

Transforming Lives Empowering Women Wastepreneurs as Drivers of Circular Economy



A remarkable transformation has taken place in Wazirabad, Gurugram, one that stands as a testament to the power of determination and the pivotal role that women can play in unconventional sectors. This is the inspiring journey of Kanika Mondal, a woman whose contributions have reshaped the waste management landscape in the region.

Pradeep Mondal, a man with an everlasting smile, has contributed significantly to the waste management landscape in Wazirabad, Gurugram. His journey, however, would be incomplete without acknowledging the remarkable transformation brought about by the empowerment of Kanika Mondal, his wife. Kanika, at the age of 35, stepped into the world of waste management alongside her husband. Initially, she started as a waste sorter, meticulously categorizing

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Credits: Saahas

Kanika Mondal, Wastepreneur in Ward 32, Gurugram



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the waste her husband collected. What began as a modest role soon blossomed into a journey of empowerment, determination, and leadership. Over the years, Kanika's skills evolved, and she transitioned from being a sorter to a proficient waste management professional. For close to 3-4 years, Kanika invested her time and expertise in sorting waste, but her aspirations reached further. Recognizing the growth potential in the waste sector, she expanded her role to include hiring and motivating individuals from her hometown of Malda, West Bengal. Therefore, Kanika built a team that operated within Pradeep's waste management unit in Wazirabad, Gurugram.

Pradeep's journey in waste collection began in Chakkarpur, Gurugram, and expanded to Wazirabad. With the entry of Eco-green in 2017, Pradeep embraced the role of an informal waste collector to a waste contractor, attracting more waste by building strong connections with local RWAs, non-gated colonies, and commercials.

The implementation of Project 'Alag Karo' in Sushant Lok in 2020 resulted in a partnership between Pradeep's waste collection team and the project team. This led to frequent interactions with Pradeep and his wife fostering the development of trust between the team involved. As a part of the program's objectives, one of the primary goals was to integrate informal waste workers into the system and identify a waste entrepreneur among them to operate a dry waste sorting center in the ward. To achieve this, Pradeep was engaged in the program and provided with necessary infrastructure such as a conveyor belt, a weighing machine, and jumbo bags. The project team also provided training to Pradeep, his wife Kanika, and his team on efficient waste collection and operations of the dry waste sorting center. The team's efforts also included training them in the composting process, which would further help in managing waste effectively.

While Pradeep was the initial point of contact for the project team, it didn't take long for them to recognize the extraordinary expertise of Kanika, his wife. Today, Kanika is the commanding force behind the entire workforce at Pradeep's unit and her influence and authority within the waste management unit grew exponentially. As Pradeep takes care of waste collection, Kanika's contributions shine behind the scenes. Her responsibilities have expanded to include overseeing crucial aspects such as bookkeeping, inventory management, and decision-making. Kanika's confidence, negotiation skills, and determination are the pillars upon which the success of their waste management unit rests.

She manages the site, oversees operations, and is the bedrock of the dry waste sorting center, which improved under the project. Her empowerment not only transformed her role but also elevated the waste management business for them as a whole. Her influence is so significant that her husband seeks her input in decision-making.

Her transformation from a waste sorter to a leader and decision-maker is a testament to her strength and the positive impact of inclusivity in waste management. It also showcases how with the right support mechanism, women can and holds break gender norms and exceed societal expectations. Her story reminds us that when women are empowered and given the opportunity to excel, they can bring about transformative change in even the most unconventional of sectors.