs) as running expenses. Within three years, the equity base has increased to INR 7.29 lacs considering the estimated stock value of products and also ploughing back of the company's surplus profits from the exhibition and retail sales in FY 2010-11 – 2011-12.
- Currently, RESOLVE has access to funds from Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor programme of Govt. of West Bengal, NABARD, and CSR support from five corporate houses, who also donate their wastes along with others.
- At the end of FY 2012-13, RESOLVE is expected to generated a gross profit of INR 2,36,000.00 with a remaining estimated stock volume of another INR 50,000.00 after depreciation.
- Average annual income of a full time working member is INR 30,000-35,000. This would substantially increase the per capita by 40-45% at the end of the current financial year.

RESOLVE : T2C			
SUMMARY OF BUSINESS MATRIX			
YEAR	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Total Turnover	INR 4.57 Lacs	INR 5.68 Lacs	INR 8.83 Lacs
Net Profit*	8.30%	16.52%	27.29%
*The projected profit % is shown as current profit when the wastes (raw materials) are obtained as donation under CSR of five corporate houses.			

Operations

Production plan : The present enterprise is based on a supply driven integrated urban waste management in which solid biodegradable wet waste and non biodegradable, recyclable solid dry waste is collected upon segregation at source from corporate house campus, urban offices, and public premises for recycling. High quality vermicompost organic fertilizers are produced from the biodegradable portion of the waste and micro utility household products, handicrafts and decors, and paper mache products are produced by reusing and recycling the dry waste portion. Plastics are segregated and sold to licensed recyclers for producing anaerobic fuel oil as a substitute to fossil fuel. The produce undergoes standardization of specific dimension and colour in accordance with its utility value. It is packed and priced for marketing.

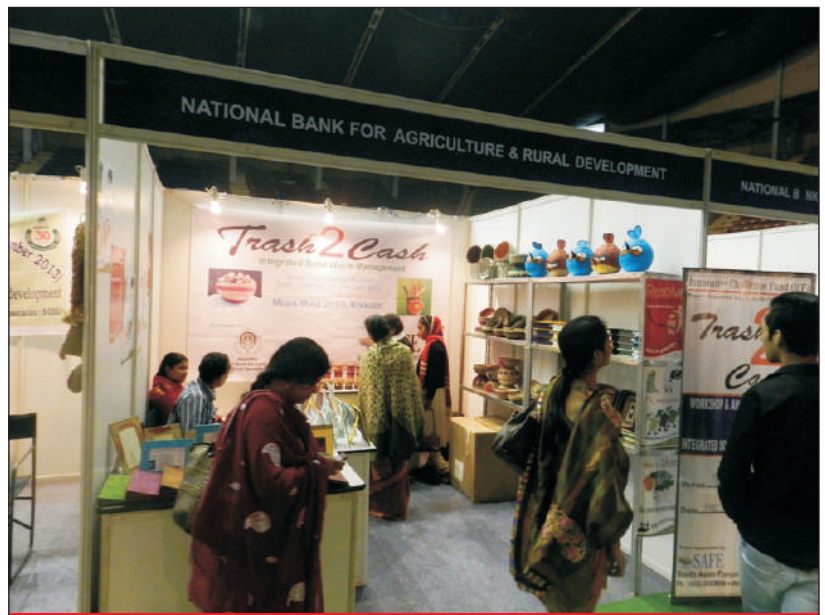
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Marketing and supply chain : The marketing strategy of the products attempts to reach specific buyers through exhibition sale and event based targeted distribution on one hand and on the other it reaches the open market buyers with a micro utility retailing effort catering to supply of micro-utility products for regular household usage. The present stature of the enterprise is now segmented into separate production and marketing divisions wherein the beneficiaries cater to both the areas with due exposure and training extended as outreach exercise by the implementing agency, SAFE. The unique marketing strategies include creation of a brand value with ecofriendly components in the production chain and intricate retail chain developed by joint liability groups with urban partnership for a sustainable cause.

Market segment & Customer profile : The organic fertilizer has an immense market demand in the urban sector, government agencies and rural sector as well. The packaging of the product is small and big both, attractive to cater to these huge market segments with almost no trade rivalry. The other micro utility products access the open market and compete with polymer fiber to metal made products. The edge over other products enjoyed here is the social and environmental values which helps in product branding and attracts 10-15 percent better pricing. The buyers' response to the USP (unique selling points) as a responsible urban citizen is an important marketing strategy to enhance revenue returns.

