



SOLVING

THE WASTE CRISIS

IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS

Q1 Report FY 2026-27



*"Grounded leadership isn't about being the loudest voice in the room.
It's about becoming the quiet force that helps everyone else find theirs."*

FOREWORD

I often think of an organisation as a living ecosystem, one where people, ideas and resources continuously interact, adapt and evolve. Waste Warriors is that ecosystem for me, where over 240+ Warriors are united by a shared commitment to serve the mountains.

As we began the new financial year, we reflected on the year gone by to strengthen our learning ecosystem while preparing for the next phase of our journey. This period also marked an important leadership transition, with our erstwhile CEO, Vishal, concluding his journey with Waste Warriors. Having worked closely with him for nearly four years, I remain deeply grateful for the culture and values he helped build.

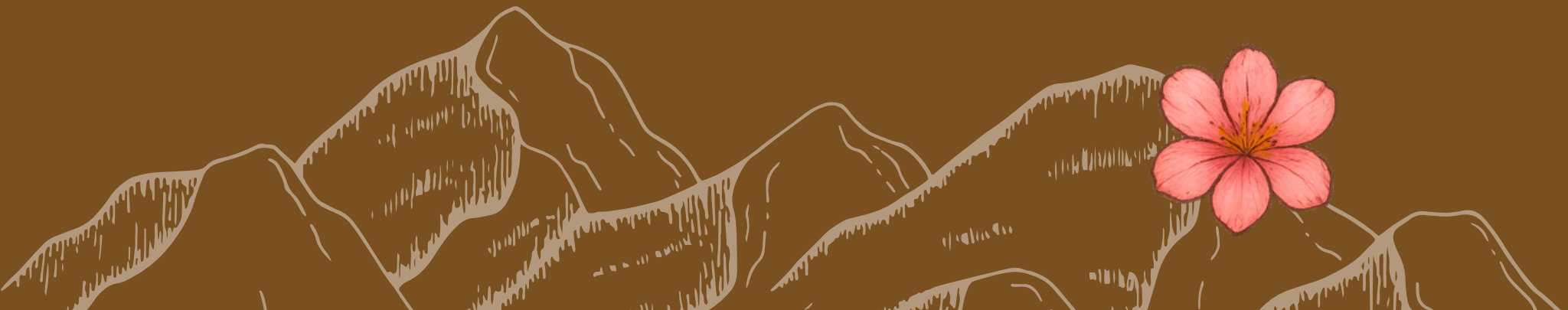
I believe we are currently in our chrysalis stage. Several of our models have entered their second phase, where we are strengthening them to become resilient, community-owned and replicable. This transformation is guided by our focus on infrastructure, operations, outreach, community participation, sustainability and eventual handover.

Over the last three months, I visited several of our locations and returned inspired by both our communities and our Warriors. In Renuka Ji, our colleague Abhimanyu was affectionately called a "rockstar" by community members - a powerful reminder that meaningful change is built on trust and relationships. I was equally encouraged by the resolve shown by newly elected Panchayat representatives, many of whom placed waste management on their agenda from the very beginning of their tenure.

The pages that follow capture these moments of learning, partnership and progress. I hope you enjoy reading about our journey over the last quarter.



Mayank Sharma
CEO, Waste Warriors Society



This year, we partnered with Nature in Focus to introduce a new category in their photography competition. More updates coming soon.
Picture: An egret at a waste dump, captured by Warrior Pradeep.

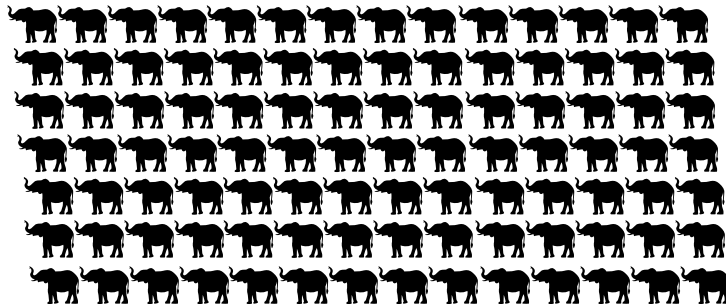


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THE PROBLEM

The IHR produces over **1.9 million tonnes*** of waste per year. Imagine that's the size of **9,00,000 Asian elephants.**



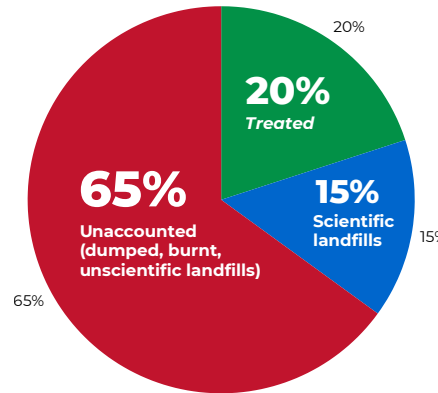
*CPCB Annual Report

THE COST OF RESPONSIBLE WASTE MANAGEMENT...



- **60-70%** of waste collected is **reject or low value.**
- Low sale of recyclables and **high cost of operations.**
- **Challenging terrain** for collection/transportation and **low land availability** for storage.
- **Insufficient government funds** for holistic waste management

WHERE DOES THE WASTE GO?*



Microplastics in soil, waterways, wildlife zones

20% global methane emissions from unmanaged wet waste

GHG and black carbon from open burning of waste

*Independent studies



IMPACT ON MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES...



Open dumps and waste burning trigger **respiratory and gut infections.**



Plastic-clogged drains and streams contribute to **severe flash floods.**



IHR warming **1.5x** faster than global average leading to **irreversible glacial melt.**

Over 2 billion people depend on the Himalayas for water, food, and life itself. Every piece of waste dumped or burnt in the Himalayas affects the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hidden Cost of Clean Communities

Across our projects, 880.43 MT of waste was collected, with 668.65 MT processed for recycling and recovery. Behind these numbers lies a less visible reality: responsible waste management requires sustained investment in people, infrastructure, logistics, and operations, while much of the recovered material generates only limited financial returns.

