

# WASTE WISE CITIES ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

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5Rs



“My Waste, Our Wealth”



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SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS



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# Introduction

This advocacy toolkit and guide, “My Waste, Our Wealth”, has been developed by UN-Habitat to guide city authorities in sensitizing its community to waste management issues and in promoting sustainable day-to-day practices that can support the county in improving waste management in the long term. This advocacy toolkit and guide aims at fostering behavioural change at the community level to achieve sustainable resource and municipal solid waste management in cities.

Waste management intervention should go hand in hand with awareness and sensitization activities. It is essential that the community understands how the plant will work, which technologies will be involved, how they can gain from it and how their role is crucial for its success and to maximize its benefits. Indeed, besides an appropriate regulatory framework, strong technical capacity and support, and adequate financing mechanisms, a critical component in any waste management system is public awareness and participation. Waste is the result of human activities and every citizen has to understand the challenges and hazards concerning waste handling, as well as the important part he or she plays in transforming waste into wealth.

Humans are the key element in the waste cycle: from extraction and processing of raw materials, over the manufacturing of products to their disposal. Depending on how well a community is informed and aware of what type of waste it generates and its potential impacts on the natural ecosystem and human health, a waste management system can bring benefits and generate wealth or cause serious environmental and health hazards.

In order to facilitate awareness raising on solid waste management issues and solutions, this toolbox was developed. It includes suggestions on activities to organize and the most relevant target groups.



# Campaign goals

The advocacy toolkit and guide, “My Waste, Our Wealth”, is a community education and awareness strategy designed by UN-Habitat to support cities in its commitment to establish a sound waste management system in the county.

The desired goals of implementing the strategy are:



## Rethink

- » To rethink the entire approach to municipal waste, including decisions on consumption (refuse), production (reduce), reuse and recycling;
- » To change the mindset of citizens towards considering waste as a valuable resource that can benefit the whole community and the natural environment.



## Engage

- » To organize events and activities targeting all community members that encourage continuous action and sharing of success stories on solid waste management;
- » Special focus should be given to children and youth, therefore highly engaging actions or programs must be tailored for this target groups.



## Act

- » To encourage day-to-day action in households and schools, at the work place and community level to improve solid waste management;
- » To value and recognize the work of waste pickers in recovering recyclable materials and to improve their working conditions.

The aim of the campaign is to **promote behavioural change at community level that will result in the transformation of habits and perception towards perceiving waste as a resource.**

Remarkable differences exist between the attitude of an informed and environmentally aware person and of an uninformed and environmentally unaware person. While the latter puts all types of waste, such as plastic, metal, batteries and food, in the same container, the environmentally aware citizen conscientiously segregates them and understands the added value and critical function of waste separation at source.

In order for a campaign to be successful, it should be accompanied interventions for improving waste management, such as establishment of composting plant to produce organic fertilizer from food waste; biogas plant to generate biogas for cooking or to be transformed into electricity; machineries to recover and process recyclable materials (plastics, paper, metal, glass); sanitary landfill for non-recoverable and non-recyclable materials.



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The community should be well aware of the technologies that will be utilized, how they can generate maximum social, environmental and economic gains for its members and what are their responsibilities and role. Engagement and support of the community is therefore crucial to maximize the resource recovery and energy generation potential, to guarantee safety and high quality of the by-products and for a sound waste management system in the long-run. In fact, if waste segregation at source is to be achieved, the community should fully understand why their commitment is crucial to recover resources. For example, if paper is contaminated with wet waste, the cost of processing it (both in terms of natural and financial resources) for recycling purposes will be much higher, than if the paper reaches the resources recovery centre uncontaminated by other waste. Similarly, if food waste is not mixed with hazardous, medical and e-waste, but is segregated at source, the chances for avoiding contamination of the feedstock and obtaining a nutrient-rich and safe organic fertilizer, highly increase.

