

SOLVING THE WASTE CRISIS IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYA

Q1 Report FY 2025-26



पेड लगाओ
जीवन बचाओ
आने वाली पीढ़ी
को
खुशहाल बनाओ

PLANT TREES
SAVE LIVES,
AND
MAKE THE FUTURE
GENERATIONS HAPPY AND
THRIFTEOUS

ENDING
PLASTIC
POLLUTION

Stop Plastic
Bags

"Some of it wasn't very nice, but most of it was beautiful."

- Roald Dahl, *Danny, the Champion of the World*



Hindu-Kush Himalaya are home to 19 rivers and 12,000 km² of freshwater reserves, with over 2 billion lives dependent on it.



8.4 MMT/A
waste generated in the
Indian Himalayan Region



60%
waste is either
dumped or burnt



Habitat destruction

Water pollution

Climate change



1.3C vs 0.88C
IHR warming faster
than global average



20%
global methane
emissions from
unmanaged wet waste



250 gms
of plastic consumed
per person every year



Table of Contents

- This Quarter's Reflection 1
- Impact Metrics 2
- Our Footprint 5
- Catalyzing Change: Special Projects 6
- Strengthening Our Roots: Core Models 15
- Leadership, Learning & Exposure 32
- Partnerships 35

Warrior Ritika, shares a community story of change with confidence during a community engagement workshop in the magical Mussoorie valley.



What began as a casual conversation among a few colleagues transformed this quarter into one of the most ambitious and inspiring efforts our organization has ever led. On June 5th, World Environment Day, we mobilized 8,500 people across 100 Himalayan locations to remove nearly 19,000 kilograms of waste. This was no ordinary cleanup. It was a people-powered movement to spark serious conversation on the urgent need for waste management systems in the Indian Himalayan Region.

The spirit of this quarter went well beyond Environment Day celebrations. Across Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, our teams worked with local communities to strengthen waste systems at the grassroots. In Renuka Ji, families began paying user fees and joined us in building momentum for a long-term waste management system. In Dehradun, women's groups stitched patchwork bags from discarded textiles, turning waste into a means of both upcycling and economic empowerment for local SHGs. Informal waste workers like Meera, who received her first official ID after 12 years, finally experienced a sense of dignity and recognition for her work.

Our Paryavaran Sakhis expanded operations in Ramnagar and prepared to do the same in Sahastradhara, proving along the way that women's leadership can be a driving force for community action. Young Warriors organized more than 300 independent social initiatives, showing the power of starting early. In the high, remote altitudes of Uttarkashi, villagers braved difficult terrain to connect their mountains to larger waste management networks.

Within the organization too, we grew stronger. New leadership programs gave our Warriors the confidence to step forward. Digital platforms made our processes more efficient and transparent. To all our supporters, thank you for standing with us. Your trust gave our 200+ Warriors the courage to dream big, and to deliver!

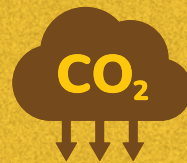
Pooja Kamath
Waste Warriors Society

With every action we take...

We are creating cleaner forests, protecting animals, empowering young people, and fostering a community committed to better waste practices.



424 MT
Waste sent
for processing
in Quarter 1



30 MT
carbon
emissions
reduced



12 MT
methane
emissions
reduced



1090
trees
saved*



11.5
hectares of
landfill saved*

49,000+ people engaged to adopt good waste management practices



280+
waste workers
benefitted



9000+
People engaged
through clean-up
drives



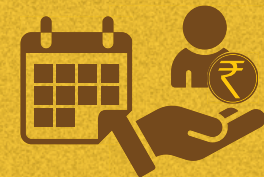
35000+
Climate-
actions



559
Active
citizens



120+
Clean-up
drives



7595+
Livelihood days
generated for
Waste Workers

13.3+ Lakh

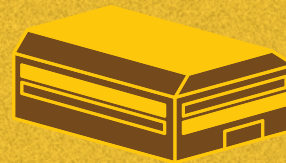
User fees collected from communities for enabling operations