The Reality

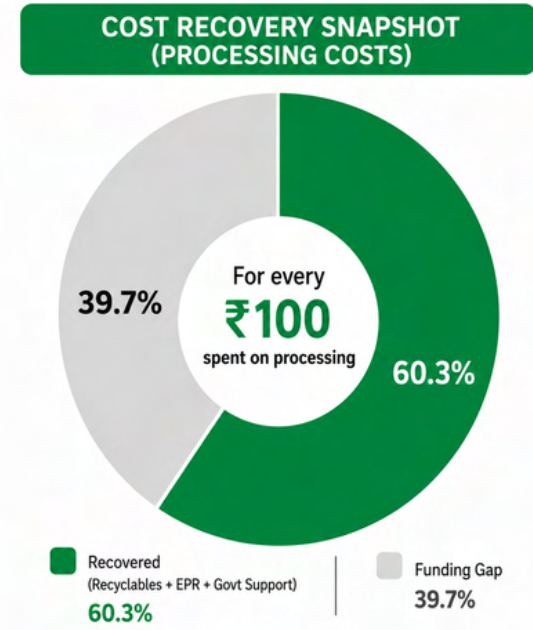
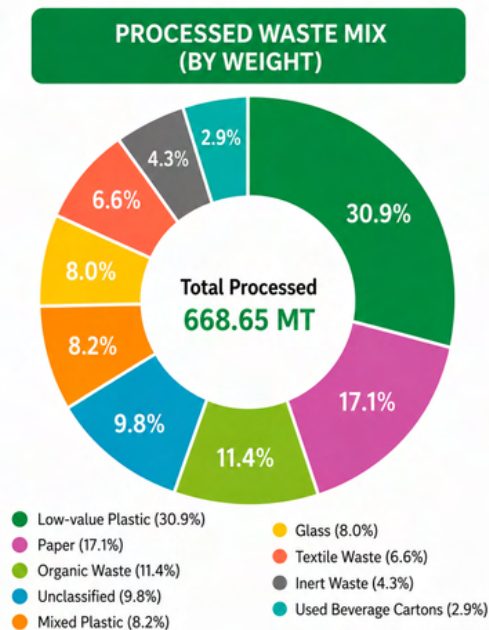
Of the 668.65 MT processed, low-value plastic accounted for 30.9%, followed by paper (17.1%), organic waste (11.4%), mixed plastic (8.2%), glass (8.0%), textiles (6.6%), inert waste (4.3%), and used beverage cartons (2.9%), while 9.8% remained unclassified.

Revenue from recyclables, EPR, and government support covered only 60.3% of processing costs. Including collection expenses, overall cost recovery stood at just 55.1%.

For every ₹8 spent collecting one kilogram of dry waste, only ₹5 is recovered. Processing one kilogram costs approximately ₹11, while generating only ₹4 in revenue.

The Insight

Clean communities cannot be built through recycling revenues alone. They depend on sustained public investment, resilient recycling markets, community participation, and stronger local governance. As Waste Warriors expands its work across the Indian Himalayan Region, improving the financial sustainability of waste management remains just as critical as improving environmental outcomes.



OUR FOOTPRINT & WORK



13

Locations across Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

200+

Warriors from across India solving the waste crisis in the IHR

10,000+

Metric tonnes of waste diverted from the environment to scientific processing since 2012

Empowering Communities

Enhancing Infrastructure

Strengthening Governance

Promoting Local Entrepreneurship

Overcoming Social Stigma

Scaling Through Partnerships

Our Models

Paryavaran Sakhi Model

Empowering local women to lead waste collection and processing while earning dignified livelihoods.

Ecodaan Model

Promoting responsible tourism by connecting travelers with local waste management and climate initiatives.

Local Entrepreneurship Model

Enabling community members to run decentralized waste systems and earn income through waste collection and processing.

Hub and Spoke Model

Core offices serve as hubs, extending rapid expertise and support to nearby locations (spokes) for timely, community-linked interventions without permanent setups.

YUWA Model

Engaging youth to drive local climate actions and address civic issues through community-led movements.

Protected Zones

A conservation-focused approach to waste management in ecologically sensitive areas, including national parks, sanctuaries, and wildlife reserves.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Q1 marked a period of expansion, stronger partnerships, and continued system strengthening across the Indian Himalayan Region. We strengthened our work across Nagrota, Govind Wildlife Sanctuary, Renuka Wetlands, Asan Barrage, and Corbett, while strategic investments in infrastructure at Harrawala, Bir, and Khyarsi in Kempty increased processing capacity and operational efficiency. Government partnerships deepened through new MoUs and financial support, alongside continued investments in organisational systems, research, and technical collaborations that strengthened Waste Warriors' capacity to scale community-led waste management. The quarter also reinforced the financial realities of responsible waste management, as low-value plastics continued to dominate collected waste, limiting revenue recovery and highlighting the need for sustained public investment and stronger local ownership to build resilient waste management systems.

Key Highlights

Financial Sustainability

- Overall, our projects **recovered 55.1% of operational costs**, while revenue from recyclables, EPR, and **government support covered 60.3% of processing costs**, reflecting encouraging progress while reinforcing the continued funding gap in responsible waste management.
- Across projects, **₹32.81 lakh was generated through the sale of recyclables, ₹12.59 lakh in government funds was unlocked, and ₹12.16 lakh was collected through user fees**, creating stronger foundations for long-term operational sustainability.
- In Dehradun, a new **₹57,000 per month MoU with Zila Panchayat** established sustained financial support for waste collection, while Govind Wildlife Sanctuary secured **₹1.8 lakh in government funding**. The expansion of the Khyarsi Waste Bank also unlocked nearly **₹4 lakh for infrastructure development**.