Indicators to measure the progress of the campaign towards the achievement of the goals should be developed. Here examples of possible indicators related to the proposed interventions:

- At least 70 % of the total households and commercial institutions in the city will segregate waste at source (as minimum in wet and dry components);
  - At least 80 % of municipal food waste is used to generate power (biogas) and organic fertilizer. This mean less than 20 % of the total municipal food waste generated in city will reach the sanitary landfill;
  - At least 80 % of municipal solid waste generated is regularly collected and transported to the new waste treatment facilities (thus no waste is abandoned in the environment, no of undesigantated dumpsite areas are created).
- In the long run, these behavioural changes will support the city authority and its community members in:
- establishing a **sustainable resource and waste management** system that recovers resources and generates clean energy;
  - perceiving **waste as a resource** and a means to achieve common wealth, including healthier ecosystems and access to basic service, such as energy, solid and liquid waste management;
  - considering **waste management a responsibility of every citizen.**



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# Key campaign messages and slogans

Solid Waste Management is a global issue that affects everyone. Therefore, everyone must be accountable for it. While the amount of individual waste grows daily, municipalities all over the world are struggling to set up sustainable schemes for waste collection, treatment and disposal. Poor solid waste collection and uncontrolled disposal are polluting air, soil, fresh and salt water, threatening human health. While being a potential time bomb, waste has untapped potential that can bring about positive opportunities. Resource recovery from the waste stream reduces consumption of natural resources, which are already overexploited and depleting. New circular economy business models create jobs and enhance income for the urban poor. In order to unleash these potentials, a change in the way waste is perceived as well as in consumption patterns must occur. Twelve key messages were developed to guide citizens towards behavioural changes and transformation of waste perception:

## 1. Together we are stronger: joint efforts for common goals!

Every citizen can make a difference by taking actions, at local level, that will benefit the whole community. If we put together our efforts and we commit to do our share to improve waste management, we will keep our environment clean and our ecosystems healthier.

What can I do? For instance, pick up a piece of litter lying around every day and dispose of it properly or participate in community activities and organize a clean-up.

Saving the world starts at home and in your neighbourhood!

## 2. I am responsible for my waste!

Uncollected waste ends up on our land and in our oceans, polluting our environment and posing serious threats to the ecosystems that provide food and water for us. Collected waste must be segregated at source to generate wealth.

You are responsible for your waste – make sure it is not ending up in the environment and it will be recovered!

## 3. Rethink: is it really waste?

Most of the items we throw away, are actually not waste but resources. For example, a glass bottle can be reused to store drinking water and can last for many years. Plastic bottles can be used as raw materials to make new t-shirts.

What did you think of as waste that turned out to be a resource?



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#### 4. Refuse: the burden of single-use items

Some items, for example plastic nets for fruits and vegetables, are used one time only, but they take hundreds of years to decompose. Why not shopping with your own reusable bags? Similarly, other disposable, single-use items such as plastic cutlery, plates, straws etc.

Say no to single-use items!

#### 5. Reduce: less is more!

Reducing simply means to be more careful regarding the waste we generate. How many times do we buy items that we do not need? Next time you want to buy something, reflect if you really need it, how it was produced, what its ecological footprint is, and how it will be disposed. These questions will guide you in making an environmentally friendly decision.

The most effective way to reduce waste is not to produce it in the first place!

#### 6. Reuse: give presents to your family and friends!

Reusing a “waste” item means that you do not have to buy a new product. This way, you are utilizing an item again for the same or a different purpose. For example, an old pair of jeans can become a bag. The trousers I don't fit in anymore, can be a present for my little sister or a friend. Besides reducing the amount of waste you generate, you also save energy and resources that would have been used to make a new product, as well as money.

Be generous with your friends, family and our planet - reuse!

#### 7. Separate your waste

Waste is a resource if it is not contaminated. For example, paper can be processed and transformed into new paper, but it is a lot easier and of better quality if no food scraps are clinging to it. Segregation at source does not take much effort, it is just a matter of habits. Wet waste (e.g. food waste) goes in one bin, dry waste (e.g. plastics, glass, paper, metals) in another one, hazardous waste (batteries, bulbs, electronic equipment) are stored separately.

Three bins are all that you need!

#### 8. Recycle: give your valuables a purpose

Recycling means that a “waste” product is returned to a factory where it is remade into either the same product or something different. For example, used aluminium cans can be recycled back into either new drinking cans or engine blocks for vehicles. Recycling has two major benefits: on one hand, it saves landfill space, and on the other hand, it recovers the material that was used to make the product in the first place. Moreover, recycling often can also save energy, water and other valuable resources.