4.28 lakh
in government funds unlocked

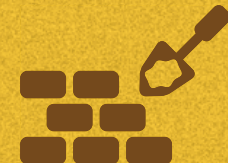


38.3+lakh
revenue generated by selling of waste



5

MRFs operational



3

MRFs under construction



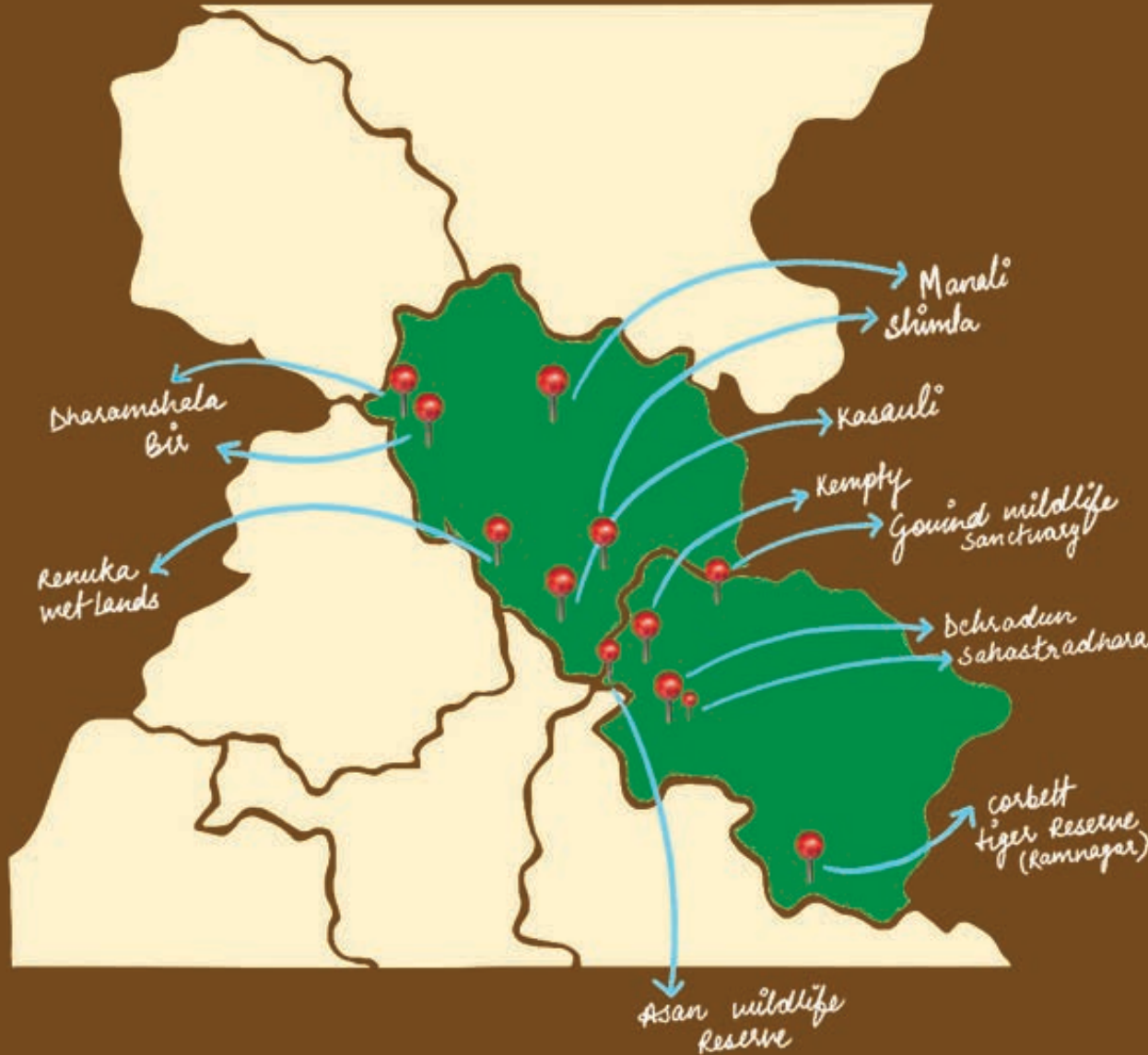
24

waste banks operational



16000+
households with access to segregated collection

OUR FOOTPRINT



12

**Locations across
Himachal Pradesh
and Uttarkhand**

52

**Total Number of
Gram Panchayats
under scope**

200+


**Warriors from
across India solving
the waste crisis in
the IHR**

Young Warriors In Dehradun stand proudly after a successful clean up during the Largest Mountain Clean Up which mobilised over 8,400 volunteers on World Environment Day.



Catalyzing Change: Special projects in action

A quarterly dive into our special efforts

A photograph showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light-colored striped shirt, standing and speaking to a group of women seated in a room. The women are dressed in traditional Indian attire, including sarees and blouses. The room has blue chairs, a white table, and a ceiling fan. A man in a white uniform and cap is seated in the background.

Warrior Kaif holds a session with SHGs in Renuka to garner their support for household onboarding in the newly-introduced waste collection system.

BEYOND THE FAIR : A HUB OF CHANGE AT RENUKA JI

India's smallest Ramsar site, Renuka Ji, rich in tradition, faces a growing waste crisis. Our engagement began with a baseline survey in 2023, followed by hands-on waste management during the 2023 and 2024 Renuka ji fairs. Building on last year's engagement, this quarter we began setting up a community-led solid waste management system using a hub-and-spoke model, with strong backing from local leaders and women's groups.

