

REVIEWING THE ALM CONCEPT TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALISATION
A Summary of the CSF-AIILSG Report

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Solid Waste Management is acknowledged as a mega problem in cities of the developing world. The challenge and speed posed by urbanization reflects the shortcomings of traditional approaches by municipalities, which are clearly unable to cope. Most urban centres in India are plagued by the tenacious problem of Solid Waste Management despite the largest part of municipal expenditure being allotted to it. Mumbai city is no exception.

Solid Waste Management is obligatory duty of Urban Local Bodies (ULB), who are now mandated to implement the provisions of the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000 by the MoEF, GOI. Given their infrastructural constraints, ULBs are looking towards other innovative approaches to handle waste. One of such emerging approaches is '**Participatory Governance**' – involving people (NGOs/ CBOs/ PWAs) in service delivery and local governance, essentially cooperating with existing Solid Waste Management services. While this is a tedious, time – consuming process for the municipality, by this simple measure of people's participation the cost of waste management can be substantially reduced, and in view of the immense problem staring us in the face, this is an option which cities can no longer afford to ignore.

There is a wide range of ways in which communities can be involved in SWM, and several international models – Zabbaleen in Cairo, Barangaya in the Philippines, Cardboarders in Bogota, and local examples such as 'Bhagidari' in Delhi, which is financially supported by the MCD, are available.

An innovative approach that emerged in Mumbai a decade ago is that of the ALM – Advanced Locality Management. From small beginnings in 1996 from Joshi Lane in Ghatkopar, duly recognized by MCGM which accepted the concept of proactive administration by coining the term 'MCGM at your doorstep', this convergence of citizens, municipal administration, and waste-pickers soon extended to some 700 such ALMs across the city. However, ten years down the line the system has slowly stagnated and not made the kind of significant impact expected from it. What then are the weaknesses that are perceived to have slowed down its momentum and efficacy, and that have hampered the very sustenance itself of this model, leave alone its proliferation?

Against this backdrop, the SWM cell of the All India Institute of Local Self- Government (AIILSG), Mumbai, and a local NGO, the CLEAN-Sweep Forum, under the assistance of the US-Asia Environment Program (US-AEP) of USAID, came together as study partners to examine the ALM system and suggest necessary steps to revitalize this effective movement of peoples' participation and help in developing its institutionalisation in the municipal set-up. The genesis of this research study was the extensive deliberations spread over a year, which CSF had with municipal officials such as the AMC in charge of SWM, which resulted in MCGM calling for a Project Report on the subject.

An **comprehensive questionnaire**, with two broad headings – information collection and data gathering, was prepared for the field survey, and after a process of scanning, a research team of 5 CSF members conducted an in-depth survey between mid Feb. and end April 2005, undertaking site-visits of 67 ALMs across the city and collecting useful data from 45 of these – 22 in M-Ward, where a Federation of ALMs actively supports the movement, and 23 ALMs in the rest of the city. Actual weightment was made of three categories of waste, 'wet', 'dry' and mixed. Three market waste collection and disposal projects and two ecotels were also surveyed. The findings were

immediately tabulated on to a data sheet followed by preliminary analysis, and the partnering institutions held joint meetings with all concerned throughout the duration of the survey, contents of which are appropriately incorporated in the Report.

The experiences of the CSF survey team were revealing – disappointing sometimes (clearly MCGM had not been at the ALM’s doorstep!) but yet largely rewarding and always invigorating. It was heartening to know that though the number of ALMs had dwindled, the 45 ALMs surveyed were still putting in selfless work for a cause dear to their hearts – environment-friendly action against all odds!