If you cannot find information on recycling possibilities, get together with your neighbours and create a recycling initiative! Why waiting if you can act now?!





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## 9. No food goes to waste!

Do you know that left-over food is a precious resource? It is used to create clean energy and to make organic fertilizer! Biogas and composting plants can be low-cost and low-tech technologies that transform food (as well as garden waste and sewage) into other resources. For example, biogas, that can in turn be used for cooking purposes (forget about all that smoke coming from charcoal and wood) or to generate electricity (finally no more power cuts). Compost is used as fertilizer to grow vegetables and fruits. Organic fertilizer also helps to restore nutrients in the soil!

Why don't you start composting in your garden or at school?

## 10. Proper waste management opens up job opportunities

When a functioning waste management system is set up, numerous job opportunities are created. In fact, managing waste streams requires coordinated and organized efforts by several teams. From collection, to transport, to recovery of resources and recycling, to final disposal, waste management offers plenty of employment possibilities.

If you want to push your community and our world towards sustainability, a green career in waste management is waiting for you!

## 11. Frontier technologies: call for innovations!

Technologies and innovations have dramatically changed for the better the quality of our lives. This is also true in the waste management sector. For example, technologies allow us to transform waste into other resources and new items, and eventually in wealth. In San Paolo (Brazil) for instance, an APP, named CATAKI, was developed to connect waste pickers with people generating waste. Swipe right on the APP for cleaner streets, protecting our planet and supporting livelihood opportunities for waste pickers.

Which other innovative solutions can transform your waste into our wealth?

## 12. My Waste, Our Wealth

Everyone generates waste, everyone is responsible for it and everyone can benefit from it.

Cleaner environment and healthier ecosystems mean improved quality of life for all, as well as availability of and access to resources for all. What can I do to ensure that my waste will be transformed into wealth for my community? By adjusting our daily routines to the above key messages/actions, we contribute to a cleaner environment and to healthier (and happier) people. Moreover, you can take initiative, for example engage your local government representative for waste management issues and raise awareness for existing problems.

It was once waste, now it is our wealth!



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These twelve principle will guide citizens and community members to adjust their daily habits in a way that will support the city authority in establishing a sound and sustainable waste management system. For instance, the first phase of the campaign could run for one year: every month can focus on one principle, so that by the end of the first year of the campaign, citizens will be well aware and informed on the actions they can implement on a daily basis to contribute to improve waste management, to increase access to clean energy and to generate economic opportunities for the city authority and its community members

Based on the key messages, monthly competitions on progress of each principle can be organized in schools, offices and neighbourhoods. In the long run, changes in the daily routine will result in behavioural change and perception of waste as a means to achieve enhanced quality of life for all.



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# Campaign target groups

This campaign aims at **stimulating behavioural change at the community level as to achieve proper solid waste management**. Commitment from all community members is necessary to achieve behavioural changes and establish a sustainable waste management system. Therefore, civil society is the target group of the campaign. Nevertheless, some groups of citizens require more involvement and special attentions for the role they have in society.

For example, **youth and children** are key target groups. They represent the future; they will be the ones shaping consumerism models and the production of items. Moreover, being a considerable portion of the population, they can lead changes in their homes and influence lifestyles in their communities.

As part of civil society, **community based organizations** and youth groups collecting waste from households, especially in low income areas, are a crucial target group as too. When collecting waste, it is fundamental that they keep the waste separated to value the effort of the households, encourage them to continue the segregation at source and to foster a collaborative approach.

Messages and activities will be tailored to each target group with the aim of:

- Enhancing awareness for waste issues
- Increasing understanding about waste reduction, reuse, recycling and resource recovery
- Enabling the citizens to be part of the solutions (rather than of the problem)

## Civil Society

To raise awareness for sustainable resource and waste management, the civil society will be the main target group. Indeed, in order to improve waste management services, it is fundamental that citizens actively engage themselves in daily actions and rethink, refuse, reduce and reuse waste. Their willingness to change behaviour and perceive themselves as contributors to shaping sustainable and resilient communities will be decisive for the success or the failure of the awareness campaign. Any waste management intervention, including construction of infrastructure, works only if the civil society supports the project. Every citizen should fully understand his/her valuable contribution in supporting the transition to sustainable and resilience communities and circular economy.