- Our team held 13 meetings with SHGs and Mahila Mandals across Dadahu and nearby panchayats, where women pledged their support and committed to spreading awareness and mobilizing households within their networks.
- With their help, over 38 households in Dadahu Gram Panchayat were successfully onboarded, and families showed strong interest by agreeing to contribute ₹100 per month as a user fee. Additionally, two waste banks have been identified.
- On Environment Day, clean-ups were organized, engaging 380 people and diverting 600 kilograms of waste. The effort was supported by the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department and the Gram Pradhan, who also arranged refreshments for the participants.
- At AKM School, our team conducted a waste management session during their monthly "No Bag Day," where more than 150 students and staff pledged to use reusable bags, start segregation at home, and encourage their neighbors to do the same.
- At Dadahu, teacher Reena Aggarwal turned "holiday homework" into a climate lesson. She asked her students to practice segregation at home, and soon families began copying the children. What started as a school exercise quickly rippled out, showing how small, local actions can spark a community-led system.

WEAVING LIVES: WOMEN TRANSFORMING TEXTILE WASTE

Launched in April 2025, Weaving Lives tackles the growing problem of textile waste in Dehradun while creating new livelihood opportunities for women's groups.

- A cloth donation drive in Harrawala Ward 97 collected 635 kgs of discarded clothes from over 150 households.
- More than 450 women across SHGs and collectives were engaged through meetings and exposure visits, with 50-60 women preparing to begin structured training in upcycling, sewing, and product design.
- Early partnerships identified with Purkul Project and Astha Rural Craft, which will open pathways for product development and skill growth for the SHGs.
- A mending workshops at Purukul created space for women to repair and upcycle clothes.
- To make sure the impact lasts, the main hurdles are building our technical know-how to manage synthetic materials well and helping SHGs create strong, independent business models.

“It was wonderful to be part of the mending workshop. I learned not just color matching, but also how it connects to life, bringing broken things back together with care”

- Sunita ji from a local SHG who made handmade patchwork bags from discarded fabric at a workshop.



Warriors from the Model Ward Team are all smiles from the community support towards the successful cloth waste collection drive in their ward of operations.

Participants from the textile upcycling workshop proudly showcase products made out of textile waste.



FROM INVISIBLE TO RECOGNIZED: DIGNITY FOR WASTE PICKERS IN DEHRADUN

While frontline waste workers battle against mismanaged waste daily, their efforts remain largely unseen and unsupported. In response, our latest initiative, conducted with Nagar Nigam Dehradun, UEPPCB, and UNDP, aims to better understand their realities.

- A joint survey was carried out with, engaging hundreds of informal workers, to identify access to services such as voter IDs and banking. Survey findings highlighted unsafe workspaces, lack of formal recognition, and lack of access to basic services like - banking.
- A medical camp offered health check-ups and safety kits with shoes, gloves, and reflector jackets.
- Alongside data collection, the team spoke with residents to surface challenges and aspirations, often overlooked. One such story was Meera's. A waste picker in Dehradun for over 12 years, she had long faced harassment and the risk of losing her recyclables, working without formal identity or recognition. After receiving an official ID through the Waste Warriors-Nagar Nigam partnership, she now works with greater security and less fear.

Key insights from the survey include:

- Lack of Dedicated Workspaces: Waste pickers often operate in open, unprotected areas, leaving them exposed to weather conditions, severely hamper their ability to work.
- Low Confidence in Systems: Many waste workers are hesitant to share information, as they feel existing processes may not always address their concerns effectively.
- Lack of Basic Entitlements: As a floating migrant population, they face chronic shortages in housing, documentation (like ID proofs), stable income, and access to social security. Shockingly, many have lived and worked in Dehradun for over a decade without any formal government support or recognition.

This is just the start in our efforts to bring visibility, dignity, and policy support to Dehradun's waste picker communities through Government support.



An informal waste worker breathes a sigh of relief after receiving her ID card.



Youth taking charge. Gaurav Yadav, a student from Doon university and a YUWA Changemaker conducts a waste worker survey.



A young champion quietly leads by example, cleaning her school surroundings during the Largest Mountain Clean-up in Ramnagar, Corbett.

A WORLD RECORD: THE LARGEST MOUNTAIN CLEANUP 2025

The first World Environment Day was celebrated in 1973 with the theme: “Only One Earth.” Fifty-two years later, we honored that message through the Largest Mountain Cleanup 2025, which mobilized 8,492 volunteers across 101 locations to remove 18600 kgs of waste.... all this in just one hour, setting a World Record certified by the World Records Union, USA.