The survey set out to confirm or dispel the many assumptions that it was believed were based on lay observations with respect to the functioning of ALMs, so as find ways to redress weaknesses through suitable administrative mechanisms and legislative modifications in the larger interests of SWM. Largely, the **Findings** were encouraging. ALMs survive entirely out of a sense of civic consciousness, with no support from MCGM. The value-add they provide to localities is immense – segregation, composting and recycling, greening and gardening, road sweeping, cleaning their SWDs, in many cases adoption and protection of their neighbourhoods, all at their own, sometimes high, cost, with the capacity to do much more. While there is a high degree of awareness about all aspects of SWM and its effects on the environment, this does not always translate to effective segregation, though this flaw is to be placed at MCGM’s door. Mixed waste quantities, therefore, are high – still the largest component of total solid waste. Contrary to common belief, public space is not the preferred location for waste treatment. This little snippet of exemplary civic consciousness must be kept in mind when schemes advocating the use of public spaces for all sorts of activity are expounded. In fact ALMs have shown a marked preference to composting in neat and compact boxes which come in no one’s way, not even parking, or inconveniencing pedestrians even when they are placed over SWDs. ALMs also provide a fair amount of employment for unskilled labour. Single building units are found to be the most efficient, while personality-based units are not working as well as they did initially. The ‘Lane’ model, though more economical, is not a prolific one and only 11 successful lanes were observed.

However, despite the many difficulties ALMs face, notably financial constraints, lack of any kind of support from MCGM (applicable to a gamut of activities), and non-cooperation from residents, the concept of the ALM has completely captured the imagination of the people! Across the city people are convinced that the ALM movement can be revitalized if suitable corrective action is taken by MCGM. **Most would be happy to see the ALM revived as originally conceived, with its tenets implemented by MCGM in letter as well as spirit.** Expectations from MCGM are numerous, as are suggestions for revival of the ALM. (The ‘actionable’ suggestions from these are factored into the recommendations).

In an **analysis** of the full picture and value generation of the ALM movement today, as has emerged in the course of the Study, the chart below, also in summary, is exemplary. (Inert wastes could not be quantified).

Table 5.1: Consolidated Quantitative Data of ALMs Surveyed in Mumbai

Sr. No.	Details	M Ward	Rest of City	Total
1	No.of ALMs surveyed	22	23	45
	No. of residents (at 5 per family)	25830	63015	88845
2	Total Waste generated in the ALM (minus inert)	1759 kgs	4405 kgs	6164 kgs.
2.1	Waste not going to dumping grounds	1210 kgs.	2228 kgs.	3438 kgs.

2.2	Percentage of total waste not going to dump	69%	51%	56%
2.3	'Dry' waste not going to dump	211 kg	795 kg	1006 kg (16%)
2.4	'Wet' waste not going to dump	999 kg	1433 kg	2432 kg (40%)
2.5	Mixed waste still going to dump	549 kg	2177 kg	2726 kg (44%)
3	Waste generated p. family (dry+wet+mixed)	0.340 kg	0.350 kg	0.345 kg ave*
4	Waste saved from dump per family per day	0.234 kg	0.177 kg	0.190 kg ave
4.1	Total amount saved by ALMs for MCGM @ Rs. 1.60 kg. per day/ per month	Rs.1936 per day Rs. 58080	Rs. 3565 per day Rs. 1,06,950	Rs. 5501 per day Rs. 1,65,030
5	Compost generation per month	3000 kg	4300 kg	7300 kg
6	Employment Generation Full/part time workers	7 / 26	65 / 20	72 / 46

Source: ALM Survey, CSF/AIILSG, 2005

* **An unusual finding of the survey is that the average waste generation per family (excluding inert wastes) as seen in ALM areas, works out to only 345 gms, ie. only 70gms per capita. It may be worthwhile for MCGM to look into this at a later stage.**

The survey clearly shows that where Cooperative Housing Societies pay the cost of composting themselves work goes on more smoothly (even if more expensively!) Lack of good segregation also increases the cost of composting because more labour and time is involved. The 'Lane' model is most economically efficient but not a currently prolific one, and needs to be suitably incentivised if it is to become the norm. Compost produced is usually used by the ALM.

