

Visit to a Zero Waste Project in Andhra Pradesh

A Case Study of Pakala in Chittoor District

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The Government of Andhra Pradesh has set in motion over 100 waste management projects across districts in the State. They are 'Solid Wealth Processing Centres', as put across by the staff deputed to set up these units. The plan is to progressively cover 3200 locations in rural areas of the state. The State calls them: 'Zero Waste Projects'. The state government has deputed staff (from Block Development Offices) exclusively for this purpose. They are called District Resource Persons (DRPs). Each DRP is in-charge of setting up waste management unit in a cluster of Gram Panchayats – comprising 4 – 5 GPs.

The model is simple with a check-list of 18 elements to fulfil for recognising that a zero waste project is in place and is operational in a given Gram Panchayat. The technology used for converting kitchen waste are, NARDEP beds and vermi-compost beds. They are put to use for converting kitchen (wet) waste into compost that are sold with a brand name: 'Amaravathi gold'. They have a dry waste segregation shed, where they keep segregated items such as bottles, plastics, cardboards etc. to be sold to the scrap dealers. Plastics and bottles collected are shredded into granules before they are sold to the scrap dealers. It is said that used plastics and bottles in granule form (i) are ready for reuse, and (ii) fetch better price from scrap dealers. Wastes are collected not only from households, but also from shops, restaurants, and other institutions.

There are no user fees charged. It is reported that the state is yet to make a decision about collecting user fees. The Units have been set up with labour and material components drawn from MGNREGS, and with the support of Swachh Andhra Corporation. Segregation shed has been constructed in a fenced area. They have made the best of MGNREGS to be able to construct / set up the Pakala Solid Wealth Processing Centre, reports a local Elected Representative.

With regard to logics and equipment, besides the regular waste collection vehicles, there are also equipment used in the Unit that run on electric power. They include: blower that cleans up dust from plastic covers, plastic waste shredders, and glass crushers - all provided by the

state. Daily collection of both wet waste and dry waste takes place. The daily waste collection, it is reported, ranges from 700 to 800 kgs. Two more components this model has are: (i) collection of construction debris from the residential and market areas, and (ii) animals laying ground to bury dead animals found on the streets.

The unit with a barbed-wire fence has been put to good use by growing many tree species and vegetables. This has made them address this place as ‘Brindhavan’ instead of being called a waste segregation place. It looks so clean and green that one can sit and eat in the waste segregation shed. In fact, the participants (that the NIRDPR took for a visit to this place) were served lunch in this waste management premises only. This helps drive away the uneasiness people have in entering a place that deals with wastes.

Those involved in waste collection, and segregation under this project are called: Green Ambassadors. They work with a lot of enthusiasm. They are being guided and are constantly being monitored by District Resource Persons (DRPs), specifically assigned to set up these units in various places of the state. The DRPs work a target of setting up 3200 units all across various districts in AP, within a period of three years.

One Mr Sudhakar Rao, Additional Director of Rural Development, Govt of Andhra Pradesh, reportedly, is the prime mover of this project. He spoke to the participants of a five-day training in Solid and Liquid Resource Management (SLRM) that the NIRDPR faculty members had taken to Pakala village. He was found to be a strong advocate of ‘waste to wealth’. 100 such units are being set up, and the one we visited in Pakala Gram Panchayat is not even one year old. Therefore, it is too early to draw any lessons or be critical of the functioning – in terms of use and maintenance, operational expenses or about sustainability.

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