- At Gangotri, 40 volunteers trekked 14 km to Bhojwasa at 12,590 ft while another 120 waded waist-deep in the icy Bhagirathi. Together they collected 85 kgs of trail litter and 500 kgs of soiled cloth from the river.
- In Shimla, 1,432 volunteers carried out the single biggest haul - 3,426 kgs of waste. The effort stretched into the night, lit only by scooter headlamp, and even doubled up as a volunteer’s birthday celebration.
- At Renuka Ji, only 13 people turned up at first. But as they began cleaning, Forest Department staff, schoolchildren, and villagers joined in. By the end, 100 people had gathered, filling sacks of waste together.
- Volunteers turned even organic waste into opportunity, ensuring nothing gets wasted. After volunteers feasted on fruit, banana peels were taken straight to gaushalas, becoming breakfast for cows.
- The campaign sparked a domino effect, as five young changemakers from our YUWA initiative, Prashant Bagiyal, Pragya, Saumya Rana, Rahul Kothiyal, and Rifat, independently led cleanups in Dehradun, mobilizing 174 people and collecting 431.5 kgs of waste.
- The effort created mass-scale awareness around littering, segregation, and active citizenship, while the collected waste is now being responsibly processed to support Green Worker livelihoods.

We had an overwhelming volunteer response from school children across all our 101 locations. Here students clear up a dumping spot in Manali, Himachal Pradesh.



Your support has enabled change that will last generations:

- The real strength of the Largest Mountain Cleanup campaign lay in its domino effect, with local champions including children, shopkeepers, trekkers and residents stepping up to lead. Each walked away with new awareness on not littering, segregating waste at source, and practicing responsible behaviour.
- The waste collected is being ethically processed through our network of Material Recovery Facilities. This ensures plastics, metals, and other recyclables are recovered, while creating sustained livelihoods for our Green Workers.
- By diverting waste from open dumping and burning, the cleanup reduced risks of forest fires, soil contamination, and plastic-choked streams, protecting fragile Himalayan ecosystems.
- From Gangotri's glacier trails to Shimla's crowded lanes, the campaign left behind not just cleaner spaces, but a collective memory of action - one that will inspire communities to protect their mountains for years to come.



The effort was coordinated by Waste Warriors Society, in collaboration with multiple local stakeholders, on 5 June, 2025 in celebration of World Environment Day and resulted in the removal of an astounding 18,599 kgs of waste.



Art meets action: Tibetan community joins hands in Bir, Himachal, as part of the Largest Mountain Cleanup effort.

Community members get in a meditative mindset during an immersive nature walk in Shera Gram Panchayat, Sahastradhara.

Strengthening Our Roots: Core Models on ground

A quarterly dive into our foundational efforts.



YOUTH IN ACTION: THE FUTURE LOOKS RESILIENT

Launched in 2023, YUWA (Youth United for Waste and Climate Action) is built on a simple belief: environmental leadership must begin early. This quarter, young changemakers showed how small acts of responsibility can ripple into community movements.

- Our Changemaker community grew to 29 youth, with 5 new leaders added this quarter. Together, they carried out 319 youth-led actions from clean-up drives and surveys to segregation, composting, upcycling, reporting civic issues, and even writing articles to raise awareness.
- In Dharamshala, six schools joined the pilot phase of Green Gurukul, a competition designed to build climate thinking and action among students.
- Our Climate Chaupals expanded to tackle issues beyond waste, including drug abuse and academic stress, making them safe spaces for youth dialogue and collective problem-solving.
- In Pithoragarh, two passionate youth, Ankit Jyala and Hansa Pannu, mobilized 350 volunteers, showing how the YUWA spirit is now inspiring action in regions beyond Dehradun.

“The Environment Day Celebrations clean-up reminded me that genuine intent sparks action, and leadership begins when you lead with heart. This experience gave me confidence in my ability to inspire change”

- Saumya Rana, Young Changemaker



Saumya, along with other Changemakers, has been a driving youth force in independently mobilising citizens to participate in climate action initiatives including The Largest Mountain Cleanup 2025.

YUWA Changemakers meet at the Sahastradhara Material Recovery Facility to learn about scientific processing of waste!





PARYAVARAN SAKHIS: WOMEN LEADING WASTE SYSTEMS

The Paryavaran Sakhi model empowers rural women to run waste systems in their own communities - from door-to-door collection and segregation to awareness and revenue collection. This quarter, the model expanded its reach, strengthened government partnerships, and was recognized as a best practice in Uttarakhand.

- On 16 June 2025, an MoU was signed with Zilla Panchayat Nainital for the Ramnagar MRF at Himmatpur Dotiyal. The Zilla Panchayat will bear operational costs of ₹58,000/month, while Waste Warriors contributes a share of revenues - a major step toward sustainability and formal government collaboration.
- Three new panchayats onboarded (Garjiya Temple, Gautam Nagar, Anand Nagar), bringing in 256 households/units and ₹25,210 in user fees. Waste collection is now regular at Garjiya Temple and twice a month at the others.
- With support from the Ramnagar Forest Division, a recurring monthly grant of ₹24,830 (₹12,415 per Sakhi) has been secured for two Sakhis managing Garjiya Temple waste, along with ₹49,660 for operational costs.
- With five new women joining this quarter, 29 Paryavaran Sakhis are now leading waste systems – proving that the model is being seen by women as a dignified livelihood that brings income, recognition, and respect in their communities.

