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## Moving towards zero waste in South Asian cities

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With increasing population, economic development and a growing consumerism, South Asian cities are facing a significant change in waste generation and its characteristics. Managing waste has always been the responsibility of local authorities (LAs), but the age-old practice of dumping waste is no longer sustainable. It is an inefficient way to use limited land resources causes environmental pollution of soil and ground-water, social impacts through health issues of nearby communities and is an overall unsustainable practice leading to loss of valuable material resources. Obviously, LAs need to look for sustainable options of reducing, reusing and recycling waste. Integrating the existing system of informal waste-pickers in South Asia, who dominate recycling even before the waste enters the formal management system can lead to significant environmental (material recovery), social (health) and economic (livelihood options) benefits. ICLEI South Asia conducted a project in 7 South Asian LAs encouraging them to promote waste segregation and recycling particularly through informal sector, to move towards a zero-waste community. Successful pilot projects in the cities, demonstrated how recycling helped to reduce waste going to landfills, produced resource materials including compost and generated livelihood for waste-pickers in the city. Continuous engagement with local communities and waste pickers ensured the continuity of the pilots even beyond the life of the project. Critical to successful recycling is simultaneous segregation of waste at source which relies heavily on the awareness levels of community as well as well-established linkages with recycling units which will take up the segregated recyclables. Moving towards zero waste in cities needs collaboration with state and national government agencies so as to incorporate all types of waste, since LAs are only responsible for municipal waste which technically excludes medical waste and hazardous waste but which are major components of the waste coming out of cities.

### Biography

Bedoshruti Sadhukhan has a Master's degree in Environmental Management and more than 12 years of experience in project management, training and capacity building in the field of environment management, environmental justice, environmental impact assessment, public participation in decision making, water, waste and climate resilience. She has also worked on Human Rights Issues such as housing rights and tribal rights. She is a Key Member of the ICLEI South Asia sustainability team and manages long term international projects on environmental management systems for local governments, climate resilience, water, sanitation and solid waste management in South Asian countries.

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