## Children and Youth

Campaigns targeting children often demonstrate that they influence the parents as well, especially when they take place in educational institutions. This allows for the behavioural change to flow from the children to other family members (or even the whole community). For example, after a waste awareness campaign in schools in one area of Victoria (United States), a high percentage of parents declared that the sensitization programme changed their thinking about reducing, reusing, composting and recycling. This thinking has translated into action: 80 % of the parents stated that they changed the way they packed their lunch for work, as a result of a waste-free lunch initiative in which they helped their children design a low-waste school lunch.<sup>1</sup>

Specific activities will be implemented to engage children and youth within the school environment and organize competitions among students and schools.

1. *Community Education and Awareness Strategy for Waste Management*, Environmental Protection Authority, 2003



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## Community Based Organization and Youth Groups

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Youth Groups, providing waste collection services, play a crucial role in the waste management chain. They are often in charge of waste collection services in low income areas, which otherwise would be deprived of such service. Additionally, they are responsible of recovering recyclables from the low-income areas and of selling them to middleman or recycling companies. Educating them on how to safely maximize their profits, by increasing the amount of recoverable materials, will result in a win-win solution. Indeed, sensitization on waste perception and 5Rs, on one hand, will increase the amount of recyclables that waste pickers can access in a clean and safe manner, and therefore enhance their livelihood too. On the other hand, recycling companies will increase their supply as well as decrease processing resources and costs (e.g. detergent, water and electricity to clean recyclable materials). Finally, less waste will be left abandoned in the environment, improving environmental and health conditions, and circular economy models will be established, enhancing sustainable and resilient communities.

Besides being a target group, CBOs can be involved in training activities for the community members. For instance, they can explain to households how to segregate the waste or might refuse to collect not segregated waste.

Specific activities will be implemented to engage CBOs and youth groups, including competition for the cleanest neighbourhood.



# Campaign methods and tools

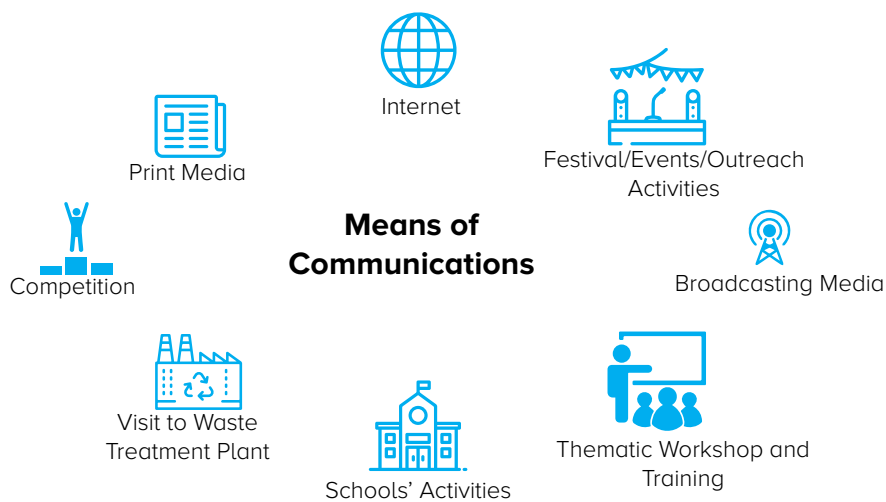
Awareness raising activities generate multiple positive impacts. On one hand, they help raise people's environmental consciousness to introduce greater comprehension of the negative effects of poor waste handling, and on the other hand support citizens to understand the positive impacts of sustainable management practices. Furthermore, a sensitization campaign makes people more conscious about their role in contributing towards sustainable waste management and in supporting economic, social and environmental wealth for the whole community.

Awareness campaigns are more effective, produce increased positive impacts and engage more the community, when they are coordinated with the implementation of

new waste management activities. In many cases, seeing is believing, this is particularly true in under-served communities.

