

## IMPORTANCE OF WASTE PICKERS IN TUTICORIN CORPORATION SOLID WASTE RECYCLING

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### Abstract

This study discusses the importance of scavengers in Tuticorin Corporation area. Scavengers were randomly interviewed at different areas and got information about collection of waste and own use of collected materials. Rarely one or two scavengers like their occupation because of the more money they earn to compare with company jobs.

**Keywords:** Scavengers, Waste pickers, Tuticorin

### INTRODUCTION

Solid wastes constitute a serious problem in most cities. Their management is one of the most permanent problems facing city sanitary officers. However scavengers play a role in the process of waste recycling. Many poor people choose to pick up waste materials and grade them to sell for earning their livelihood. Scavenging activities are carried out in three ways: 1. primary collection from households and shops area, 2. Secondary collection from the temporary dumping sites on streets and road sides and 3. Last one is collection from waste dumping sites of corporation. Casual observation indicates the ever presence of waste scavengers sorting waste of various kinds of materials such as household, glass, tins, bottles, metal, coconut shells, plastic, plastic toys, water pockets, etc. from streets. Scavengers are low income poor people but they can obtain decent earning compared to beggars. The objective of this paper is to determine the importance of scavengers on solid waste recycling of Tuticorin city.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Study area

Tuticorin city with a population size of 17,38,376 (2011 census). It is served by five main roads such as WGC, VE, beach, Thiruchendur and Madurai.

#### Data collection

A questionnaire method is not suitable to get information from scavengers because they are uneducated. So waste pickers were randomly interviewed at study area and got the following information about types of waste, purpose of

collection, grading of waste and own use of collected materials.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Scavengers play an important role in solid waste recycling. They pick up recyclable wastes from open dumping sites near road sides, open plots, drains, and public places such as beach, parks, bus stands etc of Tuticorin Corporation area. These dumps are generally temporary. They gradually appear and then disappear, until they are carried away by Tuticorin Corporation waste collectors.

Most of the scavengers had no formal education but need no education for collection and sorting of solid wastes. The scavengers had very good knowledge of wastes they were interested to collect. All collected materials can be divided into waste plastic, iron, aluminium, copper, glasses, cloth, milk cover and paper (Table 1). At the time of marriage season the scavengers collect the plastic water bottles in large numbers. The marriage parties provide plastic water bottles at the time of serving food. Scavengers usually sell collected wastes materials to dealers. Normally waste pickers use for own the volume of waste by 10%, saving the corporation fuel, equipment and labour costs and extending the life span of dumps and sanitary landfills. Solid waste recycling reduces air and water pollution and saves energy [2]. Corporation employees support the scavengers. The role of waste pickers in developing cities is essential for both environmental and economic reasons. It is difficult to quantify the total contribution of the informal sector to urban waste management [3]. The present research concludes scavengers play a important role in cleaing the environment. It

also evaluated sustainability of scavengers in Brazil [1]. In dumping site wastes are burned by scavengers and collect the metals. In that time they are exposed to harmful smoke. It submits that due to the unemployment they choose scavenging. Rarely one or two scavengers love their occupation because of the money they earn,

do not have a boss, and flexibility in their working time. In developed countries governments introduce programs to support scavengers. But Tamil Nadu government concentrates in giving free things not in employment for educated and uneducated peoples.

**Table: 1** The prices of waste materials in Tuticorin city

Waste categories	Price/Per kg	Weekly income
Plastic materials		
*Plastic water bottles	5	
*Plastic cool drink bottles	7	
*Plastic toys	8	
*Milk covers	13	30
Iron materials	15	5
Aluminium materials	24	5
Copper materials	40	10
Glass bottles		
*Beer bottles	1.40	20
*Other bottles	0.40	
Cloth		
*Shirt and Pant	4	10
*Saree	6	
Paper		
*Note and book papers	6	40
*Tamil news paper	5	
*English news paper	9	



Figure 1 Near CMS Elementary school



Figure 2 Balavinayagar kovil Street



Figure 3 Muthiyapuram, Shanthi nagar



Figure 4 Pole pattai



Figure 5 Marriage hall waste water bottles

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