Operational Efficiency

- Waste collection increased to 874.5 MT**, of which **753.8 MT** was processed and **610.6 MT** was sent to recyclers, reflecting improvements in collection systems, source segregation, and operational capacity across multiple project locations.
- In Harrawala, a **24-hour composting machine** was commissioned to process wet waste, while Corbett introduced wet waste processing, welcomed five new Paryavaran Sakhis, and expanded services to Gram Panchayat Karanpur, increasing **monthly waste collection from 12 MT to 17 MT**.
- Strategic infrastructure investments continued across locations, with the **Khyarsi Waste Bank expanding from 600 sq. ft. to 2,000 sq. ft.**, Bir's Him Era Swachhata Café becoming operational, and the Green Worker Health & Hygiene Programme strengthening worker safety and wellbeing.

Community Engagement & Governance

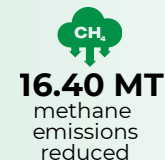
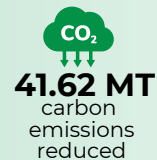
- In Govind Wildlife Sanctuary, **a baseline survey covering 1,530 households across seven Gram Panchayats and 30 villages** established the foundation for future expansion, while Renuka Wetlands extended household waste collection services across two Panchayats.
- Across projects, **938 active citizens** contributed to local waste management and community awareness efforts, through dedicated engagement with Panchayats, self-help groups, schools, and local institutions. Additionally, **11,320 dignified livelihood days** were generated.
- Through our YUWA model, schools and youth groups remained active through awareness campaigns, clean-up drives, and **monthly Climate Chaupals**, which encouraged more meaningful youth dialogue and action for sustainable waste management in Dehradun and Dharamshala.

Enabling Systems for Scale

- Monitoring and Evaluation systems advanced through **project-level sustainability dashboards**, impact tracking, and improved reporting frameworks, enabling more data-driven project management and organisational decision-making.
- Behind the scenes, organisational systems continued to evolve through **strengthened procurement and inventory processes**, digital enhancements, and internal planning tools that improved programme delivery across projects.
- Learning and research remained key organisational priorities through the **launch of Saksham, an organisation-wide Learning Needs Assessment Portal**, updated skills mapping, **exposure visits to Delhi and Udupi**, and new research collaborations with academic institutions. Together, these initiatives strengthened technical knowledge, informed future programme design, and reinforced Waste Warriors' long-term evidence and innovation agenda.

OUR IMPACT

Environmental Impact



Social Impact



Governance Impact

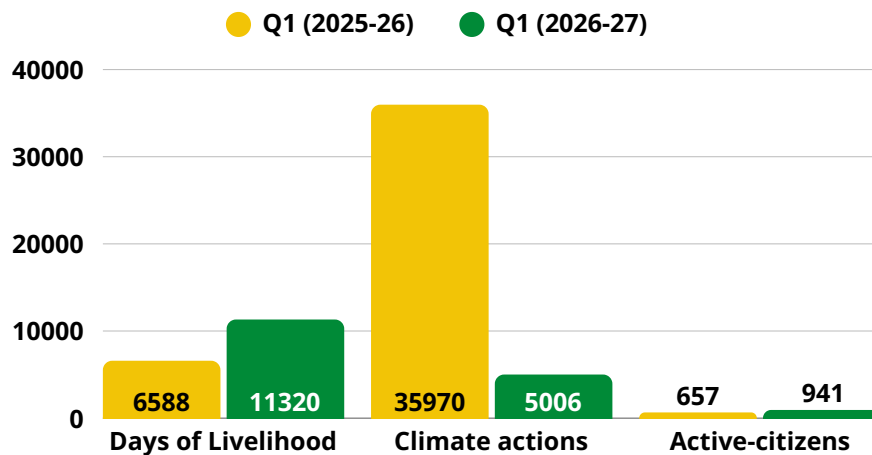


Our Paryavaran Sakhis are all smiles when they get segregated waste from the communities.

Quarter-on-Quarter Growth (Q1 FY25-26 vs Q1 FY26-27)

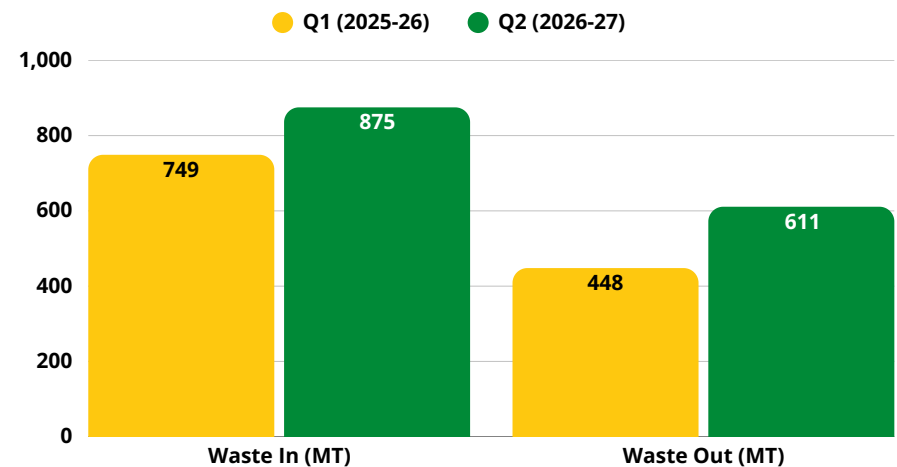
Growth in Livelihood Days, Climate actions, and Active Citizens

Livelihood days increased by 72% as operations expanded into new geographies and created more local employment opportunities. While climate actions returned to regular programme levels following last year's Largest Mountain Cleanup campaign, active citizens grew by 43%, reflecting deeper community ownership and sustained participation in local waste management.



