

CHAPTER 18

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

18.1. INTRODUCTION

Community is in the centre of all the activities, yet it is ignored by the decision makers and made to merely wait and watch and ultimately what people get in hand is what they do not want or what is not in their priority. This creates a void between the administrators and those administered and an atmosphere of apathy is created which distances people from government initiatives.

Public awareness, effective community participation, transparent and clean administration, introduction of citizen charters and accountability at all levels can only bridge this gap.

Solid Waste Management (SWM) is one such activity, where public participation is key to success. The local body can never be successful in Solid Waste Management without active community participation, whatever may be the investments made from the municipal or Government funds. The local bodies are the institutions of grass root democracy having elected members representing a small group of electorate. It also has an outreach service at the ward level through which it can easily interact with the people on almost all-important issues. The local body should therefore, seriously consider involving community in all programmes through a consultative process and variety of other communication approaches dealt with in this chapter later and adopt the strategy which has the acceptance of the community.

18.2. STRATEGY OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The following strategy may be adopted by the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

18.2.1 Identification of Groups of People to be Addressed.

18.2.1.1 Residential Areas

Community may be classified into three categories

1. High Income Group - the affording

2. Middle Income Group - educated, sensitive, less affording
3. Low Income Group – un-affording

None of the above categories of people is an exception in apathy towards SWM but the level of awareness and sensitivity of each group is different and needs to be tackled differently.

18.2.1.2 *Markets/Commercial Areas/Offices/Banks etc.*

These places may be classified into three broad categories:-

1. Vegetable Markets
2. Shopping areas
3. Offices/Institutional areas

18.2.2 Identification of the Areas in Solid Waste Management Where Community Participation is Essential

Solid Waste Management involves several stages of activities where people's participation is critically required in some of them and local body has to do the rest of the work.

18.2.2.1 *People's Participation is Essential in the Following Areas*

1. Reduce, Reuse & Recycling (R R R) of waste.
2. Not to throw the waste/litter on the streets, drains, open spaces, water bodies, etc.
3. Storage of organic/bio-degradable and recyclable waste separately at source.
4. Primary collection of waste
5. Community storage/collection of waste in flats, multi-storied buildings, societies, commercial complexes, etc.
6. Managing excreta of pet dogs and cats appropriately.
7. Waste processing/disposal at a community level (optional)
8. Pay adequately for the services provided.

18.2.3 Reach the Community

The local body should decide the methodology to be adopted for reaching the community and seeking their cooperation and effective participation in SWM services. This is a very difficult area of activity and unless this is done meticulously, desired results will not be achieved.

The essential steps in this direction is to select representative samples of the community and go through a consultative process to ascertain the perceptions of the people about the SWM services being given to them, their expectations and extent to which they are willing to support and participate in the process. Their choice of technological options available also needs to be ascertained.

The consultative process could be taken up as under: -

18.2.3.1 Identification of Problems

Identification of problems of waste management through site visits and consultation with local population at the time when the community is generally available for interaction. It may either be in early morning or late evening. The areas may be selected by following the method of drawl of representative samples.

Situation analysis may be done by the persons who know the subject reasonably well, know local language and can communicate with local population effectively. Such persons may be Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations or knowledgeable individuals. They should try to find out the prevalent situation of waste management in the area under observation and ascertain the perceptions of the people about the services provided. In this exercise the local councilors, local leaders, NGOs, etc., may be invited to participate.

18.2.3.2 Finding out Optional Solutions

Having identified the deficiencies in the system and known the public perceptions, the next essential step is to think of optional solutions to tackle the problems, workout the cost implications and level of public participation needed.

18.2.3.3 Consult Community on Options Available

Having done this homework, there should be second round of consultative process where the options worked out may be discussed with the community along

with cost implications and their support required. Their suggestions may be sought on each solution proposed. The community may be encouraged to give their views freely.

If we ask the people straight away the solutions of the problems they may not be able to give right kind of suggestions as they have no exposure of various technological options. They must, therefore, be first appraised of the options available and then asked to give their considered opinion on what will work in their area and how much they are willing to cooperate.

18.2.3.4 *Workout the Strategy of Implementation*

After the consultative process, strategy for implementation of the system may be worked out and pilot projects may be taken up in the areas where better enthusiasm is noticed and demonstrate the successes to other areas and gradually implement in rest of the areas of the city/town. It is desirable to implement the new program in a few areas to begin with, monitor its success carefully and extend the program to other areas thereafter with suitable modifications wherever necessary.

18.3. SYSTEM OF WASTE MANAGEMENT TO BE ADOPTED

Having gone through the consultative process as indicated above, in a few selected areas and having taken up pilot projects, the local body should finally decide on the systems of waste management to be adopted in the city and take the following measures to ensure public participation.

18.3.1 Public Information, Education, Communication Programs (IEC)

For the successful implementation of any program involving public at large in SWM system, it is essential to spell out clearly and make them known the manner in which local body proposes to tackle the problem of waste management and extent to which public participation in Solid Waste Management is expected to keep the city clean and improve the quality of life in the city.