The Functional Model comprised of the following

1. Youth women members of slum are initiated to joint liability groups (JLGs) that are bank linked and oriented with the trade.
2. Capacity building and technology transfer for JLGs to set up micro recycling units for paper mache and paper molding based on low cost green engineering.
3. The urban paper waste segregated at source in public and corporate sectors get donated to JLGs working as producer's organizations of micro-utility household products for daily usage made out of disposable paper waste.
4. Mainstream these producers organization through financial inclusion, state of the art marketing strategy and communication skill.
5. E-sensitization for urban stakeholders to promote the trade with cyber tools. Calling for corporate partnership through CSR & in-house sales of products.
6. Place based event management for exhibition cum sale, silent auction & web-auction for selling products.
7. Revenue return is used as working capital, micro-insurance and profit share showing fare break-even.



RESOLVE T2C products in the exhibition for sale



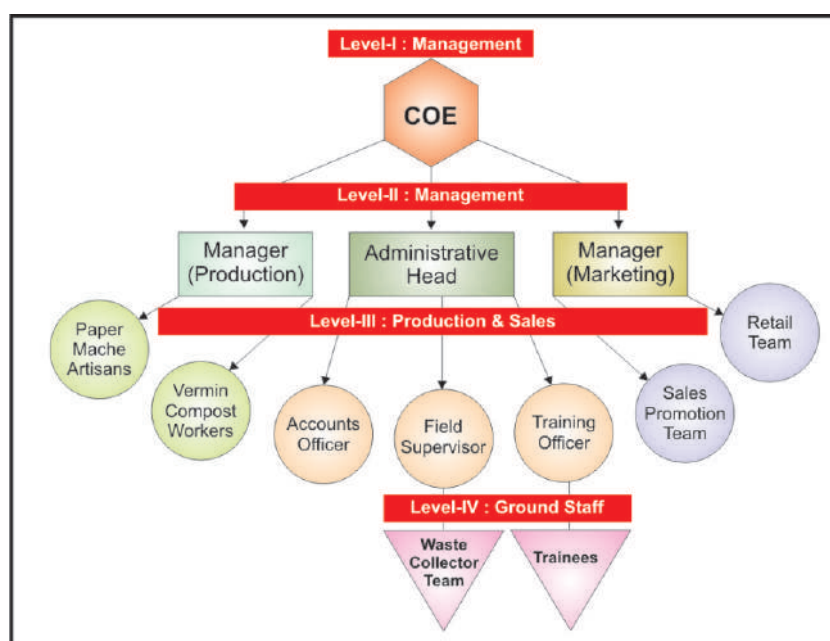
Ongoing skill development training workshop under Match International Women's Fund.

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8. Finally the enterprise is institutionalized as 'Commercial Association of Parties' and formed a producers group under the aegis of State Cooperative Bank.

Staff strength and Management Organogram

RESOLVE WORKHORSES						
YEAR	Male Members		Female Members		Active Members	TOTAL
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	
2009-10	8	12	10	20	18	50
2010-11	12	14	22	30	34	78
2011-12	12	25	35	25	47	97
2012-13	15	15	42	75	57	147
2013-14	18	23	57	83	75	181



Profile of members of Enterprise RESOLVE

Members and beneficiaries working with RESOLVE are mostly middle school drop outs or uneducated persons from slum areas, who are below poverty level and use to earn their livelihood as road scavengers and rag pickers in waste dumps. The production manager is an undergraduate, who has recently geared up for completing graduation from Open University system. However, SAFE members affiliated to RESOLVE are professionals and experienced in development sector for almost a decade.

Services offered to members

The members are those who are directly or indirectly affiliated to the enterprise and support the endeavor for better livelihood. Most of them are members of Joint Liability Groups and has undergone financial inclusion. The services offered to them are as hereunder

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- Capacity building exercises and hands-on training for the trade
- Permission to join the retail team on commission based incentives, without any capitation fee or security deposit.
- Initiation to microinsurance schemes.
- Free medical camps and sanitation awareness programme.
- Credit linkage facility after successful completion of training.

