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United Nations Development Programme to help waste segregation workers access government schemes

UN Under-Secretary-General Usha Rao-Monari will distribute 'Jan Dhan' account kits to the waste-pickers during her first visit to the country, on December 1

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The waste management promotes the collection, segregation, and recycling of all plastics to move towards a circular economy for the same. This is done at 'Swachhta Kendra' or material recovery facilities. The plastic collected and processed so far has already crossed 1,38,000 metric tonnes, the UNDP said.

Financial inclusion of 'Safai Sathis'

The programme also ensures the well-being and financial inclusion of the 'Safai Sathis' or waste-pickers, by linking them to the social protection schemes.

According to the UN agency, a key objective of the programme is to help move the sector from informal to formal. So, the UNDP has been assisting the 'Safai Saathis', who contribute immensely to resource management and yet occupy the lowest rung of the ladder of the circular economy. This is done by linking them to social protection schemes like the 'Jan Dhan' accounts, Aadhar cards, 'Ayushman Bharat', pension schemes, and scholarships for children, among others.

A baseline survey done by the UNDP earlier shows that the 'Safai Sathis' are employed mainly on the margins of the urban informal sector. Their low income and job security are compounded by the fact that nearly 70% come from socially- backward groups and over 60% have no formal education.

More than 90% workers reported owning an Aadhar card but only a tiny subset have an income, caste, or occupation certificate. The survey says, "This thwarts any attempts at formalising their work and limits their access to government social security schemes. Less than 5% of those surveyed had any health insurance, indicating very high degrees of health-shock vulnerabilities".

Of those 'Safai Sathis' who had a bank account, only 20% were linked to the 'Jan Dhan Yojana' – the government's flagship financial inclusion programme. Half of the samples reported owning and using a ration card and this proportion was even smaller in cities where migrants formed a larger share among surveyed workers.



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Ms. Rao Monari will also interact and meet with all the stakeholders involved in making the 'Swachhta Kendra'.

During her visit, Ms. Rao-Monari is likely to meet Union Ministers Hardeep Puri and Arjun Munda, key government officials, development partners, private sector leaders and young people. She will also call on senior government officials from the Department of Economic Affairs under the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of External Affairs and NITI Aayog.

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