

The State of the City

Waste Management

Waste Management

PROBLEMS

- Corruption in waste management is rampant. The public perception of this sector is also in line with that.
- There is confusion over who should manage waste, and how. Selection of sites for landfills is also controversial, and often bypasses elected councils in villages.
- Segregation at source, which is the key to many of the solutions, is resisted by many officials, contractors, and the state government, although citizens support it.
- The city council wants large campuses to take responsibility for their waste, but has not established a system of regulation and standards for this.
- The city lacks the capacity to evaluate and adopt appropriate technology advances in waste management.
- Producers are not held responsible for the waste their products and packaging generates.
- A large number of people have been employed in informal jobs in waste management, and their livelihoods could be threatened by some solutions.

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+ HOPEFUL SIGNS

- Occasionally, there are initiatives to reform SWM in a few pilot wards. These often do not scale, but they provide opportunities to try some new things.
- Under High Court orders, the state government and BBMP are now mandated to include more expert inputs in a number of areas.
- Independent of BBMP, many communities have put in place their own private systems for recycling dry waste and composting wet waste, and this trend is growing.
- A system of empaneling authorised handlers of solid waste is being developed to professionalise SWM, and also give citizens choice in selecting their service providers.
- Management of Organic Waste is now mandatory in all new communities being sanctioned by BDA. This needs to be extended to existing communities as well.
- A few companies have come forward to accept responsibility for the waste their products generate, and are in discussions with BBMP about ways to mitigate this.

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X NOT GOOD ENOUGH

- The pace of contracting reform is slow. Meanwhile, ad hoc extensions of the old failed system are costing hundreds of crores each year.
- There is not enough infrastructure in the city to handle the dry and wet waste that is being generated, or to handle special categories of waste scientifically.
- Bulk generators of waste – apartments, businesses, campuses – have been told to manage their own waste, without clarity on how they are supposed to do this.
- Involvement of citizens in SWM through ward committees is absent. Although this is mandated by law, BBMP flouts these openly, and now there is a move to shift SWM entirely to a Board.
- The State government favours cities. It forces villages around them to ‘accept’ the waste from cities. Legislation to overcome this is stalled.
- The Metropolitan Planning Committee exists only on paper, and has done no work at all so far. SWM too has suffered as a result.