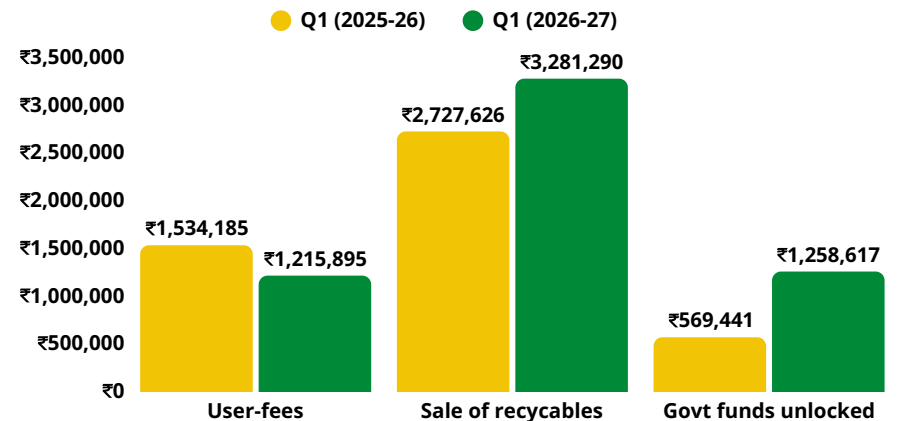
Growth in Waste Collection and Recycling Efficiency

Waste collection increased by 17% as new projects became operational and collection systems expanded. At the same time, waste sent to authorised recyclers grew by 35%, reflecting improved source segregation, stronger material recovery, and increased processing capacity across our operations.



Revenue Trends and Fund Flow: Q2 Insights

Revenue from the sale of recyclables increased by 20%, while government funding more than doubled (+121%) through stronger institutional partnerships and successful resource mobilisation. User-fee collections declined by 21%, primarily due to changes in fee collection timelines, the discontinuation of a major institutional user, and temporary operational challenges in some locations. Strengthening user-fee recovery remains a key priority for the coming quarters.



Ramnagar, Corbett Tiger Reserve

Wet waste processing in full swing • 5 new Paryavaran Sakhis • GP Karanpur added

Corbett marked another important milestone this quarter with the launch of wet waste processing, treating 9,988 kg of wet waste between April and June. The Paryavaran Sakhis continued to scale their impact, increasing monthly waste collection from 12 metric tonnes to 17 metric tonnes, while the onboarding of five new Sakhis reflected a growing shift in how waste management is perceived as a dignified livelihood. Inspired by the confidence and leadership of existing Sakhis, who drive e-loaders, engage with government stakeholders, and lead operations across Gram Panchayats, more women are stepping forward to join the initiative. Building on this momentum, the project expanded into Gram Panchayat Karanpur, extending community-led waste management services to another village.



Sakhis geared up for safe handling of wet waste which is ready for composting.



Warrior Abhinav with the newly unveiled 150+ kg metal waste installation, spreading awareness on waste and wildlife conflict.

Story of Courage

"After the clean up, I can finally see how beautiful our surroundings were meant to be. Why did we ever let them become this way?"

At just 26 years old, Dheeraj Rawat from Himmatpur Dotiyal Gram Panchayat is demonstrating how lasting change often begins with a single individual. As part of the Swachhta Champion Campaign, he organised four community clean-up drives within a month, bringing together 30 residents, including the Gram Pradhan and Block Pramukh. A long-time supporter of the Paryavaran Sakhis, Dheeraj has used the waste collection service since its inception and was among the first residents to pay his annual user fee in advance. His commitment inspired others to participate, showing how local champions can encourage greater community ownership and collective action towards cleaner villages.



Sahastradhara, Dehradun

MoU signed with Zila Panchayat • Interstate learning exchange • Expansion into Raipur begins

A new MoU with Zila Panchayat Dehradun marked an important milestone in strengthening the long-term financial sustainability of the project, securing ₹57,000 per month to support plastic waste management operations. At Gram Panchayat Dhanaula, the Paryavaran Sakhis welcomed 75 government officials, Gram Pradhans, Sarpanches, and women's Self-Help Group members from Gurugram and Rewari, showcasing the community-led waste management model and marking the beginning of interstate knowledge exchange and replication. Looking ahead, the team completed a baseline survey covering 1,530 households across seven Gram Panchayats and 30 villages in Raipur Block. The findings will guide the project's next phase of expansion, informing infrastructure planning and the rollout of waste management services across new communities.



Warriors and Government Representatives proudly display the signed MoU.



Stakeholders from Gurugram pose for a group photo during their exposure visit.



Warrior Pooja conducting the baseline survey in Gram Panchayat Thano.



Story of Change

“This is our playground, and who doesn’t want their playground to stay clean?”

Ahead of a mountain biking tournament, Neeraj and 17 fellow cyclists found the 7-kilometre trail through Khalanga Forest littered with waste. Rather than waiting for someone else to act, they took responsibility for the trails they ride every day. Together, they organised a clean-up drive, collecting 66 kilograms of waste and carefully segregating it to ensure it could be scientifically processed. When hundreds of cyclists and spectators arrived for the tournament, they were welcomed by a clean trail. For Neeraj and his fellow riders, the effort was about far more than preparing for a race. It was about protecting the forests that make their sport possible and demonstrating that caring for nature is as much a part of mountain biking as riding the trail itself.

