

( 49 )

## **Building local capacities in the operation and management of an integrated solid waste management programme; Experience of Ampara District, Eastern Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

Open dumping and burning of wastes in the environmental sensitive areas were common practices in almost all the local authorities in Ampara district. It had become a big threat to public health, the beautiful natural environment and to the local economy. The Local Authorities of the District often faced severe difficulties in the management of solid waste in an environmentally, socially and economically feasible manner. The lack of technical and financial capacities to apply and practice the newly developed waste management guidelines and policies further aggravated this situation.

Having identified the gravity and the importance of this serious environmental issue, the Department of Assistant Commissioner of Local Government of Ampara District, with the financial assistance of the European Union and the technical assistance of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), is currently implementing an Integrated Solid Waste Management Programme (ISWMP) in 12 local authorities of the District. This ISWMP is completely being operated with the full coordination of the District Office of the Central Environmental Authority, Ampara. The UNOPS, as part of its technical assistance, has constructed solid waste management facilities such as 7 engineered landfills, one Waste Transfer Station, 4 Recycling Centers, 5 compost yards, well developed collection systems as well as provided with capability building/training assistance aiming to establish an effective and efficient solid waste management system for the District. These facilities are now completed, already in use and operational.

With these facilities in place, and with the continued support from UNOPS in providing institutional and capacity building assistance to the LA officers and staff, haphazard dumping and littering of waste in certain areas of the LAs have now been stopped. Thus 45,000 urban households or 58% of the total urban population are benefitted under this programme with a total collection of 137tonnes of wastes per day through this programme. Out of this 137tonnes of waste, 59 tonnes are collected from cluster systems involving five local authorities while the balance from the other non-clustered Local Authorities.

The paper will also present the processes and methodologies to improve the landfill practices from the open dumping practices to controlled tipping and then to engineered landfills among the implementing local authorities. It will also highlight interventions/strategies to ensure sustainability of the operation and their management through the introduction of a User Fee system/Service Charge which is currently being implemented in 04 Local Authorities. This collected User Fee covers about 80% of cost of collection of waste which would otherwise been spent through their normal budget.

**Key words:** Integrated Solid Waste Management, Ampara, haphazard dumping, controlled tipping, engineered landfills