While planning for a sensitizations campaign for sustainable resource and waste management, city authorities can undertake a wide array of activities utilizing, several tools to educate the target groups. However, it is fundamental to have a clear idea which type of messages want to be passed out and which are the most appropriate means of communication intended to be used. It is important that modes of communication are appropriate to the local contexts and cultural sensitive. Therefore, a combination of traditional and cultural practices as well as modern means of communication will generate greater impact and facilitate the transmission and comprehension of the target messages.

The figure below shows examples of communication tools that can be used to deliver the campaign's key messages:





## 1. Internet

The internet is a very powerful tool that allows to reach millions of people with one click. In 2015, the International Telecommunication Union estimated that almost half of the world's population (approximately 3.2 billion people), would be online by the end of the year. Of them, around 2 billion would be from developing countries. City authorities can create ad hoc websites or use the city one to incorporate a range of information on sustainable resources and waste management as well as concrete actions that the population can implement to increase waste reduction, reuse and recycling. The website can share information on: national, regional and local statistics concerning waste and recyclables; a residential waste profile; reasons why recycling and waste reduction are so important; environmental, social and economic benefits of waste reduction; potential ways of reusing certain products; what happens to recyclables and what kinds of products can be made from them; general messages about what can and cannot be recycled<sup>2</sup>, etc. A specific social media account can be created to channel the same information and post key messages, activities, initiatives, events and competitions on a daily or weekly basis.

## 2. Festival/events/outreach activities

Public events and outreach activities play a major role in passing on messages, bringing people together and engaging them in discussion. Specific waste awareness public events can be organized and linked to traditional celebrations or means of communications. For example, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, an annual waste pickers' carnival parade is held, where the waste pickers create their costumes out of recycled waste materials. In Bangalore, India, professional performers put on a

street theatre in order to raise awareness among the town's citizens on the need of sound waste management and their participation in the household waste collection service<sup>3</sup>. During these festivals/events waste separation at source should be encouraged by placing bins to separate the waste, so that people will put into actions what they have just learnt.

Going from door to door and paying visits in the neighbourhood have proven to also be effective when undertaken by voluntary community health workers, leaders or responsible local politicians or even students. For instance, in Karachi, Pakistan, volunteers and leaders jointly visited each household to demonstrate the use of dustbins they had distributed. The campaigns rapidly led to changes in behaviour. Similarly, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, house-to-house visits were often carried out by students, who helped disseminate information and convince residents to participate in the source separation programme<sup>4</sup>. Involving youth in such activities, gives them the opportunity to bring about positive changes in their communities, while empowering them.

City authorities can also join other regular celebrations (sport, recreational, religious, etc.) and take advantage of the associated large crowds to deliver the key campaign messages. In this regard, religious leaders play an extremely significant role in supporting the behavioural change by promoting sustainable resources and waste management messages during their sermons in churches, mosques or temples.

2. *Community Education and Awareness Strategy for Waste Management*, Environmental Protection Authority, 2003

3. *Community Partnerships in Integrated Sustainable Waste Management*, Maria Muller and Lane Hoffman, 2001

4. *Ibid*





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### 3. Broadcasting media

Utilizing broadcasting media to channel the key messages and increasing awareness on sustainable resources and waste management is another effective tool. These include: radio programs, newspapers, magazines and television programs. For instance, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the publication of a monthly magazine, special radio and television programmes are used to disseminate information about the municipality's source separation programme. Celebrities, politicians and public leaders can be involved in the dissemination of such messages.

While not everyone has a television, everyone has access to the radio. Radio programs can provide platforms for the community to obtain in-depth knowledge on waste management and to discuss issues concerning their neighbourhood, with city authorities as well as national and international experts (including private sector and development organizations), while entertaining too. For example, studies on the effectiveness of radio awareness campaigns on sustainable resource and waste management in Juba (South Sudan) and Yobe State (Nigeria) revealed that compared to the years before the radio programs, the extent of random disposal of garbage by the population had reduced, as well as the regular occurrences of sicknesses such as diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid<sup>5</sup>.

