

Power of Community

Role of RWA in Sustainable Waste Management



Sushant Lok C Block is located in the heart of Ward 32 of the city of Gurugram. This area boasts of a high volume of daily commuters who engage in various business activities. Sushant Lok comprises a colony of independent houses, with a population exceeding 10,000 residents. Among these houses, C Block accommodates well over 6,000 households who are self-reliant and independent, alongside a collection of multi-story flats.

As opportunities continue to grow in the vicinity, the influx of people in and out of this area has also increased. This surge in population is accompanied by the rise of paying guest accommodations (PGs) and builder apartments, contributing

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Dry Waste Collection Center, C Block Sushant Lok



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Credits: Saahas

Dry Waste Collection Center, C Block Sushant Lok

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to issues related to water and waste management. In response to the challenges posed by waste management in the area, a waste collection agency was appointed in 2019 to provide door-to-door waste pickup services in Sushant Lok. Despite the vehicles used for waste collection being equipped with separate compartments for waste segregation, improperly mixed waste was frequently observed, which was attributed to the actions of both residents and waste collectors. Even individuals who diligently sorted their waste became disheartened upon witnessing the mingling of segregated waste within the collection vehicle, primarily due to a lack of driver and helper commitment. Additionally, inconsistent waste collection also resulted in an increase in open dumping in the vicinity.

In January 2021, Alag Karo program was launched in Block C of Sushant Lok within ward 32. The initiative aimed to establish a model system for Independent Plotted Colonies, with a particular focus on source segregation, behavioural change, streamlined waste collection that ensures adequate waste processing. Over the course of one year, Alag Karo and the RWA conducted a series of awareness campaigns, capacity building exercises for waste collectors, and daily monitoring activities. As a result of these efforts, significant changes in resident behaviour were observed, with waste audits indicating an improvement in waste segregation levels since Alag Karo's involvement.

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The changes in resident behavior were notable, but the same could not be said for the waste collector's performance. This disparity caused conflicts between the RWA and the formal waste collection agency. To address this issue, the RWA took charge of waste collection and established a decentralized waste management unit within the community. To further reinforce the process, an MoU was signed between Alag Karo and the RWA.

The Resident Welfare Association (RWA) devoted a considerable amount of time for meticulously selecting a collection agency and acquiring funds and space for the establishment of the Decentralized Waste Management Unit. Their primary objective was to promote source segregation among the residents and convert the colony into a 'Zero-Waste' community. This decentralized facility has the capacity to manage 1.5 tons of wet waste and 4 tons of dry waste on a daily basis. The RWA has also received infrastructural support and technical guidance from Alag Karo team to run the system sustainably.

Segregated waste at the household level is systematically transported to this facility, where the wet waste is composted, and the dry waste is further sorted by waste workers. Wet waste composted, returned to the community and sorted dry waste gets baled and sent to aggregators and recyclers. With the support of the RWA, an entrepreneur from the informal waste sector has been onboarded to operate the decentralized unit. This facility also provided job opportunity to women waste workers and served as a platform for them to gain visibility and influence within their respective communities.

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Sushant Lok Composting Facility

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Alag Karo served as a steadfast support system, providing expertise and addressing challenges that were encountered in the field. The facility not only established a decentralized unit but also has proven to be a positive example of women's empowerment within the waste sector, supporting entrepreneurship within the informal waste sector. Moreover, this initiative highlighted the efforts of the informal waste workers and by returning the compost produced using the wet waste back to the community, it has strengthened the belief of the community in source segregation. This has helped make source segregation sustainable at the community level. The RWA has played a pivotal role in establishing the necessary structures and systems that ensure that the community's solid waste is managed.