

# Gender Competition: The Pink Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Patna as part of the Circular Waste Solutions Project in India

## Project Description

The Pink MRF - the first of its kind in the city of Patna, initiated by the Patna Municipal Corporation with the support of the Circular Waste Solutions Team under the Mitigation Action Facility and their partners, is a progressive step towards gender-inclusive employment and sustainable waste management. The color pink in India is associated with gracefulness, kindness, empathy, and humility which are attributed to femininity. The women-led facility specializes in the segregation of dry municipal solid waste, providing a platform for waste pickers and companies in the area to contribute to recycling efforts. By employing female workers, the Pink MRF aims to create income opportunities for women in the traditionally male-dominated waste sector in India.

## Gender Aspects Already Implemented

The Pink MRF has been designed with the aim of providing stable employment for female informal waste workers, and to change the societal male-dominated perception of the waste management sector. To achieve these objectives, the facility supports female waste workers in a number of ways:

- 1. Promoting gender equality:** In India, 49% of waste pickers are women who typically earn 33% less than men working in the informal waste sector<sup>1</sup>. The Pink MRF is enabling women to work as equals in the formal waste sector. The facility is exclusively operated by female staff, thus directly challenging, and seeking to change the patriarchal notion associated with the job roles in the waste sector. Changing this perception has enabled more women to find formal employment in the waste sector. In addition, the Pink MRF worker's salary is paid on time which represents a much more stable and secure income compared to informal waste picking. The Pink MRF offers a clean and safe workplace environment with a healthy work-life balance and job stability. Furthermore, the employees are provided with training and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits.

Currently, 5 people are employed in the facility which includes 4 women and 1 male. The Facility is led by a women supervisor. The handling capacity of the MRF is 2 TPD (tonnes per day) of dry waste. The MRF has diverted 5045 kg of dry waste from the landfill and has integrated 18 informal ragpickers and itinerant buyers as of November 2023. In the medium and long term, the facility aims to operate at the maximum capacity and integrate more informal waste workers hence providing more employment to the women workers.

- 2. Gender as a quality feature of our work:** - The Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC), a partner in the project, had originally been approached by the project team for enabling women to work in the formal waste sector with Pink MRF. PMC fully supported the idea and within 3 months the facility was established. The initiative garnered national attention and recognition through multiple newspaper articles, social media posts, and digital media after the facility was formally inaugurated by the city's female mayor. The facility's color and design captured the attention of locals and citizens as well, spreading awareness at a large scale. Furthermore, the EU delegates (commissioning party) visited Pink MRF and the initiative received

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<sup>1</sup> Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, 2023

acknowledgment and appreciation as well as encouragement for the replication and scale-up of Pink MRF across India.

- 3. Implementing feminist core principles:** The Pink MRF initiative and other interventions in the project empower women by providing them with formal employment opportunities and breaking traditional gender roles and inequality in the waste management sector. The project creates an environment where women are in a managerial position with direct access and control over financial resources. This represents a gender-transformative approach. The all-women-led Pink MRF initiative increases women's representation in a male-dominated field. The initiative ensures gender-inclusive and strengthened influence of women in various sectors, which aligns with the BMZ's feminist development policy with a focus on dismantling discriminatory laws and norms.
- 4. Cooperation:** By giving women leadership positions in the male-dominant sector, the Pink MRF encourages gender equality and sets an example of breaking down discriminatory structures and enabling systematic change in the waste sector. Due to the city's and project's shared goal of strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment, the key stakeholders including the Municipal Commissioner, Mayor, Ward Councillor, civil society, and the project team came together. All these stakeholders were involved from the initiation of the initiative till the implementation, and they all supported and had a part in ensuring its successful implementation.

Normally, the majority of formal employment within the waste sector in India is taken by men as there are a very limited number of female workers especially in managerial roles. Despite offering better working conditions, candidates for female supervisors/managers have been low. This implies the need for capacity building and managerial training. In terms of cooperation, the female staff is also supported by a male staff for labor-intensive work such as loading and unloading of material.