5. *The role of national radio in solid waste management in juba: a case study of South Sudan radio*, Garang Kuol Gabriel, 2013 and *Role Of Radio Stations In Creating Awareness On Proper Solid Waste Management Practice In Yobe State, Nigeria*, Abubakar Bappayo and Zanna Maidunoma, 2018

### 4. Thematic workshop and training

City authorities, y themselves or with the support of organizations, can organize thematic workshops and trainings targeting the population at large or specific groups, (e.g. youth and children). Besides passing on information, these activities are opportunities to teach and showcase waste management best practices. For example, composting companies can be invited to teach the audience how to make organic compost at their home.

Alongside with formal training, it is possible to use traditional channels. For instance, neighbours and street committees agree among themselves on good practices in their homes and area. They admonish each other and develop an understanding of the difficulties involved. Community leaders play a crucial part in stimulating desired behavioural change. The most powerful messages are delivered when the leaders set the example for their community, for instance, by organizing clean-up campaigns; regularly paying waste collection fees; segregating waste at source. Their involvement is therefore paramount to ensure collaboration and engagement of community members.

Likewise, waste collectors and street sweepers can train citizens on how to segregate their waste. An example is from Las Rosas, Argentina; the municipality organised a source separation campaign, the waste collectors educated the households and returned anything misplaced in the bin to the household where the mistake was made<sup>6</sup>.

6. *Community Partnerships in Integrated Sustainable Waste Management*, Maria Muller and Lane Hoffman, 2001



## 5. School activities

Activities to promote sustainable resource and waste management practices can also be organized at schools. Examples include offering a creative workshop to make new items utilizing waste materials (the so called Recycled Art, creative work that is made from discarded materials that once had another purpose<sup>7</sup>) and exhibit the results; organizing a competition on waste reduction in each class, including food waste; showcasing clothes made from recyclables through a fashion show; establishing a composting area; constructing benches/shelters with plastic bottles filled with other waste or sand.

Moreover, the educational tasks of schoolteachers are also very relevant. Awareness-raising activities have to target students, school-leavers and children who are unable to attend school. Environmental curricula should be developed and introduced in all schools from kindergartens to high schools. Educating children on sustainable resource and waste management will allow the key messages and practices to be brought home and in neighbourhoods. For example, in Patan city, Nepal, it is the children who were tasked to “wake up” their parents and the neighbourhoods to the necessity of sanitary behaviour. In Campinas, Brazil, the involvement of children through the environmental education programmes at schools has proved to be a relevant factor in the success of the awareness programme<sup>8</sup>.

If we want to have environmentally aware citizens with a life-long commitment to environment protection, who perceive waste as a resource bringing benefit to the entire community, environmental and waste education must be part of the schools’ curricula, starting from kindergarten.

## 6. Visit to waste treatment plant

As seeing is believing, visits to waste treatment plants can be very effective in creating awareness among the civil society. On one hand, the visits will allow citizens to gain practical knowledge on how waste is treated, how resources are recovered and transformed into energy. On the other hand, community members will deeply understand why their contribution is essential for the maximum and safe recovery of resources. By observing how waste is processed from the arrival to the treatment plant, to the sorting, to the shredding and cutting of plastic and glass, to the transformation into compost and biogas, people will gain first-hand knowledge of how waste creates wealth in safe conditions. They will shift their perception of litter from waste to a resource. For example, an open-house event can be organized and community members can be invited to a composting plant, explaining and showing on site why source segregation greatly contributes to enhancing the operation of the composting plant.

Visits to waste treatment and recycling plants should be also part of schools’ programmes, to foster the perception of waste as valuable resources and the importance of preserving our precious natural resources since a young age. For instance, in Jambi Regenci, Indonesia, biogas digesters are designed in a colourful way, so that visiting children do not perceive waste processing plants as “repulsive”, but rather as places where new resources are created in clean and safe conditions.

7. *Recycled Art: History and Materials*, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/recycled-art-history-materials.html>

8. *Community Partnerships in Integrated Sustainable Waste Management*, Maria Muller and Lane Hoffman, 2001





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## 7. Competitions

Making people aware and assigning them responsibilities on sustainable resource and waste management can be fostered through incentive measures: these can vary from competitions offering prizes or rewards for the collection of recyclables, to festivals, as well as the use of the media and visits from authorities to present the cleanliness award. For example, in Angra dos Reis, Brazil, the municipality offers financial rewards to those city residents bringing in the largest number of recyclables to the city exchange centres, or in Patan city, Nepal, the Prime Minister awarded a prize to schoolchildren in a competition<sup>9</sup>.

