

Green Productivity and solid waste management

Urban environmental management has become an issue of concern owing to ever-increasing urbanization in APO member countries and worldwide. Due to progressive increases in urban populations and rapidly changing consumption patterns, solid waste management (SWM) has emerged as a main problem area. To address the key issues and challenges and discuss approaches to managing solid waste, the APO organized a multi-country workshop on Green Productivity and Solid Waste Management in Manila, the Philippines, 21–25 November 2005, with the local support of the Development Academy of the Philippines and the Colombo Plan Secretariat. The workshop was attended by 23 delegates from 17 member countries.



Waste collection center in Marikina City

During the workshop, participants pointed out that despite having the required legal frameworks in place, there are problems in carrying out appropriate SWM. In all APO member countries, there is great stress on recycling, reusing, and reducing waste rather than on disposal. However, less than 5–10% of waste is recycled in most countries. Realizing the need for better SWM measures, the APO deputed Professor Tay Joo Hwa of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; Professor Det Wattanachai Yingcharoen of Naresuan University, Thailand; Lisa Antonio of Philippines Business for the Environment, Manila; and Alan S. Cajés, Center for Sustainable Human Development, Manila, to discuss specific approaches to successful community and private-sector participation in SWM and explore potential business opportunities created by the recycling of solid waste. Several actual examples were discussed by the three experts, who pointed out how systematic and innovative approaches to the recycling of waste had resulted in the creation of business entities in Thailand and elsewhere. Various business models were explored during the workshop. The experts also threw light on various technological aspects suitable to developing countries involved in the processing and disposal of solid waste. The discussion at the workshop enabled participants to perform a case study of Tagaytay City, the Philippines, for developing an integrated SWM system, including assessing resource requirements, following a Green Productivity approach.

Workshop participants visited Marikina City, which has developed a model SWM system by ensuring 100% waste collection, setting up a material recovery facility, and putting a penalty system for littering in place under the leadership of the mayor. The participants noted that this was an example of commitment from top management. They were also encouraged to witness students delivering waste to recycling centers and earning points entered in passbooks, which can be redeemed for school supplies.

Overall, the workshop highlighted the need to improve the productivity of local government units and at the same time ensure environmental protection. The participants were able to develop a fresh perspective, examining options other than landfills or incinerators for SWM, such as the processing of organic waste or creating value from items that had previously had little or none. The participants' understanding of SWM was reinforced by the view that waste can be a resource. 🌀