Kempton, Mussoorie

3x sorting capacity • Pink Safe Corner Campaign for Menstrual Waste • Baler boosts efficiency

Strategic government investment significantly strengthened Kempton's waste management infrastructure this quarter. The Khyarsi Waste Bank expanded from 600 sq. ft. to 2,000 sq. ft., increasing daily sorting capacity from 600 kg to over one metric tonne. A new baler and upgraded electricity supply further improved operational efficiency, strengthened material recovery, and enhanced the facility's long-term sustainability. Additional funding also upgraded the Plastic Waste Management Unit, improving site infrastructure and increasing capacity for scientific waste processing. Alongside these infrastructure upgrades, the team implemented targeted community initiatives. One of them, the Pink Safe Corner introduced dedicated sanitary waste collection, awareness, and disposal infrastructure across five public washrooms in the Kempton Falls market area.

“This tripartite MoU gives the Panchayat greater ownership and brings us one step closer to a financially sustainable waste management system.”
— Kavita Bhatt, Gram Panchayat Development Officer, Gram Panchayat Siya

Govind Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarkashi

Naitwar Market onboarded • Trek It Back expands • Construction waste diverted from burning

The project expanded waste management services to Naitwar Market, bringing 130 commercial establishments into a regular waste collection system while securing ₹1.8 lakh in local government support for operations. Responsible tourism also gained momentum through the Trek It Back campaign, with 30 trekking operators joining the initiative and 2.1 tonnes of trail waste returned for scientific processing. Continued collaboration with government departments and road construction agencies also diverted 1,100 kg of cement bags from open burning and dumping to recycling. Together, these initiatives strengthened shared responsibility for waste management across local businesses, trekking operators, government agencies, and contractors, reinforcing a collaborative approach to protecting the fragile ecosystems of Govind Wildlife Sanctuary.



Changing rooms in Kempton Falls area now have dedicated menstrual waste disposal.

Story of Change

Road construction along the Naitwar–Sankri–Jakhol stretch left used cement bags scattered along roadsides, where many were routinely burnt or dumped. After community members raised the issue, the Waste Warriors team worked closely with the Public Works Department to establish a simple alternative, enabling construction crews to channel the waste to nearby waste banks instead. The initiative quickly gained momentum. Contractors soon began requesting collection bags before starting work on new road stretches, making responsible disposal part of their routine operations.



Kasauli

70 students engaged • Community wellbeing promoted • 50 women adopt reusable cloth pads

The Kasauli project continued to strengthen community engagement through health, education, and behaviour change initiatives. In collaboration with the YUWA team, a waste management workshop at Shoolini University engaged 70 students in responsible waste management, while a free community health camp and menstrual health workshops across Kasauli Gaon, Dharampur, Nalwa, and Baddah reached 75 women, with 50 participants adopting reusable cloth pads.

The project continues to navigate structural challenges, including limited land availability for establishing a Material Recovery Facility (MRF), a fragmented local waste management ecosystem, and the conclusion of a major funding partnership. Despite these constraints, the team remains focused on strengthening community relationships, building local ownership, and exploring pathways towards a more resilient and sustainable waste management system.

Shimla

Sipur Fair waste managed • 396 volunteers mobilised • MRF construction begins

The Shimla project continued to strengthen community participation while laying the foundations for long-term waste management infrastructure. At the Sipur Fair, a structured waste collection system diverted 148 kg of mixed dry waste to the Plastic Waste Management Unit, supported by awareness activities and a street play. On World Environment Day, 396 volunteers participated in clean-up drives across seven locations, collecting 525 kg of mixed dry waste. Notably, communities in Naldehra and Kufri independently organised and led clean-up activities, reflecting growing local ownership of waste management. The quarter also marked the foundation stone laying of the Vocational Training and Learning Centre-cum-Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Dummi Panchayat, a significant milestone that will strengthen waste processing capacity while creating a dedicated space for skills development and community learning.

Manali

Panchayat commits space for Waste Bank • Local volunteer mobilises households

Growing community confidence in the project was reflected in the extension of the waste collection campaign across Raison, Benchi, and Duwara Panchayats for another three months. Continued door-to-door collection encouraged more households to segregate waste at source and hand over dry waste for scientific processing. A major milestone came when the Raison Panchayat issued a No Objection Certificate (NOC) and committed an under-construction government building to be developed into a future Waste Bank, subject to approval by the Gram Sabha. This marks an important step towards establishing long-term waste management infrastructure in the region. Community support also continued to grow, with local volunteer Ghanshyam Ji playing an active role in connecting with households, encouraging participation, and building trust across the villages, further strengthening the foundation for a community-led waste management system.

Story of Change

The best solutions often begin by listening. When discussions around waste collection began in Gulhari Panchayat, Kasauli, Uppradhan Dinesh Govardhan initially proposed a roadside collection model, asking residents to bring their waste to the main road. However, community members explained that a door-to-door collection system would be more practical, accessible, and inclusive. The challenge, however, was financial. To make the service viable, the Panchayat onboarded local commercial establishments into the collection system and introduced user fees based on property size. The additional revenue created a sustainable financial model, enabling the launch of door-to-door waste collection while balancing operational costs with community needs.



Bir Billing

MRF operational • MIT Design Lab workshop held • Chaugan Panchayat honoured at state level

The opening of Keori's Him Era Swachhata Café marked a major milestone in strengthening local waste management infrastructure. Since becoming operational, the facility has received and stored 5,000 kg of dry waste, providing a dedicated space for sorting, aggregation, and scientific processing. Innovation also took centre stage through a Creative Capacity Building Workshop, organised in collaboration with MIT D-Lab, UPES Dehradun, and EGF, where 31 participants developed practical waste management solutions, with three ideas advancing to the proposal stage for further development. The quarter also saw Chaugan Panchayat receive the Himachal Pradesh Annual Environment Leadership Award, along with ₹25,000, recognising its leadership in community-led waste management and environmental stewardship.