In Sahastradhara, Dehradun, the Paryavaran Sakhi model continues to strengthen its foothold.

- Three new panchayats have been surveyed (1,071 households/units), expanding the model's reach beyond the six already active panchayats.
- Under Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-II, the model was recognized as a potential national example, and the Panchayati Raj Department, Uttarakhand, selected our Dhanola Centre as a training site for Compactor Machine operations.
- In Raipur Block, 7 Paryavaran Sakhis and 2 Green Workers managed 17,246 kgs of waste, generating ₹70,750 in user fees and ₹37,701 from recyclables, while an additional ₹12,954 was unlocked from government funds to cover electricity charges.
- On 22 June, an awareness walk themed "Walk with Nature" was held at Shera Gram Panchayat, where over tea and pakoras, participants discussed waste and local environmental issues, followed by a trail clean-up whose waste was sent to the MRF—turning reflection into action.

At Kheri Man Singh Panchayat, the Sakhis built a "Plant Trees, Not Plastic" installation using discarded bottles and wrappers. Initially, it was just an installation, but now visitors are stopping to take pictures and learning about the impact of plastic waste. When the local MLA inaugurated it, he praised the women's creativity and pledged his support. What began as waste became a symbol of pride and awareness, led entirely by women.



Our Corbett team at the signing of the MoU with Zilla Panchayat Nainital for operating the MRF in Ramnagar Block.





HARRAWALA: A MODEL FOR URBAN WASTE SOLUTIONS

Harrawala in Dehradun has become a showcase for how large-scale waste processing and community-led action can work hand-in-hand. At the Material Recovery Facility (MRF), tons of waste are diverted from landfills each month, while Ward 97, our “model ward”, demonstrates how consistent community engagement and user-fee systems can sustain waste collection.

- User fee collection grew strongly this quarter, averaging ₹1.63 lakh per month (April: ₹1,35,560; May: ₹1,55,850; June: ₹2,00,400). This improvement shows growing trust and financial ownership among residents and that Ward 97 is moving closer to being a self-sustaining model.
- 241.4 MT of waste was collected this quarter (~80 MT/month) from Ward 97, while the Harrawala MRF processed 166,759 kgs dry waste and 47,000 kgs wet waste, dispatching 136,233 kgs of recyclables for market recovery.
- The MRF also demonstrated its ability to respond to high-volume demands and responsibly processed 4,967 kgs of waste from the World Environment Day cleanup.
- Community engagement remained a strong pillar this quarter, with 45 Young Warriors engaged through MRF visits, composting demos, and art activities, while Maasika Mahotsav workshops reached women and households with awareness on sustainable menstruation and reusable alternatives.
- Harrawala MRF also became a learning hub this quarter, hosting visits from the National Clean Air Program (NCAP), Mizoram UDD officers, and Dehradun officials. Adding a creative touch to the space, a new mural now welcomes visitors at the MRF entrance. The artwork visually maps the waste processing journey, making the site more engaging for educational tours.
- In our ongoing efforts to empower Safai Saathis, a financial literacy training was conducted in collaboration with a partner organization. The session aimed to build awareness among Safai Saathis around essential financial tools and government schemes.

Young Warriors from Sidhpuram visited the MRF to observe segregation, composting, and also joined an environmental art session using reused paper.



A YEAR OF THE LE MODEL: LEARNINGS FROM BAIJNATH AND DHARAMSHALA

From bustling towns to tucked-away villages in Himachal, the Local Entrepreneur (LE) model is passing the baton to communities to manage their own waste systems. In Baijnath and Dharamshala, the model has been running for nearly a year under local entrepreneur Ravi Thakur, showing both promise and areas for strengthening.

- In 10 panchayats, waste collection, user fee collection, and processing is being managed by local entrepreneur Ravi Thakur since nearly a year, with Waste Warriors providing guidance and monitoring. The handover has enabled grassroots ownership, but operations remain heavily dependent on Ravi himself, with only two workers covering 400+ households, which has led to delays, missed rounds, and uneven user fee collection, at times - highlighting the need for stronger staffing and oversight.
- Sheehla Buthed Panchayat has been newly onboarded and on World Menstrual Hygiene Day (28 May), workshops were held in both Sheehla Buthed and Gunehar Panchayats, where 48 women received cloth pads and joined us for discussions on sustainable disposal practices.
- Bir became a hub for partnerships : Members of the Kullu Panchayati Raj Institution, along with representatives from Zero Waste Himalaya and Green Hub Foundation, visited to learn from the model. Additionally, an MoU with the Special Area Development Authority (SADA) enabled us to operate the dry waste unit of Him Ira Swachhta Café at Keori.

In Narwana Khas Panchayat, open dumping from a wedding party was traced back to an individual. For the first time, the Panchayat imposed a ₹4,000 fine, covered in local newspapers and recognized by the Block Development Officer. The case set a precedent that careless dumping will not be tolerated, showing how Panchayat leaders are now ready to enforce accountability.