Dayal Committee of Government of India (Report 1995) has advocated that IEC approach should

- Ensure that the people become aware of the problems of waste accumulation and the way it affects their lives directly.
- Ensure that the people generate less waste by cutting back on waste generating material and by following clear defined practices of waste management.

- Create public awareness against big waste generators and provide information to monitor the performance of these sources of waste.
- Inform the people about waste management program of the government and municipal bodies.
- Promote public participation in waste management efforts through private partnership where feasible.
- Propagate the message that the "Clean City Program" is both analytical and purposive and that solutions proposed are within the framework of government initiatives and legally appropriate.

Citizens co-operation is vital to reduce, reuse and recycling of waste and in keeping garbage off the streets, by keeping biodegradable "wet" kitchen and food wastes unmixed and separate from recyclable "dry" wastes and other hazardous wastes. Their participation in primary collection of waste, using community bins for storage of waste generated in multistoried buildings, societies, commercial complexes and slums is also essential. If the reasons for doing so are explained, public participation is bound to improve.

18.4 MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR

A series of measures can be taken to bring about a change in public behaviour through public awareness programs, which could be as under:

18.4.1 Promote "Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle (R-R-R)" of Waste

18.4.1.1 *Reduce*

Everyone is concerned with the growing problems of waste disposal in urban areas with the scarce availability of land for processing and disposal of waste and environmental remediation measures becoming ever more expensive. It is therefore necessary to not only think about effective ways and means to process and dispose of the waste that we generate each day, it is also essential to seriously consider how to avoid or reduce the generation of waste in the first place and to consider ways to re-use and recycle the waste, so that the least quantity of waste needs to be processed and disposed of.

While the quantity of food waste generated per capita has remained almost static, the quantity of packaging waste material and non-bio-degradable waste is going up alarmingly every year. This increases the burden on local bodies to deal with the problem of non-biodegradable and non-recyclable components of waste landing up at processing and disposal sites.

The following measures are therefore proposed to be taken to Reduce, Re-use and Recycling of waste by all concerned:

- All manufacturers producing a variety of domestic and non-domestic products, food as well as non-food should be persuaded to seriously endeavour to use re-usable packaging materials so that after the delivery of goods, the packaging materials could be collected back and used over and over again. They could also consider minimizing or avoiding use of unnecessary packaging materials by innovative methods.
- Incentives and product discount should be given to consumers for the return of packaging or bottling materials in good condition, to the waste producers or retailers to promote re-use.
- The cost of packed articles and article without the packaging material could be kept different with a choice to the consumers to take the article without the packaging material at low cost.

18.4.1.2 Re-use

One person's waste can be useful material for others. Efforts should therefore be made to encourage collection of such re-usable material through waste collectors, waste producers, NGOs and private sector instead of allowing reusable waste to land up on the disposal sites. Bottles, cans, tins, drums and cartons can be reused.

18.4.1.3 Re-Cycling

In the era of excessive packaging materials being used, a lot of recyclable waste material is generated. All-out efforts are necessary to retrieve recyclable material from the households, shops and establishments and fed to the recycling industries through intermediaries such as waste purchasers, waste collectors/NGOs, etc.

18.4.2 Promote Public Participation in SWM Systems Adopted

The first and foremost thing that the citizens need to be told and made to understand is that no waste shall be thrown on the streets, drains, water bodies, open spaces, etc. and that they should form habit of:

- Storage of wet food/bio-degradable waste and dry recyclable waste separately at source

- Participation in primary collection of wastes
- Handing over of recyclable waste materials to rag pickers/waste collectors
- Use of community bins wherever directed/provided.
- Use of litter-bins on roads and public places

18.4.3 Provide Information Hot-line

The key to success of any public-education, awareness and motivation program is to provide as many ways as possible for the public to interact, as promptly and conveniently as possible, with policy-makers, to seek clarification of doubts, share ideas or give suggestions which are constructively followed up. A telephone hot line or Post Box number for written communications could be one of the ways to have inputs from members of the public. The phone must be attended during working hours by polite, responsive and dynamic persons who are well informed, interested in the subject and available at all stated times.

18.4.4 Public Education

The communication material developed should be utilised in public awareness programmes through variety of approaches as under.

18.4.4.1 Group Education

This may be done through :

- a. Group Meetings in the community
- b. Workshops
- c. Exhibitions
- d. Lecture series
- e. Panel Discussions, etc.

18.4.4.2 Mass Education

This is very essential to cover the entire population as it is not possible to reach all the people through group education programs.

Mass Education programs can be planned using following methods of communication.

(i) Use of Print Media:

Advertisements may be given in a planned manner to educate the masses and local newspapers can also be requested to insert the given messages on SWM at regular intervals. They should also be encouraged to start a regular Suggestion Box from where good ideas can be picked up by the local body.

Newspapers maybe specially encouraged to give coverage to successful initiatives that have overcome SWM problems.

ULBs can also use newspaper delivery services by inserting handbills for readers in a particular locality to announce the start of campaign from time to time and to adhere to the systems introduced.