Dharamshala Rural

Wet waste system strengthened • State award secured • Community partnerships expanded

The project continued to strengthen its waste management system this quarter through improved wet waste processing, stronger community partnerships, and enhanced financial sustainability. Backed by improved collection systems and partnerships with local piggeries, the wet waste model became more efficient and financially viable. These efforts were recognised with a State Environment Leadership Award 2026 for one of the project's Gram Panchayats, acknowledging its commitment to community-led waste management. Partnerships with Mahila Mandals, Youth Clubs, and schools continued to deepen community participation and encourage responsible waste management practices. At the same time, recurring challenges with the Local Ecopreneur model, including irregular waste collection and low worker retention, highlighted the need for stronger accountability and operational systems, which the team will prioritise in the coming quarter.



Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu presents the state award to Sheehla Butehd.



Story of Change

“After years of hard work, our dream has finally come true. Seeing it become a reality fills us with pride,” says Warrior Sapna Devi.

After years of patient coordination with government departments and local stakeholders, the Bir team finally witnessed a milestone they had long worked towards. On 21 May 2026, they gathered for a traditional puja to inaugurate the Him Era Swachhata Café, a Material Recovery Facility nestled amidst the pine forests of Keori Gram Panchayat. Soon after the ceremony, the Local Ecopreneur's vehicle arrived carrying the first load of dry waste collected from the Panchayat. As the waste was unloaded, the facility officially came to life, marking the beginning of a new chapter in Bir's journey towards a stronger, community-led waste management system.

Dharamshala Urban MRF

221 MT waste processed • Low value recycling strengthened • Green Worker programme launched

The Dharamshala Urban MRF continued to strengthen its operational efficiency this quarter, scientifically processing 221.55 MT of dry waste while maintaining high processing efficiency despite increasing waste volumes. Through effective segregation and resource recovery, 131.64 MT of recyclable materials were sent to authorised recyclers, while 58.23 MT of non-recyclable waste and Alternative Fuel and Raw Material (AFR) were diverted for co-processing, maximising landfill diversion. To improve the financial sustainability of difficult-to-recycle materials such as multi-layered plastic (MLP) and Tetra Pak, the project revised its partnership model with the local ecopreneur, creating a more viable system for recovering low-value recyclables. The quarter also marked the launch of a structured Green Worker Health and Hygiene Programme, introducing regular health profiling and hygiene monitoring to strengthen workplace safety, improve wellbeing, and establish consistent occupational health standards across the facility.

Dehradun Model Ward Program and MRF

68 MT wet waste processed • 924 kg food waste recovered • 24-hour composting launched

The Dehradun Model Ward Programme continued to strengthen source segregation and decentralised waste management this quarter. In Shiv Colony, 30 dustbins were distributed to active citizens, while 924 kg of food waste was collected separately for cattle, encouraging better segregation at source and reducing the volume of organic waste entering the municipal waste stream. At the Harrawala Material Recovery Facility (MRF), the installation of a 24-hour composting machine significantly enhanced organic waste processing capacity, enabling the facility to process 68 tonnes of wet waste during the quarter. The facility also welcomed Member of Parliament Shri Trivendra Singh Rawat, along with other senior public representatives, reflecting growing institutional recognition and support for the project's work.



Member of Parliament during his visit to the Harrawala MRF

Story of Change

“I never thought my kitchen waste could become something valuable,” says Aarti Bhardwaj, a resident of Ranipokhri. “Today, my garden is greener, my waste is reduced, and I know that small changes at home can make a big difference.”

Six months ago, Aarti Bhardwaj attended a composting workshop organised by the Waste Warriors team with little understanding of how kitchen waste could be reused. Inspired by the session, she began composting at home. While the journey wasn't without its challenges, continued guidance and encouragement from the team helped her build the confidence to make composting part of her daily routine. Today, Aarti uses nutrient-rich compost in her garden, reducing her dependence on chemical fertilisers while transforming everyday kitchen waste into a valuable resource for her home and the environment.



Renuka Wetlands

118 households onboarded • Two waste storage sites established

The Hub and Spoke model expanded to Badon Panchayat this quarter, with 118 new households joining the monthly segregated dry waste collection system, taking the total number of households onboarded to over 300. Support from the Wildlife Department further strengthened conservation efforts through the establishment of two enclosed waste storage areas, improving waste collection and diversion to the Harrawala MRF. On World Environment Day, 57 community members came together to collect and divert 130 kg of waste, followed by the plantation of 50 native trees, reinforcing the shared responsibility of protecting the Renuka Wetlands.

Asan Barrage

Exposure visit inspires action • 395 kg millboard recovered • 580 kg textile waste diverted

An exposure visit to our Dehradun MRFs inspired Atten Bagh Panchayat to initiate a segregated dry waste collection system, demonstrating the value of peer learning. The project also diverted 395 kg of millboard waste from open dumping by connecting Safai Saathis with a reliable recycler, ensuring fair market value for recovered materials. In addition, 580 kg of textile waste from Royal College Boarding School was channelled for reuse and recycling through Goonj, strengthening resource recovery through collaborative partnerships.

WISH, Shimla

Government institutions onboarded • Integrated waste systems installed

This quarter marked the successful completion of Phase I of the WISH (Waste-efficient Institutions for Sustainable Himalayas) project at the State Fire Training Centre, Baldeyan, and Model Central Jail, Kanda. Integrated wet and dry waste management systems were established at both institutions, laying the foundation for more sustainable institutional waste management. With Phase I complete, the project now enters Phase II, where segregated dry waste will be integrated into Waste Warriors' waste processing network.