Early morning collection by a Green Worker under the Local Entrepreneur in the area.

The Manali Waste Bank, a community-run facility to store collected dry waste before transporting it to recyclers and cement plants.



MANALI: WASTE BANK IN ACTION DESPITE ROADBLOCKS

This quarter, Manali's Local Entrepreneur (LE) Waste Bank showed how persistence and local leadership can push waste systems forward even amid Panchayat resistance.

- In April, a legal MoU was signed with a Local Entrepreneur to operate the Waste Bank, and efforts began to extend collection services to Solang Village. In June, the Waste Bank began processing waste from cleanups and trekking companies, while segregation rates in the Panchayat crossed 90% (up from ~80%).
- 322 community members were engaged through segregation trainings and sack distribution. Meetings were held with five administrative bodies to divert Palchan waste, and collection was launched in Solang - the fifth and final Panchayat village. A record 12 waste collections were completed in one month.
- Awareness was driven through coded sack distribution to 78 households, segregation workshops with Mahila Mandals (improving segregation to 92% avg), and five cleanups in Palchan that cleared 1,089 kgs of waste.
- Progress remains slow as the Pradhan has refused to grant an NOC for waste diversion. There is community resistance to Waste Bank operations, poor Gram Sabha turnouts, and Panchayat complacency due to lack of trust in collection services already provided.
- The focus next quarter will be on expanding Waste Bank operations to treks and trails, strengthening Panchayat engagement, and deepening community participation through weekly cleanups, menstrual hygiene workshops, and student-led initiatives like Swachhata Ki Pathshala (school programs).

KASULI: BUILDING SYSTEMS FOR SCALE

Kasauli made steady progress this quarter, expanding door-to-door collection in more Panchayats, operationionlising two new Waste Bank to store and segregate dry waste, and identifying land for a Material Recovery Facility and Skill Training Centre.

- Two new Waste Banks become operational across Kasauli, giving residents accessible drop-off points and improving segregation at source. Work on a fourth Waste Bank in Dharampur Panchayat is underway, which will bring all local Panchayats under a decentralized, community-driven system.
- Local entrepreneurs are managing waste systems across multiple Panchayats - with reliable collection and processing in Garkhal, services extending to Gulhari, and new leadership taking charge in Garkhal Sanawar.
- Block Development Office has allocated land for a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and skill center, laying the foundation for a hub to process waste at scale and train local youth and women in scientific waste management.
- 1,338 people were engaged through awareness and education activities, including women from Cluster Level Federations (CLF) and 150 students and teachers at Saraswati Niketan School, who learned about waste management through Waste Warriors' in-house films.
- 2,700 kgs of textile waste was diverted to Goonj for reuse and upcycling, collected through cloth donation drives across four Panchayats.
- Workshops with women in Garkhal Sanawar and Garkhal Kasauli gathered feedback on collection systems, addressed segregation challenges, and included menstrual hygiene awareness. A capacity-building workshop with local entrepreneurs and Green Workers, strengthened problem-solving with team-building and morale-boosting activities.



Warrior Palak conducts a waste management awareness session for students at Saraswati Niketan School.

DHARAMSHALA MRF: ACHIEVING 94% OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

In Q1, the Dharamshala MRF marked a smooth leadership transition under the Local Entrepreneur model by generating strong recycling revenues, creating livelihoods for local workers, and continuing to serve as a learning hub for the local community and tourists.

- In April 2025, after 12+ years with Waste Warriors, Rajkumar formally took charge of the Dharamshala MRF under the Local Entrepreneur (LE) model, managing operations through his firm with mentoring, monitoring, and gap funding support from Waste Warriors to ensure a stable and sustainable transition.
- A total of 170 MT of dry waste was received, of which 160.57 MT was processed - achieving 94% operational efficiency. Sale of recyclables from 143.13 MT of outward waste reinforced the recycling potential of the facility.
- Safety guidelines tailored for MRF staff and Green Workers were developed and displayed to improve workflow clarity, reinforce safety standards, and encourage a culture of accountability and awareness across the MRF.
- A master plan for optimal space utilization at the MRF was created, alongside infrastructure additions including a new segregation shed and office area.
- The MRF also became a learning hub, hosting 152 visitors, including students and community members, for guided tours, where Rajkumar himself explained how scientific waste management works.
- The focus ahead is on strengthening Green Worker training, scaling the plastic credits, expanding facility capacity through infrastructure upgrades, and deepening community engagement to improve segregation at source which remains a challenge.



A green worker gears up with a mask and gloves for the day's work at the MRF.

At the MRF Dharamshala, visitors fill in their details in the visitor's book during a field visit.



