

# The role of **community-based organisations (CBOs)** in solid waste management

## What can CBOs do?

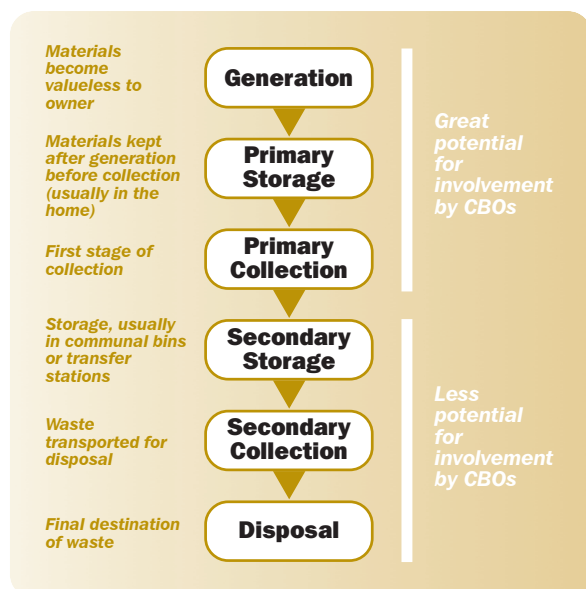
- Increase awareness of the problems associated with poor solid waste management.
- Promote a primary collection service. The CBO can either hire a sweeper to do this or encourage a micro-entrepreneur.
- Channel technical and financial support for micro-entrepreneurs. Often such support is available from NGOs or other donors.
- Form a link for dialogue between the municipality and the community. Through this they can lobby the government to:
  - increase the resources available for solid waste management and primary collection;
  - improve secondary collection; and
  - improve access to municipal offices.

## What is a CBO?

Community-based organisations are groups formed within a local community. These can include neighbourhood committees, youth and women's groups, religious groups etc. However, they are often formed for a specific reason, to find a collective solution to a problem that they face as a group. In low-income countries, they frequently exist in order to address a poor service provided by the official or government agencies. For example, a number of households may come together to initiate a waste collection programme.



## Stages in solid waste management and the scope of CBO involvement



There is a great potential for CBOs to work for improvement in solid waste management, mainly in primary storage and collection. The two common roles CBOs could adopt are:

- to act as a pressure group upon municipal agencies
- to act as a service provider.

The storage and collection of solid waste occur near to the point of generation, hence, within the communities themselves. This could include activities such as door-to-door collection and the provision of communal bins for solid waste. An active involvement in the secondary stages in solid waste management is frequently out of reach for most CBOs due to the large scale of these activities and the need to use more expensive equipment. Where CBOs are involved in large-scale activities, this frequently involves campaigning to the municipality to improve services rather than attempting to improve services themselves.

## What are the advantages of involving CBOs?

- Initiatives undertaken by CBOs usually come from the people and with the people's support and commitment. Therefore, they are more likely to be sustainable and address the real needs of the people.
- CBOs can create a feeling of unity amongst communities and can empower the people to improve their quality of life, developing a sense of personal responsibility among residents for the local environment.
- CBOs are often highly committed to understand their communities and will work to achieve their goal.
- Initiatives by CBOs may share in the provision of services that were previously the total responsibility of the municipality, thereby taking some pressure off the municipal resources.
- CBOs are highly flexible and receptive to new ideas and technologies.
- Once formed, CBOs can be used to combat other issues in the community.
- CBOs can increase awareness of issues within communities and an awareness of potential solutions.

### CARWAN, Faisalabad, Pakistan

The Faisalabad Area Upgrading Project (joint-funded by the governments of Pakistan and DFID, UK) started work in the slum of Chak-7 in 1995, and began a social mobilisation process to improve the living standards of the residents of the area. It organised many meetings with residents in which they could voice and discuss their concerns. Problems of solid waste management were raised and solutions suggested. CARWAN, a neighbourhood-level female CBO, came forward to implement a solid waste system in line with discussions facilitated by the project team.

Prior to intervention by the FAUP, lane-level organisations had existed in the area but most were involved in poultry keeping. The women from three existing lane-level organisations agreed to form a neighbourhood-level group with representatives from other groups. From this group, a core of ten members were selected who meet together every day to discuss the progress of the project.