Tetra Pak Dehradun

Aadhaar registrations supported • Health workshops held • Worker wellbeing strengthened

This quarter, the project focused on improving the wellbeing of Safai Sathis and their families alongside strengthening the recyclable packaging collection network. Support with Aadhaar registrations helped workers' children access essential government services, while a long-time Safai Sathi received much-needed dental treatment. The team also conducted seven capacity-building workshops, including three focused on health and hygiene, equipping Safai Sathis with practical knowledge and hygiene kits to promote safer and healthier working conditions.



Launch of the waste collection services in Atten Bagh Panchayat



Warrior Suraj explains the recycling process of used beverage cartons to Safai Sathis in Dharamshala.

YUWA

900+ students • 2,500+ climate actions • 45 schools engaged across Uttarakhand & Himachal

Across Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, YUWA continued to grow as a youth-led movement for waste and climate action. On World Environment Day, YUWA Changemakers organised 16 clean-up drives, engaging 590 volunteers and diverting 827 kg of waste for responsible processing. Beyond these campaigns, young people independently completed 984 climate actions, demonstrating how environmental leadership is increasingly being driven by youth within their own communities.

"If young people don't take responsibility for the places we call home, change will always remain someone else's job. Every cleanup is our way of proving that leadership begins with action."

- Sonia Thapa, a YUWA Changemaker

Meanwhile, in Dharamshala, the first YUWA Changemaker Accelerator Programme equipped nine Changemakers with practical leadership and problem-solving skills through structured learning sessions. Participants investigated local waste and climate challenges, engaged more than 200 community members, collaborated with local stakeholders, and tested solutions to real-world issues, building a new cohort of confident young leaders ready to drive long-term environmental change.



It's always inspiring to see young Changemakers lead waste and climate initiatives independently across their communities.

Story of Change

"For me, success isn't measured by personal achievements alone, but by the positive impact I can create for people, communities, and the environment," says Satvik Bansal (19), a YUWA Changemaker.

For Satvik Bansal, YUWA became more than a platform for volunteering - it became the starting point for a larger journey towards environmental leadership. Together with fellow YUWA Changemaker Prashant Bagiyal (24), his involvement in clean-up drives and community campaigns inspired them to co-author The Sustainability Algorithm, a book on practical sustainability, and launch Teraniva, a venture promoting eco-friendly products. Their journey reflects how early opportunities for youth leadership can grow into long-term commitment, with environmental action shaping not just projects, but careers and purpose.



Dharamshala Urban

PMU partnership launched • 800 kg waste diverted • Safai Sathis empowered

This quarter, Waste Warriors was appointed as the Project Management Unit (PMU) for the Municipal Corporation Dharamshala, marking an important step in strengthening source segregation and citywide waste management systems through closer collaboration with the local government. The team also conducted seven health and hygiene workshops with Safai Sathis, building confidence, strengthening professional practices, and supporting more effective community engagement during door-to-door waste collection. On World Environment Day, eight clean-up drives across seven wards brought together more than 300 residents, Ward Councillors, and the Municipal Corporation, diverting 800 kg of waste for responsible processing and reinforcing collective ownership of a cleaner Dharamshala.

Nagrota

197 households onboarded • First collection system launched • Community clean-ups led

This quarter marked the beginning of Nagrota's first Panchayat-level waste collection system, with 197 households across two Gram Panchayats joining regular waste collection services. Two source segregation workshops engaged 65 women from Mahila Mandals, strengthening household waste segregation and improving the quality of recyclable waste. Community participation also grew through three clean-up drives in Keerchamba and Chahri, where residents came together to improve public spaces and pledged to keep them litter-free. These early milestones mark the beginning of Waste Warriors' journey in Nagrota, laying the foundation for expanding waste management services in the quarters ahead.



An active community member from Keerchamba Panchayat, Nagrota, hands over segregated waste to the waste collection vehicle.



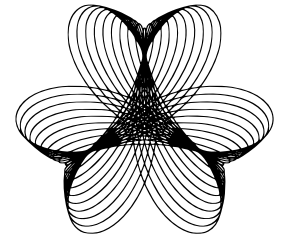
Story of Change

"Change begins at home. Once I started segregating my own waste, I realised I could encourage my entire ward to do the same," says Meena Kumari, the Councillor of Ward 12, Dharamshala.

Before being elected as the Councillor of Ward 12, Meena Kumari was one of the households handing over mixed waste during Waste Warriors' regular collection visits. Through continued engagement and follow-up by the team, she began segregating waste at home, embracing the behaviour she now encourages others to adopt. After her election, Meena partnered with Waste Warriors to strengthen cleanliness efforts across her ward. She proposed awareness signboards at Garbage Vulnerable Points, supported regular clean-up drives, and, on World Environment Day, mobilised the Ward 12 Vyapar Mandal and local youth clubs to participate in the campaign. Her journey reflects how individual behaviour change can evolve into community leadership.

People & Processes

ENABLING SYSTEMS FOR SCALE



Evidence & Insights – Driving evidence-based decision-making

This quarter, we strengthened data-driven decision-making by developing Roadmaps to Sustainability (RtS) for Bir, Dharamshala Rural, and Kasauli, creating a shared framework to guide long-term project strategy. The first phase of RtS supported the development of proposals and concept notes for prospective funders, while also helping shape the programme's strategic direction and future roadmap. (More detailed updates will be shared in the next quarter.)

A cross-functional workshop strengthened data management and analysis skills across the Monitoring & Evaluation, Research, and Digital Transformation teams. The waste dashboard was also redesigned to provide clearer visibility across the waste management value chain, helping teams identify trends, improve operational performance, and make more informed decisions.

Research also advanced Waste Warriors' evidence and innovation agenda. Three grant proposals were submitted to strengthen future research on Himalayan waste management, greenhouse gas emissions, and wet waste solutions. New collaborations with Ashoka University, IIT Mandi, and the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD) expanded research on climate and public health. At the same time, a roadmap for scaling wet waste management was developed to guide future implementation.