(ii) Use of TV / Cable TV / Radio/Web Site:

This is the very powerful medium and can be used through local programs to inform the citizens of new waste collection arrangements made by the local body as and when they become operational and advise them to participate effectively in the prescribed manner. Contact numbers of the concerned officials for problem solving or reporting of SWM grievances may also be publicized. This media may be used to publicize successful efforts in some localities to motivate other citizens to perform likewise and get similar recognition of their effort.

(iii) Use of Cinema Halls:

Slides in cinema theaters can be displayed to inform and motivate the public.

(iv) Street Plays, Puppet Shows, etc.:

Street plays and puppet shows play a significant role in bringing awareness among the people. This method of communication will work well in low-income population; more particularly in slums. Well designed street plays /puppet shows can convey the messages effectively as such programs are well attended in slums.

(v) Posters:

Attractive posters with good photographs and messages with a very few words, readable from a distance, should be prepared and displayed in various parts of the city where awareness campaign is being taken up.

(vi) Pamphlets:

Pamphlets, hand bills can be printed giving instructions in very simple and understandable language showing photographs in action and circulated in the community requesting public participation.

(vii) Use of Hoarding:

Special hoarding may be put at strategic locations in the city carrying messages seeking public participation. Alternatively, all Municipal-licensed hoarding should have a space reserved at the bottom for civic messages. Such messages should be developed and painted by professional agencies. These hoarding should also carry the contact numbers etc.

(viii) Use of Public Transport System:

Brief messages can be painted on the rear of public buses or inside the bus panels. Public and private firms having their own bus fleets may be invited to support such efforts.

(ix) Use of School Children:

Children are powerful communicators. Parents who do not listen to the advice of others often take their children seriously. Children are idealistic and would like to change their world for better. The ULB should hold regular meetings with principals, teachers and students to explain the need for change, and the usefulness to society of new ways to manage waste. The message can be reinforced by holding essay, debate or drawing and painting competitions on the subject and publicizing the winning contestants. Social clubs can be encouraged to sponsor such events to keep the topic alive. The leading schools could be persuaded to work as a role model for other schools in taking up awareness campaigns in the city through their students, which should be highly publicized and other schools could be persuaded to follow suite.

(x) Primary School Curriculum to cover the subject:

It is an established fact that people form habit at a very young age and habits are hard to change. It is, therefore, necessary to educate young children when they are in primary school to form good habits for managing waste. School curriculum should cover this aspect in the subject of moral science or social studies. This will go a long way in developing enlightened community and least efforts would be required to discipline the people in managing the waste.

(xi) Involvement of National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Social Service (NSS) and Scouts:

In the schools and colleges the students are participating in NCC, NSS and scout activities. These students could also be sensitized on the public participatory aspect in solid waste management and as part of their activities they can be involved in the awareness campaign to bring about a change in public behaviour.

(xii) Involvement of Religious Leaders:

Religious leaders play a significant role in bringing about a change in the mind set of the people. If they advise their devotees/disciples to keep their surroundings clean by not littering anywhere and by managing their waste as advised by the urban local body it will go a long way in improving the situation in the urban areas.

(xiii) Involvement of Medical Practitioners:

Medical practitioners are held in high esteem by the citizens. A word from them to the patients or the community to practice appropriate systems of waste management at home, offices, shops and establishments would help substantially in bringing compliance of the directions of the urban local body to keep the city clean.

(xiv) Involvement of Mahila Mandals/Women Associations:

Women are generally found more concerned in maintenance of health and hygiene and they are involved in domestic waste management on day to day basis. The awareness among the women could be raised through Mahila Mandals/Women Associations who could be given talking points and necessary literatures in a very simple understandable language / graphics for creating awareness among women.

(xv) Resident Associations:

Most citizens want a nearby facility to dispose of their waste, but nobody wants a dustbin at their doorstep. Both needs can be met by the house-to-house collection system through handcarts or tricycles. Neighbourhoods can be rewarded for good response to doorstep collection of segregated waste. Groups that undertake to manage the cleaning of their own area can be rewarded by ULBs through grants/subsidies.

(xvi) Voluntary Organizations/NGO involvement:

Many NGOs are committed to improve SWM practices in urban areas to protect the environment and have been very active in this field. They have also developed good mass-communication skills and education programs for the public. Such NGOs may be persuaded to actively support the new strategies adopted by the local body and associate in public awareness campaigns. Those who wish to conduct programs for sections of the public on the new SWM strategies may be encouraged to do so and given necessary support.

18.5 ENFORCEMENT

All said and done, all human beings are not the same. There are people who understand easily as soon as they are told to behave, there are also people who are hard to understand and there is a special category of people who do not want to understand. While all efforts should be made to educate the people to effectively participate in the management of waste, they also need to be told that they can be punished if they fail to discharge their civic duties. The provision of penalties may be made known to the people and details of those punished should be publicized widely to deter others.

To begin with, the enforcement should begin at the public places, market places, etc. and gradually extended to cover residential areas. Discipline should be brought about in the public offices first so that correct examples be set before the people.