KEMPTY: A ZERO-DUMPING MODEL IN A TOURISM HUB

This quarter, Kempty made major strides toward a financially sustainable and zero-dumping waste system - combining user fees, upgraded infrastructure, and innovative waste diversion solutions to respond to the unique pressures of a high-tourism area.

- With the support of Swachhta Samitis in Siya and Banglow Ki Kandi Panchayats, formal user fee collection began in April 2025. Each Samiti appointed dedicated collectors, with receipts issued and records maintained digitally by Waste Warriors to ensure accountability. Over the quarter, ₹2,70,550 was collected, Banglow Ki Kandi Panchayat now manages the process almost independently, showing strong local ownership.
- The Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU) at Siya Panchayat was upgraded and inaugurated in the presence of key officials, with live demonstrations sparking interest in replicating the model across Jaunpur Block.
- For the first time, all waste collected was processed without open dumping. Recyclables were recovered, while 31 MT of reject waste was diverted to paper mills for Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) co-processing
- With food waste surging during the tourist season, compost pits reached capacity. To adapt, a new service provider was onboarded to divert 100% of wet waste to a Bio-Methane Plant, resulting in 53.4 MT processed
- The tourist season continues to add pressure, requiring agile diversion strategies. The focus ahead is on deepening community ownership, ensuring timely transport of materials, and strengthening partnerships to scale innovations like RDF and bio-methane diversion across more Panchayats.



Our composting units are full capacity with the surge in tourism in the quarter.

Tourists have some fun with the EcoDaan Team at Bhagsu, Dharamshala.



ECODAAAN: BUILDING RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN DHARAMSHALA

In Dharamshala's bustling tourist season, EcoDaan stepped in to shape visitor behavior - combining pledges, cleanups, theatre, and murals with digital storytelling to make "responsible tourism" a message that can't be missed.

- Tourism continues to be one of the largest contributors to waste in Dharamshala, making it critical to address visitor behavior alongside local systems. Over the quarter, 929 tourists were directly engaged through 35 anti-littering pledges, 12 Do Your Own Cleanup sessions, and 4 guided tours of the Material Recovery Facility. Small individual and group discussions were also held with tourists to understand their perspectives on the environment, how they would like to give back through volunteering, and the best ways to create experiences with them.
- To sharpen communication, EcoDaan posters were piloted with tourists through A/B testing, with feedback already shaping stronger and more relatable messaging. A dedicated EcoDaan Instagram page was launched, using reels and creative storytelling to connect with both current and future visitors.
- On the ground, the message of responsible tourism remained visible through clean-up drives, anti-littering pledges, murals, signboards, and art installations. At the same time, eight theatre workshops led to two original nukkad natak scripts, performed to tourists and locals, sparking conversations on waste and shared responsibility in culturally relatable ways.

HIGH ALTITUDE ACTION IN UTTARKASHI

In the high-altitude villages of Uttarkashi, nestled within Govind National Park, our work this quarter moved beyond routine waste collection to deepen government engagement and expand local systems.

- During his visit to the region, the Honourable Minister for Biotechnology, Government of Uttarakhand, Mr. Ganesh Joshi, met with the team, appreciated their ongoing efforts, and received a formal request to upgrade the Gaichwan Waste Bank into a Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU).
- In Dandagaon, a cleanliness committee was formed after a meeting with 25 community stakeholders. The group reviewed operational costs, waste collection and transport, infrastructure needs, user charges, GPDP fund allocation, and committee roles. As part of the process, a site was also identified for a new waste bank, to be developed and managed with leadership from motivated young residents.
- Our collection efforts continued with around 10,447 kilograms of waste collected across 8 to 10 categories, mostly low-value plastic. Despite the rough terrain, poor roads, and weak network connectivity, 9,000 kilograms of this waste were successfully transported to our Material Recovery Facility in Harrawala for further processing.
- On the eve of World Environment Day, a large clean-up drive took place in Sankri with over 250 participants, including students, teachers, shopkeepers, and villagers. Together, they collected about 220 kilograms of dry waste, showing the power of community participation.
- While progress has been made, challenges remain with limited participation from some villagers and shopkeepers, low government involvement, and the lack of formal recognition for the Gaichwan Waste Bank, which restricts resources and integration into official schemes.



Honourable Minister Ganesh Joshi is handed over a formal request by our team to upgrade the Gaichwan Waste Bank into a Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU).

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: BUILDING TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT SYSTEMS FOR SCALE

This quarter saw significant progress in building digital systems and streamlining internal processes to improve efficiency, transparency, and access across Waste Warriors.