Digital Transformation - Streamlining systems and strengthening impact

Digital systems continued to improve organisational efficiency this quarter. An automated 80G receipt system, integrated with Razorpay, now delivers donor receipts within minutes, replacing a manual process for nearly 2,000 receipts annually. Adoption metrics were introduced across key digital platforms to help teams track usage and improve effectiveness. User testing for Zoho Contracts was completed ahead of organisation-wide rollout, while the Satya Portal entered pilot implementation across four projects, replacing spreadsheet-based reporting with a more integrated platform for capturing and communicating project impact.

Partnerships & Preparedness - Building resilience for scale

This quarter strengthened the foundations for long-term partnerships and organisational resilience. On the first anniversary of the Largest Mountain Cleanup world record, a recurring giving campaign welcomed six new monthly donors, helping build more predictable support for our work. The team also completed all donor reporting and compliance requirements for the previous financial year, reinforcing transparency and partner trust.

Looking ahead, the Strategic Partnerships & Growth and Communications teams aligned fundraising and storytelling through a joint strategy workshop, while close cross-functional collaboration ensured every donor report was delivered on time during a demanding reporting cycle. Beyond fundraising, Waste Warriors also continued to strengthen its role as a sector partner through knowledge exchange and organisational mentoring, supporting peer organisations such as The Midway Journey and Bharat Ingenuity Foundation with technical guidance, organisational systems, and waste management expertise.

Learning & Development - Building a culture of continuous learning

This quarter marked the launch of Saksham, Waste Warriors' Learning & Development portal, with 177 of 192 Warriors completing their Learning Needs Assessment. Insights from the assessment are now shaping the FY 2026–27 learning roadmap, while a centralised learning calendar has improved access to learning opportunities across the organisation.

Learning continued through leadership programmes, policy and sustainability fellowships, conferences, exposure visits, and digital skills training. Internally, a 16-week Spoken English programme engaged more than 50 Warriors, while Parichay 2026 enabled 32 team members to participate in cross-location learning visits, strengthening collaboration, knowledge exchange, and organisational capacity.



Urban Waste Systems Modelling Workshop: Warrior Ashish participated in a two-day systems thinking workshop in Bengaluru, bringing together 25 practitioners, researchers, recyclers, innovators, and community organisations to explore the complexities of India's urban solid waste management system. Through collaborative systems mapping and simulation exercises, participants developed a shared understanding of the sector, examined the underlying drivers shaping current outcomes, and identified high-leverage strategies for strengthening waste management systems. The learning will help inform Waste Warriors' own systems thinking and long-term programme design.



Turtle Forum Bootcamp: Warrior Khushboo attended the Turtle Forum Bootcamp in Bengaluru, joining 20 participants for an immersive learning experience on communication and storytelling. Through interactive sessions, participants explored relationship-centred communication, community-led storytelling, and systems thinking, while reflecting on how stories can drive meaningful change. The workshop reinforced the importance of intentional storytelling that builds trust, amplifies community voices, and inspires action.

WE ARE IN NEWS



Bengaluru-based natural history platform, Nature in Focus, introduces new category to its annual photography contest

THE
WIRE

Plastic Waste in the Wild: The Himalayas Are Telling a Story We Haven't Learned to See Yet

Looking Ahead: Scaling Proven Models Across the Indian Himalayan Region

Over the past several years, Waste Warriors has worked alongside communities and local governments to establish waste management systems across some of the Indian Himalayan Region's most ecologically sensitive and tourism-dependent landscapes. These projects have moved beyond pilots to become proven models of community-led waste management. As we enter the next phase of our journey, four flagship projects are seeking long-term institutional partners to strengthen operations, expand community ownership, improve financial sustainability, and build resilient waste management systems that can be sustained for years to come.

We Are Looking for Long Term Partners in These Locations:

Kemty, Uttarakhand: Located around one of Uttarakhand's busiest tourist destinations, since 2021 Waste Warriors has responsibly managed 478 MT of waste, onboarded 609 households, and engaged more than 4.35 lakh citizens, tourists, and stakeholders. Strong support from the Zila Panchayat has helped establish this as a proven model of government-backed, community-led waste management. The next phase focuses on strengthening waste processing infrastructure, particularly for wet waste management.

Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh: Nestled in one of Himachal Pradesh's fastest-growing hill towns, since 2022 Waste Warriors has onboarded 950+ households in four panchayats, established 3 Waste Banks, and supported 3 Local Entrepreneurs to lead community-owned waste management systems. The next phase focuses on securing land for a permanent MRF and strengthening local collection systems to improve operational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

Manali, Himachal Pradesh: As tourism expands beyond Manali town into surrounding Panchayats, since 2023 Waste Warriors has onboarded 270+ households, collected and processed 4.3 MT of waste, and established a community Waste Bank through its pilot programme. The next phase focuses on scaling the model in Panchayats where strong local government partnerships and community ownership provide the greatest opportunity for long-term impact.

Dharamshala Rural: Since 2021, Waste Warriors has established a robust community-led waste management model across 6 Gram Panchayats, combining decentralised dry waste collection, a Local Entrepreneur-led operational model, and strong community ownership. The project has contributed to state-recognised environmental leadership, with one Panchayat receiving the Himachal Pradesh State Environment Leadership Award in 2026, while also becoming a hub for inter-Panchayat and inter-departmental exposure visits, showcasing its model to government officials and practitioners from across the country. The next phase focuses on strengthening financial sustainability, introducing wet waste management services across all six Panchayats, and establishing a permanent MRF to support long-term operations.

Partner with us to build resilient, community-owned waste management systems across the Indian Himalayan Region. To explore institutional partnerships, CSR collaborations, or philanthropic support, write to us at partnerships@wastewarriors.org.

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!





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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