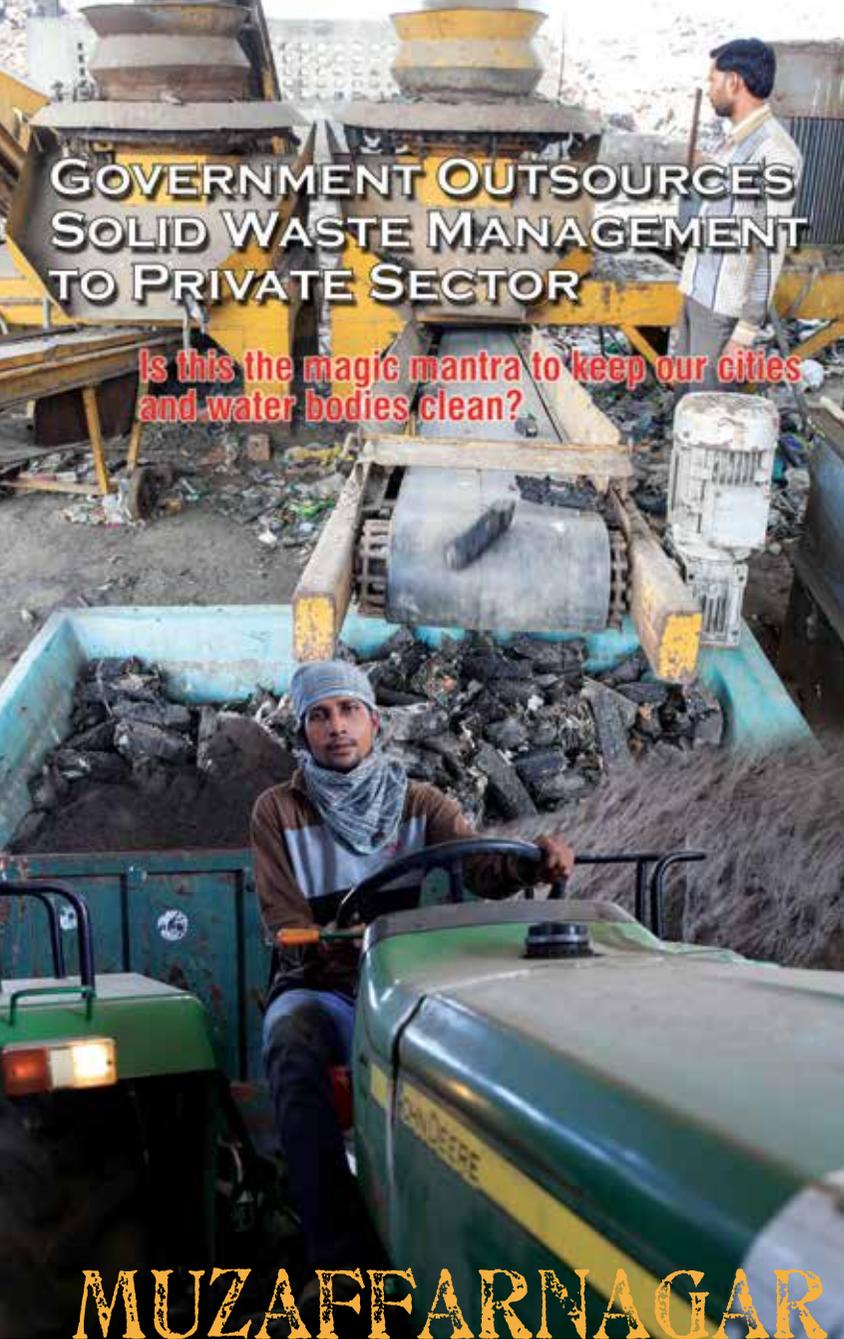
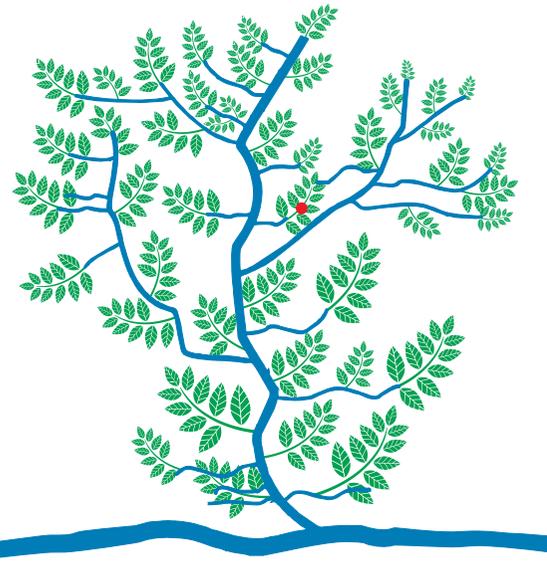