The Pink MRF initiative's success is intricately tied to the cooperation among stakeholders, the effective steering structure promoting gender-inclusive leadership, and the well-designed processes that address the specific challenges faced by women in the waste sector. The involvement of diverse stakeholders in decision-making, from the Municipal Commissioner to civil society representatives, ensures a comprehensive and inclusive steering structure. This participatory approach ensures that decisions are made with a broad perspective, taking into account the needs and challenges faced by different segments of the community.

It recognizes the importance of cooperation between male and female staff. While promoting women in leadership roles, the initiative also acknowledges the necessity of male support for labor-intensive tasks. This process-oriented approach addresses the root cause of the gender gap by providing the necessary skills and knowledge to women, enabling them to take on leadership positions. By investing in the development of female talent, the initiative ensures a sustainable and impactful change in the waste sector. This cooperative approach not only empowers women directly but also challenges existing norms, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse workforce. The leadership's commitment to gender equality sets the tone for the entire initiative and influences the organizational culture.

## Contribution to internal gender mainstreaming:

1. **Corporate Culture:** In fostering a corporate culture committed to gender equality, our team at the Pink MRF initiative has implemented a range of measures, processes, and approaches that reflect our dedication to this crucial value. Internally, we prioritize women's empowerment by providing formal employment opportunities, breaking traditional gender roles, and ensuring women hold managerial positions with direct access and control over financial resources. Through capacity building and managerial training, we address the gender gap in leadership roles, acknowledging the need for skills development to enhance female representation in the waste sector. The involvement of both male and female staff in key roles recognizes the importance of cooperation for a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

Through employment at the Pink MRF, women have the opportunity to open bank accounts for salary deposits. Access to a bank account is crucial for the economic empowerment of women and gender equality. Having a bank account is a fundamental step towards financial independence for women. It allows them to save money securely and facilitates access to other financial services like loans, insurance, and possibly investments. It is also a prerequisite for any entrepreneurial activities, as a bank account allows for engagement in business activities, receiving payments, and managing profits.

Apart from job security and work-life balance, formal employment at the Pink MRF also ensures safer working conditions for women, as compared to informal waste work. Informal waste picking comes with risks to human health, and many waste pickers have work-related wounds and injuries, chronic pain, and skin and lung diseases<sup>2</sup>. In a formalized work environment, these risks can be greatly diminished and at the Pink MRF, workers are provided with protective gear to protect their health.

In summary, our team not only prioritizes gender equality as a goal in itself but also integrates it as a guiding principle both internally and externally. Through tangible actions, collaborative decision-making, and visible symbols of commitment, we actively shape a corporate culture where gender equality is not only valued but is an integral part of how we define ourselves and contribute to positive societal transformation.

2. **Gender Competence:** The Pink MRF has been established in the city of Patna to provide employment opportunities for women in the otherwise male-dominated waste sector. Recognizing this challenge, our initiative aimed at enhancing gender competence by actively promoting women in leadership roles within the waste sector. It has helped create steady employment for female waste workers. Regular training provided by the supervisor enhances the women's skills, capabilities, and confidence. Moreover, it opens avenues for entrepreneurial endeavors, as these skilled women may choose to establish their own waste management facilities, contributing further to breaking gender barriers in the waste sector.
3. **Cooperation:** - The Pink MRF initiative, aimed at promoting gender equality in the male-dominated waste sector, emphasizes women's leadership roles. In collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Municipal Commissioner, Mayor, Ward Councillor, civil society, and the project team, the initiative focuses on breaking down discriminatory structures. Recognizing the scarcity of female workers in managerial positions within the waste sector, the project addresses the need for capacity building and managerial training for women. The

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<sup>2</sup> Gender Analysis for Waste Sector, p. 20

success of the initiative is attributed to effective cooperation among stakeholders, a gender-inclusive leadership structure, and well-designed processes tailored to overcome challenges faced by women in the sector.