Benefits to the members


- Alternative Economic opportunity for sustaining livelihood
- Skill development and financial inclusion
- Social assurance and better lifestyle.

Benefits to the non members

Non-members from the beneficiary communities are not discriminated very strictly, though they are first given an exposure to the process and business model and then encouraged for joining training workshop as members.

Profile of non-members : Same as members.

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>INTERNAL</p>  <p>EXTERNAL</p>	<p>STRENGTHS [S]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. End to end solution for ISWM 2. Revenue linked sustainable model 3. Environment friendly enterprise 4. Positive behavioral and attitude changes by awareness building 5. Strong social impact on urban poor 6. Risk spreading and risk coverage 7. Innovative scale-up plans 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES [O]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low market competition and increasing demand 2. Exhibition sale & silent auction 3. Cyber promotion and sale 4. Huge volume of solid waste 5. Job creation through capacity building and HR development 6. Green USP with Carbon Finance
<p>WEAKNESS [W]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous technology 2. Brief product range and scope 3. Time bound production chain 4. Insufficient marketing & branding tool 5. Lack of skilled workers 6. Lacking in policy advocacy 	<p>S-W Strategies</p> <p>Return on investment will be utilized in technology transfer and mechanization to increase scope, scale and delivery. Awareness campaign to be used as marketing tool and community mobilization. Social & environmental impact will help in policy advocacy.</p>	<p>O-W Strategies</p> <p>Demand driven market economy can be created with more manpower and capacity building. Cost of production will not suffer owing to sufficiency in raw materials and human resources. Green USP increases brand value and market share.</p>
<p>THREATS [T]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Big waste Mafias & dealers 2. Prolonged financial lock-in 3. Health hazard risks of workers 4. Market Saturation 5. Externalities 	<p>S-T Strategies</p> <p>Social drive and attitude change will help combat waste-mafias. Risk spreading and coverage with micro-insurance will help combat hazards and externalities. Innovative scaling up will disallow market saturation.</p>	<p>O-T Strategies</p> <p>Augmented human resource input and technology transfer will help combat external pressure and financial criticality. Green quotient (USP) and Carbon finance will be additional leverage to it.</p>

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Take on the Community Enterprise

Resolve is a prima facie endeavor of SAFE that directly relates to its mandate of sustainable development through poverty alleviation. The project defines a win-win situation for the community, stakeholders, and urban society by promising social assurance, clean environment, and financial compensation to opportunity cost in a one-in-all-package. SAFE has the onus and pride to drive the community in addressing two crucial challenges of mainstreaming slum dwellers and giving an organized structure to solid waste management domain. The spin-off effect has a deep impact on the urban community bringing positive change in behavior and attitude. SAFE has been successful in devising a low cost efficacy model and in designing a participatory community based intervention for a better revenue return. Above all the catalytic role of SAFE presents a social change maker rather than a business developer to architect a sustainable city with a community owned enterprise.



Ongoing skill development training workshop under Match International Women's Fund.

Social Responsibility & Impact

Highlights:

- Socio-economic inclusion of 550 urban slum dwellers through access to financing, access to supply chains, access to technology and access to economic opportunity. Nearly 120 members of the community bank linked as 10 Joint Liability Groups with State Cooperatives & SBI
- Microinsurance Coverage for 400 beneficiaries participating in this programme directly or indirectly with specially designed savings mode policy towards risk spreading in collaboration with TATA-AIG life.
- Developing green economy for betterment of urban environment by converting 8216 MT of wet waste every month to organic fertilizer for climate smart agriculture and fish feed and saving a total of 537 MT of CO₂ emissions from landfills.
- The facility recycles nearly 2000 Kg of waste papers every week that has an indirect REDD plus implication in saving forests or non timber forest produces.
- Betterment of livelihood for more than 500 households in slums and social assurance for urban poor,
- Policy change impact through advocacy in Integrated Solid Waste Management to two Urban Local Bodies (Municipalities) and five MNC's in Kolkata.



Ongoing skill development training workshop under Match International Women's Fund.

