



Improving Solid Waste Management in Sri Lanka

In the summer of 2010, ICMA assessed current solid waste practices in the town of Trincomalee, located on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka, and made recommendations for improvement. The assessment was conducted by the Urban Management Centre, ICMA's representative in South Asia, based in Ahmedabad, India.

Trincomalee has a population of about 102,900, including about 17,700 households. The assessment was an important step toward understanding the current status of solid waste management in the town and how the system can be improved to support the needs of the growing population.

The assessment found that more than 20% of waste was left uncollected in Trincomalee, and accumulated garbage posed the threat of water stagnation that forms a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Plastics were the biggest menace and could be seen flying around on every street corner and hiding inside open drains. Other problems included the over-fill of the dumping site, which had contaminated the surroundings, causing harm to wildlife. Schools also were affected by waste that was neither converted/reused nor discarded. In addition, rain often worsened the situation, since dengue was a looming threat and there had been two or three deaths from dengue per month during the season.

As the population of Trincomalee is growing, along with an increase in economic and tourist activity, it was critical to put into place a planning process to improve the solid waste management service in the town. The ICMA team worked with the urban council of Trincomalee, the body that plans and manages urban solid waste locally. The urban council provided critical information and support throughout the effort. Others involved included the assistant local government commissioner and the medical superintendent of the general hospital. Citizens of Trincomalee were also interviewed and came to a workshop to offer their suggestions and comments.

From this study, 12 recommendations were put forward and were very well received by the city. The city leadership committed to start implementing two of the recommendations right away.

This work was undertaken as part of the Facilitating Economic Growth project awarded to the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance by the U.S. Agency for International Development. ICMA was a member of a team headed by the International Executive Service Corps.

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