CARWAN decided to hire a sweeper who is responsible for sweeping the lanes, house-to-house waste collection and collecting silt from drains. A handcart was provided by FAUP through the signing of an agreement. The residents of the area contribute Rs.15 per house, per month to pay for the sweeper, purchase any necessary equipment and pay for maintenance. This monthly contribution is collected by a representative in each lane and is then deposited in the CBO's bank account.

The system has been running smoothly with every member taking part. The project has acted as an example for other neighbourhoods who have since shown an interest in starting similar programmes. This has led to an increase in the demands from women of other neighbourhoods for similar systems and has prompted a change in public attitudes towards solutions to the solid waste problem.

## Links: Municipal agencies and CBOs

Waste collection schemes cannot be sustained without the establishment of strong links between the CBOs involved and the municipal agencies. If the two work together, efficient and productive schemes can be developed which are beneficial for both parties.

### Why are links needed?

CBO initiatives are an integral part of the SWM system, which is traditionally supplied by the municipality. When this system is not working efficiently, CBOs may form to address problems of primary collection. This takes pressure off the municipality to provide this service and improves the SWM in the area. However, if secondary collection is not sufficient, these attempts will be largely in vain, as waste will still remain uncollected. The two groups must be aware of each other's obligations and responsibilities, and work together to improve SWM.

The municipality can help to sustain and promote the CBO activities by providing support. This support can be of many different types, for example, financial or technical back-up, the provision of an enabling environment and the supply of equipment or staff. CBOs can help the municipal agency in the area of cost recovery.

These links help to foster an attitude of unity amongst the residents and the official agency, and help the two parties to work together in solving the problems. This can help in the development of further projects.



### Local initiatives in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Over 130 local initiatives have developed in the city in response to the inadequate solid waste service being provided by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). Most of these provide a door-to-door collection service and take the waste to the nearest DCC bin for secondary collection. Most developments have been initiated in middle-income areas where people tend to be more educated in the links between health and waste and have more money to spend.

Local initiatives in solid waste management were started by Khurram Mahboob who campaigned in his area to introduce a community-based, door-to-door collection service. This has been taken up throughout the city. Local CBOs fix the service charge (usually 10-20 Taka per household, per month) which is collected by the waste collector.

These local initiatives provide an efficient service, which has resulted in a cleaner environment and better management of waste.

### What are the possible links?

- **Consultative links** — There should be clear, two-way communication between the municipality and the CBO. Each should be fully aware of the others roles, responsibilities, obligations and proposed activities.
- **Informal links** — Informal agreements may exist between the municipality and the CBOs. For example, in Dhaka, the municipality provides tricycles to CBOs for primary collection projects.
- **Financial links** — The municipality could divert some of its budget to supporting CBO initiatives. This money may be that which is saved by no longer having to provide municipal operatives in the area.

### Lessons learned

Many lessons can be learned from the experiences gained on previous projects involving the use of CBOs in solid waste management. These include:

- CBOs can address local problems of solid waste management. They can play a very positive role in initiating waste collection and community education programmes.
- CBO programmes can operate more effectively if they have support from official agencies, such as municipal corporations.
- It is not always possible to accommodate outside agencies such as CBOs under the rules and procedures that govern municipal agencies. The agencies are designed to deal with the elected persons as the citizens' representatives. However, looking at the growing importance of more popular participation from citizens, many municipal agencies are changing their practices to accommodate CBOs.
- CBOs may be constrained by a lack of financial support. CBOs that provide a service and make a charge to its users are more likely to be sustainable.
- CBOs have a great capacity to work within their local population. They can address all sections of society including women, children etc.



This note presents the synthesis of a knowledge review on 'The Role of Community-based Organisations in Solid Waste Management'. The research project aims to build capacities of government and non-government organisations in primary collection of solid waste. This note is written for organisations and individuals who in one way or another support the development of primary collection systems in low-income countries.

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### **Other titles in this series include:**

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- Vehicles for primary collection of solid waste
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- Recognising gender issues in the management of urban waste

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