



## Solid Waste Management in India

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**Abstract:** The abysmal state of and challenges in municipal solid waste management (MSWM) in urban India is the motivation of the present study. Urbanization contributes enhanced municipal solid waste (MSW) generation and unscientific handling of MSW degrades the urban environment and causes health hazards. In this paper, an attempt is made to evaluate the major parameters of MSWM, in addition to a comprehensive review of MSW generation, its characterization, collection, and treatment options as practiced in India. The current status of MSWM in Indian states and important cities of India is also reported. The essential conditions for harnessing optimal benefits from the possibilities for public private partnership and challenges thereof and unnoticeable role of rag-pickers are also discussed. The study concludes that installation of decentralized solid waste processing units in metropolitan cities/towns and development of formal recycling industry sector is the need of the hour in developing countries like India.

**Keywords:** urbanization; biodegradable; population; solid waste; rag-pickers; recycling,

**Introduction:** India is the second largest nation in the world, with a population of 1.21 billion, accounting for nearly 18% of world's human population, but it does not have enough resources or adequate systems in place to treat its solid wastes. Its urban population grew at a rate of 31.8% during the last decade to 377 million, which is greater than the entire population of US, the third largest country in the world according to population. India is facing a sharp contrast between its increasing urban population and available services and resources. Solid waste management (SWM) is one such service where India has an enormous gap to fill. Proper municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal systems to address the burgeoning amount of wastes are absent. The current SWM services are inefficient, incur heavy expenditure and are so low as to be a potential threat to the public health and environmental quality. Improper solid waste management deteriorates public health, causes environmental pollution, accelerates natural resources degradation, causes climate change and greatly impacts the quality of life of citizens.

The present citizens of India are living in times of unprecedented economic growth, rising aspirations, and rapidly changing lifestyles, which will raise the expectations on public health and quality of life. Remediation and recovery of misused resources will also be expected. These expectations when not met might result in a low quality of life for the citizens. Pollution of whether air, water or land results in long-term reduction of productivity leading to a deterioration of economic condition of a country. Therefore, controlling pollution to reduce risk of poor health, to protect the natural environment and to contribute to our quality of life is a key component of sustainable development. The per capita waste generation rate in India has increased from 0.44 kg/day in 2001 to 0.5 kg/day in 2011, fuelled by changing lifestyles and increased purchasing power of urban Indians. Urban population growth and increase in per capita waste generation have resulted in a 50% increase in the waste generated by Indian cities within only a decade since 2001. There are 53 cities in India with a million plus population, which together generate 86,000 TPD (31.5 million tons per year) of MSW at a per capita waste generation rate of 500 grams/day. The total MSW generated in urban India is estimated to be 68.8 million tons per year (TPY) or 188,500 tons per day (TPD) of MSW. Such a steep increase in waste generation within a decade has severed the stress on all available natural, infrastructural and budgetary resources. Big cities collect about 70 - 90% of MSW generated, whereas smaller cities and towns collect less than 50% of waste generated. More than 91% of the MSW collected formally is land filled on open lands and dumps. It is estimated that about 2% of the uncollected wastes are

ISSN 2454-308X



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