The above analysis clarifies that a mere 45 ALMs, 90,000 people, save MCGM from carting 3.44 tons of waste to the dump, Rs. 5500/- per day and Rs. 1,65,030 per month. If this is projected to the estimated 2000 tons of domestic waste said to be generated daily by the city, then the estimated cost savings can be Rs. 32,000,00/-. These are **immense cost benefits!** The recommendations then are based on these value-additions as well as the sense that MCGM needs to not only preserve the commitment of these remaining few ALMs, but also motivate numerous others to follow their example, as much for the cost savings involved as the environmental gains accruing from holistic management.

The **Legal and Institutional Framework** for the kind of formal bonding needed to empower ALMs is provided in the MSW Rules 2000 itself, which mandates participation of the community. Section 50TT of the MMC Act opens the doors of formal engagement of civil society organizations in municipal governance. It is feasible then to accommodate ALMs through this provision. Also, section 63A of the same provides for outsourcing of municipal functions to agencies appointed by MCGM. ALMs undertake many aspects of waste management (excluding transport and disposal at landfill) so the study suggests that ALMs can be treated as such agencies with a few waivers. Cooperative Housing Societies (CHS) too, some of whom have proved to be excellent models in the Study, can be mandated to compost their waste. Suitable amendments in the Bye-laws of the CHS Act would then need to be made.

The Study has successfully established that the ALM concept is a viable system for citizen participation. To make it truly effective and multiply it manifold some proactive steps need to be taken by MCGM. The ensuing **Recommendations** are merely an attempt to show the way, facets to be placed on the discussion table as part of a consultative process with MCGM as the lead partner.

Some of these revisit the old ALM concept but factored in with greater thrust and vigour. Thus a fully empowered ALM cell within MCGM is recommended, this time blessed with adequate resources, measurable targets and holistic vision, which does away with the nodal officer, but adds the corporator, and the new post of AE (Environment). This cell must be empowered by electronic technology, a comprehensive 'Management Information System' and regular updation. Inspired by ALMANAC, the Federation of M-Ward, where there are almost as many waste-managing ALMs as the rest of the city, this study recommends that MCGM officially facilitates the formation of such federations in all the wards, representing active ALMs and incorporating new members as more ALMs are born. These federations could then be registered as Trusts and receive and disburse the ALM fund. In time an apex federation for the city could also be formed.

Incentives are a must for proliferation and could be in cash and kind or both. These could be as a percentage of savings accruing to MCGM, buyback of compost at a reasonable price, a scheme of compensation after the fact (ie. after verifying their activity for a 'try and watch' period of, say, a year). A system of gradation and star status would be exciting and ensure growth of the concept, cash prizes being given at the end.

Commissioning large projects is highly recommended by the Study. 13.5 tons per day is saved by just three currently existing projects surveyed. Novel projects should also be commissioned such as within or adjoining marketplaces. MCGM must make it mandatory for all clubs, hotels, restaurants, marriage halls etc to compost their waste after the example of the Cricket Club of India, which treats 350 kgs per day. Cooperative Housing Societies must be facilitated for civic-citizen partnerships, segregation must be effectively implemented and **composting made mandatory after first putting in place incentives and pay-back for this work**. Rag-picker organizations deserve support and every effort must be made by MCGM to get rag-pickers off the roads and into projects run by these organisations. The Study recommends a complete 'dry' waste management plan, not detailed here, and recommends a holistic plan for inert wastes (though out of the scope of the Study). And above all the Study recommends setting up an Independent Monitoring Body to ensure efficient functioning.

The events of 26 / 7 / 05 have shown beyond doubt that garbage on the streets compounded the natural disaster in Mumbai. Serious note needs to be taken of this report by all concerned as civic-citizen partnerships as exemplified by ALMs can go a long way in holistic management of waste.

The partners of this study are pleased to offer their services to MCGM in implementation of the final recommendations that come out of discussions stemming from this report.

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