

The Informal Economy of Waste in India's Transit Hubs: A Case Study of the Safai Sena and the "Swachhta Sainik" Framework at New Delhi Railway Station

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of the informal waste economy in urban transit sanitation through a case study of the Safai Sena initiative at New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS). Situated within Delhi's escalating solid waste crisis, the study analyses how a collaborative partnership between Northern Railways, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, and organized waste pickers facilitates efficient waste recovery, recycling, and livelihood generation. Using the framework of the Swachhta Sainik (Cleanliness Soldier), the paper explores the formal recognition of informal recyclers as environmental service providers. The findings demonstrate that inclusive waste governance can simultaneously enhance sanitation outcomes, resource recovery, and social justice for marginalized workers.

Keywords: Solid Waste Crisis; Informal Economy; Safai Sena; Swachhta Sainik; Waste Pickers; New Delhi Railway Station; Inclusive Waste Governance

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