# The City Was Already Being Recycled

*How Bengaluru Put Its Waste Pickers on the Payroll*

HASIRU DALA · BENGALURU · 59 WARDS · KARNATAKA







*A dry waste collection centre. The work was always happening. Now it is counted.*

**27,653**
**waste-picker families reached**
since the trust was formed in 2013

**63**
**dry waste collection centres**
across Karnataka

**15,582 t**
**of waste collected**
of which 4,648 t went for co-processing

**2,002**
**given social security papers**
identity cards, bank accounts, entitlements

> Bengaluru's waste pickers were already doing the city's recycling for nothing. Hasiru Dala's argument was not that they should be helped, but that they should be recognised as the workers they already were.

The first step was paper: occupational identity cards issued by the city. For a worker nobody had counted, the card meant a bank account, a school admission and, for the first time, a claim on the state. Nearly 28,000 families have come through since 2013.

The second was contracts. Hasiru Dala runs dry waste collection centres across Karnataka and places waste pickers into paid municipal work, so the recycling the city depends on now sits inside the system.

**HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE**

Go to a collection centre on a working morning. The sorting line tells you more than any meeting would.

# Go and stand in it.

## *Hasiru Dala*

Every sheet in this set points to a place you can visit: a sorting platform, a solarised health centre, a processing floor, a driving lesson. It is real work, and all of it is open to visitors.

### WHERE TO GO



**A dry waste collection centre, Bengaluru**

Where the city's recycling is actually sorted, by hand.



**A basti where waste pickers live**

Ninety-two of them, about 25,000 people.



**Buguri Community Library**

The children's library the organisation runs alongside the work.

### THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

**01** An identity card changed more than a wage would have. Why?

**02** The city depended on this labour long before it paid for it. What else is your own economy quietly getting for free?

**03** Formalising informal work usually raises its cost. Who should carry that cost, and what happens if nobody will?

### WHAT WE RUN

**Academic programs**

Business, leadership, entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, sustainability and culture. Immersions of 12 to 15 days built around one of them.

**Faculty and dean cohorts**

Site-based curriculum development with Indian universities, industry and state agencies.

**Executive programs**

Company visits, policy briefings and operator conversations, tailored to a sector.

**Service learning programs**

Working visits with non-profits, social enterprises and CSR partners, tailored to your group.

### READS WELL WITH: CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

**16** Climate & Just Transition **12** Jugaad (frugal innovation)

**SOURCES** Hasiru Dala, via Bangalore International Centre's B.Cause profile. Organisation founded 2013; working with waste pickers in Bengaluru since 2011.