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SMART Impacts

Initiated in a small scale in Kolkata metropolis a handful of women (150 numbers) working as ragpickers in the solid waste dumping ground were trained with the trade and an exhibition organized with the first set of production of their handwork. The consequences were far reaching that attracted a corporate social responsibility funding for proper capacity building followed by voluntary donation of paper wastes from five leading multinational corporate houses of Kolkata. The women who used to gaze in the garbage grounds now regularly attend paper mache workshop in proper uniform and stick to the rules of safety and hygiene. The economic development has come by virtue of an increased income of nearly 35% over their previous earnings. Moreover, they are aware of risk coverage and have micro insurance policies to their benefits. Though the amount of landfill emission reduction was in miniscule, the effort has been recognized as one of the best practiced by UNEP in their clean up the world campaign.



RESOLVE T2C products in the exhibition for sale at corporate office.

Initiated project will diversify in two verticals, one is recycling of wet garbage into vermicompost impacting in reducing landfill emission and promoting sustainable agriculture, other is reuse of non biodegradable plastic bottles as paper mould cast for creating home garden potteries. This activity will be associated with capacity building for to initiate newer members into the trade and aggressive awareness campaign in the public domain for segregation at source. Beneficiaries would standardize their products, deduce correct production cost and decide on the profit margins so as to prepare a bankable model that can be placed for a credit linkage request. Proper marketing tools, innovative awareness devices and extended outreach activities will be integral to this 3 year action plan.

Innovations

Highlights:

- It is an end-to-end integrated management paradigm for urban solid waste bringing positive change in attitude amongst urban communities about waste 'segregation at source' before disposal to add tangible values to the generated trash. Segregation augments the commodity valuations of wastes as this makes it ready for direct recycling.
- It conjure revenue return model for creating alternative economic opportunity for urban poor creating 12000 job opportunities annually from waste recycling, which would have otherwise created environmental and



RESOLVE T2C women entrepreneurs team with international delegates at an exhibition.

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health hazards leading to loss in national GDP.

- It is based on an ecofriendly clean development mechanism that helps reduce landfill emission footprints, and directly implicate in downscaling climate impacts and abatement of environmental pollution. This has the potentials to accrue carbon finance in future to add to the sustainability of the project.
- It is augmenting the economic values of disposable products using minimal infrastructure and reduced capital expenses, thereby facilitating resource amplification. These doubly ensure sustainability and product management.
- It is mainstreaming socially excluded marginal urban poor without displacing them from their trade but organizing it into a structured revenue return model through comprehensive technology cooperation and financial inclusion.
- It has direct links with value added services like plantation, prevention of land fill and conservation of habitat, urban aesthetics, water and sanitation issues, microinsurance cover etc to compensate the opportunity costs of rehabilitated beneficiaries in the programme.



Ongoing health awareness camp

The initiative is evolutionary showing cumulative changes in urban attitude towards segregation of waste at source, use of recycled waste products, awareness on landfill emission and habitat loss etc. The urban poor evolve towards a better lifestyle and more organized livelihood adding towards city's sustainability coefficient. The innovation is basically applied in three segments of which one is in strategic implementation of segregation of waste at source to add-in commodity value to trash, the next is technology wherein it uses low cost green technology and the last segment is administration and planning to provide entrepreneurial leadership to slum dwellers in creating an alternative livelihood opportunity towards sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Basically this is a comprehensive effort to aggregate sporadic efforts on integrated solid waste management and socioeconomic mainstreaming of slum dwellers who scavenge the open garbage to survive. This low-cost, inclusive and holistic paradigm has benefitted the urban poor in the first place and other urban stakeholders like the municipal corporation, corporate and urban society as a whole.

Convergence of slum members under fiscal strain and retention of the purpose needs meticulous counseling, incentives and promising market returns. To combat this, a contingency plan is followed which includes regular capacity building workshops to substitute dropouts, organizing events and exhibitions for fund raising to allow stipends as incentives to beneficiaries. Arrange for high end activities, exposure visits and market survey programs to keep beneficiaries motivated. Power of Small has boldly branded the work more as a value added community service, rather than a revenue coupled business pathway.