The participatory decision-making approach ensures a comprehensive perspective, considering the diverse needs of the community. The initiative also highlights the importance of cooperation between male and female staff, acknowledging the necessity of male support. By investing in the development of female talent, the Pink MRF initiative aims to bring about sustainable and impactful change while challenging existing gender norms in the workforce. The commitment to gender equality demonstrated by leadership sets the tone for a more inclusive organizational culture.



Figure 1 EU delegates visit at the Pink MRF in Patna

**Publication Links:**

1. <https://globalgreenews.com/2023/09/12/bihar-patna-municipal-corporation-starts-a-cash-for-waste-scheme-for-common-people/>
2. <https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=Patna-Municipal-Corporation-starts-a-Cash-for-Waste-scheme-for-common-people-at-recently-established-Material-Recovery-Facility&id=467630>
3. <https://x.com/airnewsalerts/status/1701593992968966360?t=J5R8-SE5tlCPGtciVTAdyQ&s=08>
4. <https://youtu.be/L3l1vKj9TDM?si=sZrbeFD8HmlS33SF>
5. [\(4998\) Pink MRF Patna Kankarbagh - YouTube](#)

**कंकड़बाग में पकि एमआरएफ सेंटर का हुआ शुभारंभ**  
**घर का कचरा बेच शहरवासी कर सकेंगे कमाई**

**संवाददाता, पटना**  
 सूखे कचरे के निपटारन व पुनः उपयोग के लिए पिक एमआरएफ सेंटर का शुभारंभ मेघर सोना साहू ने गुरुवार को किया. नगर निगम द्वारा कंकड़बाग अंचल में स्थापित इस सेंटर में सूखे कचरे को अलग कर रिसाइकिलिंग किया जायेगा. शहर को स्वच्छ व सुंदर बनाने के साथ-साथ महिलाओं को रोजगार उपलब्ध कराने के लिए इसे तैयार किया गया है. यहां महिलाएं सूखा कचरा अलग कर न सिर्फ उसे रिसाइकिलिंग के लिए भेजती हैं, बल्कि आम लोग यहां घर का सूखा कचरा बेचकर पैसे भी प्राप्त कर सकते हैं.



- पिक एमआरएफ सेंटर में महिलाओं द्वारा अलग किया जा रहा सूखा कचरा
- आम लोग भी अपने घर के सूखे कचरे बिद्वी कर प्राप्त कर सकते हैं पैसे

**पहली बार किया गया है प्रयोग, वार्ड 34 में स्थापित है यह सेंटर**



गुरुवार को पकि एमआरएफ सेंटर का उद्घाटन करती मेघर सोना साहू. पटना में पकि एमआरएफ पटना नगर निगम के नेतृत्व में जी.आइ.जेड द्वारा बनाया जा रहा है, जिसे संकुलर सेंट संविधानसभा प्रोजेक्ट के अंतर्गत स्थापित किया गया है. यह प्रोजेक्ट इतिमेशन एक्सन फैसिलिटी, यूरोपियन यूनियन, जर्मन फेडरल मिनिस्ट्री फॉर इकोनॉमिक अफेयर्स और वेल्फेयर के बीच के सहयोग से चलाया जा रहा है. यह पहल सतत विकास लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करने और महिला सशक्तीकरण को बढ़ाने की दिशा में एक बड़े मिशन का हिस्सा है. यह एमआरएफ सेंटर वार्ड 34 में स्थापित है, जिसमें एक ही बाइडी में कार्पोरेशन युनिट भी मौजूद है. इसमें वार्ड से एकजिन मौल और सूखे कचरे को प्रोसेस किया जायेगा. इसके साथ-साथ इस एमआरएफ में साफ सूखा कूड़ा बेचने का भी प्रबंध किया गया है, जहां पटना के नागरिक अपने सूखे कूड़े को बेच सकेंगे. कार्यक्रम के दौरान वार्ड 34 के पार्श्व एव कार्यालयक पदाधिकारी कंकड़बाग अंचल और नगर प्रबन्धक सलिल नगर निगम के कर्मी मौजूद रहे.