Competitions can be organized among schools, offices or neighbourhoods. For instance, an awareness raising campaign was organized in Dar es Salaam based on a cleanest neighbour competition combined with improved solid waste collection services and guidance and support offered to the community leaders. The objectives of the campaign were to improve solid waste management in the selected areas, encourage source separation and the payment of collection fees. Engagement of community leaders was essential for the success of the activity and the competition. In the selected areas, it was possible to build and improve solid waste management. The campaign resulted in regular payments of waste fees, removal of illegal neighbourhood dumps, increased cooperation among leaders and actors of the neighbourhood and enhanced level of accountability as community leaders became more aware and took action on solid waste management problems<sup>10</sup>.

## 8. Print media

A common tool to inform citizens is print media. Leaflets can be prepared and distributed among households describing the benefits of source segregation and providing guidelines to differentiate between inorganic and organic waste. Messages, contained in the informative material, should be designed in a simple and positive way, focusing on what every citizen can do daily to contribute to establishing a sound waste management system and generating wealth for the whole community.

The flyers should be distributed or hung in very populated areas and in places with high visibility, such as of billboards, buses, bus stops, garbage trucks, squares, etc. Besides the usual flyers, innovative approaches to communicate messages through printed material are encouraged. For example, comics with local characters can be designed and distributed in schools and published in the most popular newspaper or on the City website/social media. Whatever paper material is produced should be on recycled paper and provide direction to further information such as a website or the City authority.

9. Ibid

10. *Awareness Raising Campaign: Cleanest Neighbour Competition Program in Dar es Salaam*, Bremen Overseas Research & Development Association (BORDA), 2016



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## Conclusion and call for action

In order for regulatory frameworks and policies to produce the desired result of sound and sustainable resource and waste management, active public participation and engagement must be in place. Citizens must be aware of the challenges related to mismanagement of municipal solid waste and the associated environmental and health threats. Education at all levels and knowledge sharing are proven tools to create such awareness among the civil society members and stimulate behavioural change. Environmentally conscious citizens supported by strong political will and commitment are the essential elements to ensure that a sustainable waste management system is in place and that future generation will have enough resources to meet their own needs in a clean and healthy environment<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, awareness campaigns must be complemented with concrete actions that aim at improving waste management in the city, including collection, disposal and recycling, especially in those areas of the city deprived of waste services. Collaboration and support by the civil society will increase, as citizens see that waste management interventions are implemented and their cooperation will generate positive impacts in their lives too.

Changing people's behaviour is not a simple task, nevertheless it is not impossible.

- A successful camping should have several means of communications and not concentrate on one instrument only. Usually each communication tool targets specific groups, while the objective of the campaign is to reach all citizens.

- A campaign should run for a period of at least one year, be consistent with its messages, have a well-defined strategy and human resources fully dedicated to it. It must be backed by a strong political will to improve municipal solid waste management and create wealth for the citizens.
- A well thought through budget should be developed and sufficient funds have to be secured for the implementation of the campaign.
- Engaging all stakeholders in the waste chain is fundamental to reach the goal: if one ring of the chain is weak or broke, the risk is that the all chain will fall apart.

As everyone generate waste, waste management is everyone's responsibility. Citizens should internalize this concept and understand that their contribution is fundamental to preserve our natural resources and utilize waste to generate wealth, rather than health hazards and pollution. Once everyone recognizes that waste management is a matter concerning all individuals, they will also comprehend that a collaborative approach and joint efforts are the only ways to provide long-lasting and sustainable solutions to waste management.

11. Public Awareness Is Key to Successful Waste Management, Syed Hasan, 2004



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*For more information on how to take action to improve waste management in your cities and communities?*

Visit us at <https://unhabitat.org/waste-wise-cities>

**Share with us your awareness and sensitization strategies: what have you achieved? Which challenges have you encountered?**

**How have you overcome them?**

**Tell us at [wastewisecitie@un.org](mailto:wastewisecitie@un.org)**