RESOLVE T2C products selling at renowned handcraft outlet in Kolkata

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Case Study

"We understand that innovation is a freedom from the fear of failure. This freedom can sustain a positive social change and Resolve is a burning example of this intervention", says Amrita Chatterjee, CEO of the project Resolve. In her journey with marginal stock of slum dwellers towards a sustainable esteemed entrepreneurship she has come across cases of transformations that are exemplary. Excerpts from the voices of such community members are shared here:

1. **Mukti Mandal** "I had never thought that one day I will enter these office premises in uniforms and photo ID cards. This project has taught me that a true effort can bring up a street dweller to the dais. I feel proud to be a part of this". (Mukti was a ragpicker in the cyber hub of Kolkata, two years back and have been a victim of drug abuse, social crime and poverty. Today he earns INR 4500 per month and takes community classes on waste management awareness)
2. **Mira Mandal** "For generations we survived as waste water workers. Never in my dreams even had I thought of paintings and handicrafts as an alternative livelihood that can make me free from this ugly, stinking work of waste water fisheries. Didi (Amrita) says that we too can do it if we do it together. We have learnt it from this project. We will continue to work for a better lifestyle and livelihood". (Mira was a waste water fisherwoman who worked in sewerage in all seasons to earn just INR 750-800 per month, suffering from skin ailments and acute intestinal disorder. Today she is in good health, earns five times more by making papermache handicrafts, sends her kids to school and learns to read and write Bengali.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of women resorting to Rag picking is mostly due to their instinct to survive with their children in hard life conditions. Though, many do not like Rag picking, they continue to engage in this work thus. The gaps and deficiencies in solid waste management is one of the causes of the increasing phenomenon of Rag picking. Most of them belong to lower caste poor families where their parents are illiterate and unskilled. Scrap dealers very often take advantage of their vulnerability, ignorance and illiteracy and they are cheated and exploited. Rag picking has several negative consequences on the lives of poor urban women. The risks related to their children's health and physical development, as well as being the hindrance for their education and psychological development, makes Rag picking a particularly adverse occupation for



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women. The environment they operate in make them vulnerable to violence, abuse and ill treatment, which may drive them to indulge in delinquent behavior. Exposure to alcohol, drugs and commercial sex also represents a constant threat, leading them to drug addiction and victims of AIDS even. The Problem of poor women in general and rag pickers in particular cannot be seen or solved in isolation. The problems of rag pickers should be seen as problems of the rag picker must be seen as a human person in a holistic perspective. The problems of the survival and development of women should be viewed as an intertwined ramification. In that perspective, infant mortality, malnutrition, unemployment of adults, bonded labour, lack of a modicum of educational facilities, the fractured condition of the family institution, explosion of population, pervasive poverty and penury, and workers growing social defenselessness, helplessness and insensitivity are all knotted threads in the web of such a predicament. A concerted and dynamic thrust is needed towards solving these problems. General public and policy stakeholders should be made aware of the rights of the women. It is high time that rights are recognized and implemented. An effective and efficient solid waste management system is equally required to deal with the problem of rag pickers. The most enduring would be to improve the economic conditions of the families from where these rag picking women and children are drawn into the dirty trade. The provision of assistance in the form of income generating assets under different development and poverty eradication programmes needs to be provided to such families. 'RESOLVE Trash to Cash' can be an exemplary entrepreneurial solution to this. Free and compulsory education along with vocational training would enable them to earn a living as esteemed adults. In Rag picking there is no visible employers to discourage employing children and vulnerable women so as to penalize them under law for continuous violation of human rights as in cases where the employer and the employee could be easily traced. In such a situation the trade needs a structured and institutionalized system as found in 'RESOLVE Trash 2 cash". Other social partners have an important role in mobilizing public opinion against Rag picking by large-scale awareness campaign. The Act of 1986 in India and similar acts in other countries should be followed and kept under careful review. A mandatory provision for educational and recreational facilities; for social and economic safeguards and for administrative and legal arrangement is also recommended. Existing legislation has many loophole areas for example unorganized sector and informal sector, which employ a lot of child workers as domestic servants, hawkers, porters, etc. Women unclassified labour in unorganized sector especially in urban informal sector is in a precarious condition and is casual in nature. A girl, who is ignorant and illiterate, is often treated in inhuman ways. State and local level committees should be formed of committed social partners to act as significant propeller and pressure group. They should also act change agents, monitoring mechanism and an institutional catalyst.

Awards and Accolades

- MATCH International Women Award 2014

- Social Welfare Award 2014

Report prepared by :

- UNFCCC Light House Activity Award 2014 for Momentum of Change program.



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