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**Social obstacles of community based urban waste management projects: lessons learnt from Matara municipality**

L M Abeywickrama<sup>1</sup> , S N Subasinghe<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya,*

One of the emerging and burning issues in municipal areas of Sri Lanka is the inefficiency in collection and disposal of solid wastes and consequent widespread scattering and dumping grounds of garbage. Unplanned dumping sites of garbage in many areas cause pollution of ground and surface water and encroachment also. In Matara municipality the problem is more critical as the dumping sites are along the Nilwala river bank which generates serious environmental and hygienic threats due to contamination of ground water and river water.

Although, several authorities are spending a huge sum of money and other resources on disposal of solid wastes, still it is an unsolved and complex problem. In the year 2006, after conducting a baseline survey to estimate household solid waste generation, awareness programs were launched for households in Walpola GN division in Matara municipality with the help of different stakeholders. Model composting bins were established at household level to produce compost using kitchen and garden waste while collecting non-degradable waste separately. Urban agricultural techniques were introduced to utilize composts made of household waste and people were mobilized to cultivate vegetables using modern home-gardening techniques. Social obstacles in different forms were recorded during a period of two years.

The study identified that poor attitudes and understanding of people is the main hindrance while friction made by the fleet of the waste collectors of municipal conventional system also significant. Bureaucracy and local politics also play a role to discourage people who are involved in the project activities.

Proper identification of such groups, awareness programs and providing a significant role to the conventional fleet of waste collectors helps the progress of community based household waste management programs for a pleasant environment.

\*abey@agecon.ruh.ac.lk

Tel: 077 3229011