

C-61: Application of regional approach for solid waste management in Sri Lanka

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Today, Local Authorities (LAs) in Sri Lanka are managing their solid waste by themselves. This can be called as a local level approach. Yet, most of these LAs still find it difficult to manage the problem of ever increasing quantity of solid waste and associated other problems. It is now the time to look into different approaches for Solid Waste Management(SWM). One of them can be the 'Regional Level Waste Management'.

Most of our towns today are without a proper development plan. Thus, these towns are developing in a haphazard manner. These town development plans are a legal requirement by the UDA Act 48 of 1978, but they are only confined to the respective Local Authority (LA) and its suburbs. It is a requirement that a separate solid waste management plan be included in most of these town development plans. But these LAs today face the problem of finding suitable land for solid waste disposal, technically competent staff to handle the waste and threshold to carry out investigations for a suitable landfill site combined with recycling and composting programme.

A Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (RSWMA) under the Ministry of Environment at Provincial Council level can carry out a regional approach for SWM. RSWMA should have the legal backing and it will direct the LAs on their own SWM programme. In this system LAs will be entrusted with the task of handling waste generation and collection. Hence, RSWMA will have to identify the solid waste disposal sites and their operation. Identification of possible landfill sites at regional level will be comparatively easier task than at local level. Also by clustering the LAs and town centres, RSWMA would be able to create the much-needed threshold and also reduce the number of sites. Furthermore, regional level approach will allow to identify sites with less environment damage and most importantly less damage to human settlements, mainly due to existence of low density areas outside the town limits.

Also by creating this kind of ventures in the suburbs, with very strict environmental controls, people will get benefited by means of employment and investments. In this context, it is important to look into possibility of regional approach for SWM in LAs in Sri Lanka.