

Personal photo by Rozita Singh



Composting in India

By Rozita Singh, Sustainable Development Graduate, New Delhi, India

A few years back, I watched a documentary called *Don't Rubbish It*, and little did I know that the nine-minute documentary would shape my "interest area"—solid waste management. A minute or so in the documentary was devoted to composting. It was then that I got to know about this lovely organization called Daily Dump in Bangalore (<http://daily-dump.org>). The director, Ms. Poonam Bir Kasturi, has designed

a series of products suitable for household composting. I fell in love with the three-tier *khamba* model—it was beautiful, could be kept anywhere (veranda or balcony), and what I liked the most was that it made composting so much more easier!

As part of the British Council's Climate Champion Programme, I decided to take this up as my school project. It is part of the National Action Project (NAP) and was selected to receive a grant. I became part of a group called Social Action Team under NAP, and though my fellow climate champions are based in different cities, we have taken up waste management as our agenda and are working toward it simultaneously from different places. Upon graduation, this activity led me to my current job as a research associate in the Centre for Research on Sustainable Urban Development and Transport Systems at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi, India, working on urban climate resilience issues.

As urbanization increases, the problem of mounting garbage in the cities increases. With land fast becoming a scarce commodity, how long can we depend on landfills? The idea is to promote the habit of segregation at the source among the urban households in New Delhi, India. The technique is aerobic composting using terra-cotta pots designed by the Daily Dump organization, which converts organic kitchen waste into manure in a very simple way. The intended outcome is to sensitize urban residents about the problem of increased solid waste generation and show them a sustainable solution to tackle the problem. Using the pots will decrease the pressure on existing landfills by offsetting the organic waste that currently constitutes roughly 60 to 70 percent of the total waste generated in an ideal household. My ultimate dream or mission is to convince the urban residents to adopt the practice of composting so that we handle our own waste responsibly.

I believe in the power of the "one"—the individual. As an eco-lover and graduate of a master's program in sustainable development practice, I feel that I should emulate the teachings of sustainable living. Moreover, this project is the perfect example of the 3Rs (reuse, reduce, and recycle). Turning your waste into compost is good for the environment and good for your soul. It is also a logical step because it doesn't make sense for organic waste to be sent to the landfill! On average, an urban Indian household generates 0.5 kg (1.1 lb.) of waste each day. When this mixed waste ends up in the landfill, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas. Do the calculation on how many emissions you can save by not sending this waste to the landfill, instead turning it into manure, which in turn could support green-belt development and develop carbon sinks.

If you would like to learn more, please visit me on my blog at <http://come-n-post.blogspot.in/>. Happy composting!