# GOVERNMENT OUTSOURCES SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TO PRIVATE SECTOR

Is this the magic mantra to keep our cities and water bodies clean?



## MUZAFFARNAGAR



Contractual arrangement between Municipal Corporation and **A2Z Waste Management Services** saw marked **improvement in cleanliness** but unless waste **generates revenue**, sustainability will always be questionable

Solid waste management in urban areas is the responsibility of Municipal Corporations. However with burgeoning pressures of development and a callous approach towards sanitation and hygiene; the task of garbage collection, segregation and disposal remains complex. Constrained by lack of expertise and resources, most municipal corporations are ill equipped to carry out the task. Given the sheer volume of waste generated, the model of public private partnership (PPP) has been adopted quite successfully in many cities in the country.

With Muzaffarnagar facing the mounting pressures of domestic and institutional waste, city authorities recognising the need for a more intense and efficient intervention made the decision to hire a professional solid waste management firm.

### Bringing some method to the madness of garbage collection

Entering into a contract with an established player in solid waste management (SWM) sector seemed a logical decision. A2Z Waste Management Ltd. was already in the business and had similar working arrangements with

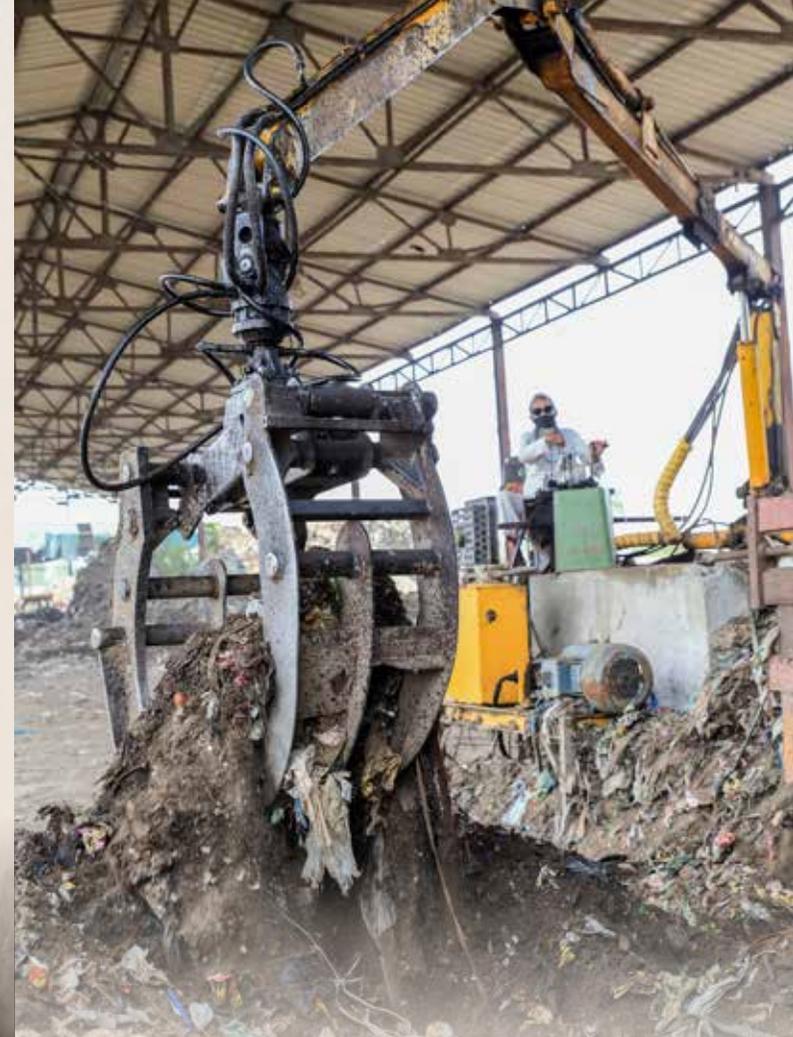


cities including Aligarh, Meerut, Kanpur and Varanasi. The initial estimated project cost was Rs. 657 lakh, they begun by undertaking a city mapping exercise and drawing up an efficient route plan. Investment was made in new trucks and rickshaws along with training programs for garbage collectors so as to ensure zero garbage is dumped in drains and water bodies.

The USP of A2Z lies in following an integrated model wherein they manage end-to-end operation of garbage collection and transportation (C&T) as well as processing and disposal. The scale is huge with garbage collected from over 80% of the city's households covering 40 wards. Their operations begin at 6 am with 200 safai mitras hitting the streets, blowing their whistle and announcing their entry into the locality. They

arrive at every doorstep, collect garbage and take it to the nearest garbage collection point. The process of primary collection is completed by 11 am which effectively means that the city is clean by noon while secondary collection is complete by 7 pm. Approximately 120-130 metric tonnes of garbage is received by the processing plant every day.

Garbage brought to the plant is weighed and sent for segregation with team of 30 staff guiding the next round of activities. Following a 360 degree approach, the company focuses just as much on collection, segregation and recycling as they do on pushing the bar on hygiene standards. In order to raise awareness, they have campaigns on cleanliness, hygiene and garbage disposal in schools and colleges, resident welfare associations as well as slums.



