



Central Environmental
Authority



Sevanatha Urban Resource
Center

Consultation Workshop on Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) for the Waste Management Sector in Sri Lanka: Opportunities for Linking the PILISARU Program with International Climate Financing

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 30 April 2015

REPORT

The workshop took place on 30 April 2015 at the Waters Edge Conference Center in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and was organised by ESCAP in partnership with the Central Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka and the Sevanatha Urban Resource Center. The workshop was attended by around 30 participants, which included representatives from national ministries, such as the Ministry of Environment and Mahaweli Development and the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils, international organizations, NGOs and academic experts.

Prof. Lal Mervin Dharmasiri, Chairman, Central Environmental Authority, Mr. K.H. Muthukudaarachchi, Director General, Central Environmental Authority, Mr. Lorenzo Santucci, Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Urban Development Section, ESCAP, and Mr. Udeni Chularathna, Executive Director, Sevanatha Urban Resource Center, delivered opening remarks.

The workshop reviewed current policies and programmes in Sri Lanka on the municipal solid waste and climate change sectors, and discussed opportunities for linking the Pilisar programme with climate financing opportunities, especially NAMAs. The Pilisar programme supports small and medium-sized towns in Sri Lanka in implementing decentralized waste treatment solutions that recover resources from waste, mostly through composting. As these solutions avoid the disposal of waste into disposal sites, the emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas, can thereby be reduced. There is thus an opportunity to link project activities under the Pilisar programme with climate financing mechanisms.

NAMAs can support the implementation of national policies or programmes by leveraging international climate support in the form of finance, technology and capacity building. The development of NAMAs in Sri Lanka is still relatively recent. However, one programme on end-use energy supply will start implementation in 2016, while another one in the transport sector is currently under assessment.

Under Phase I of Pilisar, more than one hundred composting plants have been deployed in cities of Sri Lanka. Yet, participants recognized that most plants have been facing operational difficulties, which could be addressed with the support of a well-designed NAMA programme associated with phase II of Pilisar, which will be implemented throughout the 2015-2018 period.

A number of barriers and challenges with implementing Pilisaru were identified and discussed during the workshop. Financing was highlighted as one of the key issues. While funds are made available to these projects by the Central Environmental Authority (CEA), these do not suffice to meet the needs of all small and medium-sized cities in Sri Lanka. This is further compounded by the limited financial resources of local government authorities, which usually do not have funds to match the contributions made available by CEA, with the plants constructed under Pilisaru fully relying on the grants of CEA.

Other barriers hinder the financial performance of projects under Pilisaru. Among them are the difficulties in charging service fees for the collection, transport and treatment of waste. Another challenge is the low marketability of compost produced from municipal solid waste in Sri Lanka, which is ascribed to competition from heavily-subsidized chemical fertilizers and the lack of standards for compost and guidelines for its use.

A number of plants under the Pilisaru programme have performed below standard. This has been attributed to the lack of skilled labourers to operate the plants, including the high turnover of employees that are trained. Insufficient separation of waste at source was also identified as a key issue, and thus the need for continuous programmes to raise awareness among citizens on waste segregation. Finding suitable land for the plants was also highlighted as a difficulty for many local government authorities in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, it was highlighted the need to reflect on the NAMA the good practices of the successful projects developed during phase I of Pilisaru, as well as the experiences of the Integrated Resource Recovery Center (IRRC) model that has been implemented in the cities of Matale and Ratnapura by Sevanatha with the assistance of ESCAP and Waste Concern.

Barriers and challenges were identified at the institutional level. There are several stakeholders involved on municipal solid waste management in Sri Lanka, including national ministries, provincial authorities and local governments. Coordination among these entities is often difficult, with overlapping responsibilities and lengthy approval processes. It was also recognized that other ministries not traditionally involved in the waste sector, such as the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Agriculture, would need to be part of the NAMA, due to their role in supporting the valuation of resources derived from waste.

The discussions indicated that the NAMA should support the deployment of state-of-the-art technologies in Sri Lanka. It was highlighted, too, the need to take into account the existence of a CDM Programme of Activities (PoA) that is being implemented by the Waste Management Authority, Western Province. This CDM PoA could be linked and/or be integrated under the umbrella of a NAMA. In case the PoA is able to obtain favourable prices for any carbon credits generated, it would need to be ensured that there is a clear boundary between this programme and the NAMA.

The meeting requested ESCAP and its partners to further assist the Government in developing a NAMA for the waste sector, with next steps the hiring of a consultant to develop a NAMA-design study that would propose solutions to address the challenges identified and lay out the building blocks of the programme. Another stakeholder consultation will be convened to discuss the findings of the study and the next steps towards the implementation of the NAMA.

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