



An efficient move

Mobile garbage recycling unit has given these women an opportunity to earn livelihood in a better way

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The Solid Waste Collection and Handling (SwaCH) inaugurated its first mobile garbage recycling unit in the city recently. SWaCH Co-op, established by Kagad Kach Patra Kash-takari Panchayat (KKPKP), is an autonomous enterprise of waste pickers that is authorised to provide door-to-door waste collection and waste management services by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).

SWaCH manages both dry and wet waste, thus facilitating a zero garbage scenario. Suvarna Sargade, the first woman to undergo training in driving lessons to drive the mobile unit, has come a long way from the days of roaming the streets with a sack on her back looking for recyclable waste to support her family.

Rukmini and Anita Dasu Phadke, who have both undergone driving lessons and are ready to drive the mobile unit say, "KKPKP-SWaCH is like our family. We feel proud to work and interact in this organisation as all members are like our kin. At first, the girls had jitters while learning to drive.

"Earlier, we were scared but determined. If boys can do it why can't we? That's the thought that drove me to take up driving lessons."

Percentage of non-recyclable waste has been increasing at

an alarming rate in our city due to consumer needs and packaging trends. Manisha Desai of the organisation, says, "The mobile recycling unit will be used to collect non-recyclable waste that has little or no resale value. It includes metalised plastic (wafer, biscuit packets), plastic bags below 10-20 microns, rags, flex banners and so on. Generally, this waste is directed towards garbage containers as it has low value in the recycling market. Our organisation is partnering with certain companies to explore options available to process the waste. The main reason behind purchasing a tempo is to improve working conditions for waste pickers. It also symbolises the breaking away from stereotypes that generally waste pickers are associated with as thieves, vagrants and scavengers. Confident young girls at the wheel like Rukmini and Anita would definitely help change such thinking."

So far, 51 women have been trained as drivers in PMC and Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).

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