

Green Solution to Waste Management

Department of Urban Administration and Development - Chhattisgarh

Ambikapur, the district headquarter of Sarguja, located 350 km away from Raipur in Chhattisgarh, was an obscure town until 2017, when it was ranked first, among small towns, in 'Swachhata Sarvekshan', 2017.

With a population of 1.45 lakh housed in 27,247 households, together generating 51 metric tonnes of municipal solid waste per day, Ambikapur, till 2015, had garbage dumps dotting streets; plastic bags flying with the wind; and huge dumpsites generating toxic fumes spreading at the outskirts of the city.

Garbage from households was thrown anywhere and everywhere. Municipal vehicles picked up garbage from the streets twice a week, sometimes once in a week and dumped it at a landfill located 15 kms south of town. The municipality spent ₹6 crore annually on city sanitation but the result hardly showed. Then, there was no grievance redressal system.

However, things changed with Swachh Bharat Mission when garbage was identified as a resource.

The Ambikapur model is cost-effective, women-Self Help Group (SHG) driven, consumes the entire trash, as well as offers a green solution. Instead of a city-wide approach, *Mohalla*-approach was adopted, and a Garbage Clinic was built as the nucleus of this arrangement. Over 600 women

were enlisted and trained intensively for a week and 450 of them completed the training successfully. With these 450 trained women, 20 SHGs were formed and each Garbage Clinic was assigned to one SHG.

The idea required strong and effective marketing at various levels. Public representatives were roped in, municipal workers were re-oriented, and most importantly, people were educated. School children were identified as harbingers of change. *Chhota Bheem*, the popular animation character was chosen as a mascot. A jingle based paraody on a traditional game (*geela papad, sookha papad*), re-named as '*Geela Kachra, Sookha Kachra*' was composed and set to music. Around 225 garbage collection routes were charted out in the city covered by 137 teams.

At present, the women workers start collection around by 7:00 AM and end by 2:00 PM. The second half of the day is devoted to segregation and cleaning, which includes 17 wet and 20 dry categories of sale-worthy trash. At the tertiary segregation centre, 20 dry wastes get further segregated into 156 categories. Ultimately, there are 133 inorganic and 33 organic categories of saleable items. These include tablet-strips, egg shells, fruit-peels, sachets, thermocol, plastic bottles, human hair, glass bottles, CDs, cardboard, paper, etc.



CHALLENGES FACED

- Land issues concerning trenching ground/landfill
- High cost of transportation of waste from city to trenching grounds
- High cost of setting up waste to energy plants
- Public resistance by villages in the vicinity of trenching grounds and political opposition during site selection process