- Our procurement platform, Saral, was first developed in-house and later shifted to Zoho Creator for scaling up across all key projects. Designed to simplify workflows, it brings greater transparency and ease to the procurement process.
- A digital repository was launched to serve as a one-stop file management system, enabling teams across locations to quickly search, access, and retrieve critical documents.
- For the Sahastradhara project, the baseline survey was digitized and deployed via ODK Collect - a mobile app that allows real-time data collection from the field, reducing errors and speeding up analysis.
- The Saathi Portal, Waste Warriors' internal one-stop platform for staff support, resources, and workflows, underwent a thorough audit this quarter. Based on the findings, a clear roadmap of enhancements was developed to make it more user-friendly and effective for teams.
- The process for managing organizational contacts was refined to ensure consistency and usability across departments and functions.
- Waste Warriors participated in the India Leaders for Social Sector (ILSS) Digital Transformation for Social Impact program at IIT Delhi, gaining insights on leveraging technology for greater impact in the development sector.
- A diagnostic review of finance workflows was completed, identifying areas for digitization and automation - the first step in a longer-term transformation of this critical function.



Warrior Angshuman De with Ms. Anu Prasad, CEO of ILSS, on cohort graduation day.

LEADERSHIP, LEARNING & EXPOSURE: Q1 AT A GLANCE

Vince Lombardi once said, “Leaders are not born, they are made.” This quarter, our Learning & Exposure vertical focused on just that, cultivating leadership through diverse learning spaces tailored to individual strengths and needs.

- The first cohort of LeAP saw the active participation of 13 Warriors in reflective sessions on self-leadership, feedback, and alignment. In parallel, three senior leaders continued their one-on-one coaching journeys with Timshel, delving deeper into personal clarity and leadership growth. Complementing these was “The Performance Tango,” where three other Warriors explored the nuances of trust-building, performance, and team alignment.
- Meanwhile, two Warriors represented Waste Warriors in the Environment Policy and Action Youth Fellowship (EPAYF), contributing to conversations at the intersection of environment and policy, and two others joined a hands-on exposure visit with Earth Sashtta to deepen their understanding of sustainability in action.
- Team members also participated in several national-level platforms this quarter. From dialogues on sustainable textiles at GIZ India’s Circular Samvaad to national co-creation spaces on plastic innovation and clean air, these engagements helped bring the WWS lens to broader sector challenges. A virtual policy workshop with Takshashila also offered an opportunity to hone skills in policy writing and strategic communication.
- These collective efforts mark steady progress in building internal capacity and staying connected with broader sector conversations, but some challenges remain. Poor internet access in remote project areas often limits participation in digital training. Applying new learnings to day-to-day field work can also be difficult, especially in dynamic on-ground realities. Additionally, language and literacy differences across teams highlight the need for simple, multilingual learning content to ensure inclusivity.

ECOSYSTEM UPDATE: FROM SUMMIT TO ACTION

In February 2025, we convened the Mountain Cleaners Summit, uniting 40+ organizations from across the Himalayas to strengthen collaboration on waste management. Since then, momentum has continued through three Community Calls that fostered knowledge exchange, idea-sharing, and motivation, leading to closer regional partnerships and cross-visits. We also facilitated scholarships for two partners to attend the ILSS Fundraising Program, enhancing their resource mobilization skills. Additionally, the Resilience Fund supported five partners in sustaining their ongoing efforts.



Representing Waste Warriors, Warrior Niraj Bhatia joined a national-level conference on waste, innovation, and clean air solutions.



We are in the news...



Himachal Pradesh Government joins hands with waste warriors for rural waste management



From Triund to Manali, young eco-activists are leading a mountain-wide waste movement.



Transforming waste: Vishal Kumar on India's path to sustainable plastic management

We are grateful to all our donors and individual funders for supporting our mission and envisioning a cleaner Himalaya together.



Alliances and Consortiums

Blessed to be a part of this community. Together, we are able to achieve much more than we ever could on our own.



Government Collaborations

Thankful to all our government stakeholders for their guidance, support and commitment!



Though this report covers April–June, we must share a critical development from this monsoon season.

Relentless rains in Uttarkashi have damaged our Waste Banks in Sankri - a historic first for the region where waste is being segregated under two humble structures: a tin-shed workspace and a roofed space in the local Anganwadi.

A tree crashed onto the Anganwadi roof.

The tin shed has no walls leading to flooding in rains, freezing in winter. The site has no phone signal, leaving workers cut off even in emergencies. Still, our Safai Saathis continue their work so that waste doesn't flow into forests, streams, and farmland.

We now urgently need ₹6 lakh to:

- Repair and weather-proof both structures.
- Build protective walls.
- Repair and fence Waste Banks in Doni and Satta Panchayats.



Help us rebuild the Waste Banks. Scan or click the link to the donation page:
<https://bit.ly/m/UTK25>



Waste Warriors believes waste is a global problem requiring local action. Since our founding over 13 years ago, we've accelerated our mission from one location to 10 project locations across the Indian Himalayan Region. In the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, we are building inclusive, participatory and sustainable approaches to solving the waste crisis. We are fully committed to serving our community tirelessly, both in their daily lives and during moments of crisis. Through these efforts, we are reshaping perspectives and shaping a collective future - a future of meaningful change.

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