*“Apart from taking lab readings and measuring weights we have our own monitoring system. Photos are taken daily on the spot showing the collection, loading and the completion of tasks. These are shared over the phone with the Chairman Nagar Palika, Executive Officer Nagar Palika, City Health Officer, corporate office of A2Z and other company officials.*

*Ravendra Singh, Manager C&T*



## Constraints in conducting smooth operations

When the company started operations in Muzaffarnagar in February 2011, they met with opposition from existing street sweepers/rag pickers who protested claiming ownership over the turf and refused to give it up to an outside third party. Although the company had a legitimate contract with the Municipal Corporation, they faced protests and non-cooperation in many locations, halting their operations and causing delays. Gradually, the company won them over by including them in their end-user collection plan and provided training on segregation and other aspects of SWM. Approximately 20% / 10,000 households are still excluded due to the street sweeper community unwilling to relinquish their hold.

The plant location is in a residential area on the outskirts of the city and therefore not only face the challenge of bringing in garbage laden trucks but are also subjected to power outages. However, the biggest challenge is receiving timely payment as per their contractual obligations with the Municipal Corporation. With delays in implementing yearly increments in payment as per contract, their operations are on the verge of making loss if not already. In addition, staff wages, vehicles and equipment maintenance costs



continue to grow while collecting user charges of Rs. 30 per household still remains an uphill task.

## Profit from waste, only way to stay invested in the business of SWM

Wanting to create a model of excellence and being committed to making each dump point zero waste garbage, A2Z was willing to make garbage collection twice-a-day activity. In the absence of financial resources, they are unable to take this task up even though they have the technical capability to do so. The only way out for private companies like A2Z is to generate a pipeline of waste-to-wealth products. They are using at least 100 metric tonnes of collected garbage to make briquettes which are sold to paper mills and boiler plants while they are unable to market the compost to open up additional revenue streams. These efforts need to be taken to scale, market linkages established and new avenues such as producing energy from waste need to be explored.



## REFLECTIONS & WAY FORWARD

Promoting and marketing use of compost is important and can be made mandatory by law. Urban local bodies must use their own composts for their parks and public buildings.

Solid Waste Management charges could be added alongside Municipal Corporation annual bills such as 'Property Tax'. The collection of annual SWM charges will support timely payments to the contractor. Progressive increase by say 5-10% every year on the SWM charges would help in ensuring sustenance.

There are also opportunities for knowledge sharing from solid waste management PPP models in other cities such as Nagpur which have been operating for a longer time period and adapting practices as appropriate.

*Karishma Bist and Mohan Patil, Resource Conservation & Management Division, FICCI.*