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The ragpicker with a social cause

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Introduction

Green Worms is a social enterprise on a mission to sustainably and scientifically tackle solid waste menace in the world. We envision a world free of solid waste. Jabir Karat, a post graduate in History from Delhi University lives in Thamarassery. He chose his career in waste management even though it was not his subject. On completion of his studies, he was offered the meritorious Gandhi Fellowship. He opted to work at the Andheri Slum in Mumbai and there the concept of garbage processing struck him. He also found an entrepreneur who transforms garbage into compost in TV show ' Satyamev Jayate' produced by Aamir Khan. The show discusses and provides possible solutions to address social issues in India. He realized that waste is a misplaced resource. Later on he underwent training with the Environmental Protection and Service Organization led by Vellore Srinivasan near Coimbatore. Back home, he failed in establishing his new ideas. People of Thamarassery agreed to everything but were reluctant to pay nominal fees for the waste management services offered. It was easier to throw away.

Jabir then focused on events like conferences, marriages etc introducing the "ZERO WASTE EVENTS" concept. His company, Greens Worms is now providing waste management services and advice on making surroundings waste free during such special occasions.

Description of wastes

Green worms initially dealt with degradable wet wastes like the food wastes from community and household, apartments, events and presently handling and managing non degradable wastes like e waste and plastic waste.

How we do?

To tackle this problem of solid waste for every task we take up is guided by three objectives: minimise waste, maximum recycle and reuse of waste and dignify the waste workers job.

To achieve this, we first focused on events like conferences and marriages. Our first step involved in plan formulation to reduce the use of paper and plastic. Steel, ceramic plates and cups are made available for rent. Washing service team was also provided when necessary. The food wastes are segregated at source, collected in bins and is transported to resource recovery centre. Food wastes are composted. The first challenge taken up by Jabir was the Markaz Conference at Kunnamangalam. It was a three days conference attended by over one lakh delegates.

After successfully completing the first challenge, they started providing end-to-end services in waste management right from awareness to recycling. Our current activities include: Awareness, Decentralised Wet Waste Management, Dry Waste Collection, Segregation, Recycling, Consultancy, to government bodies, Productslike decomposing units, bio degradable cutlery, Workers' Welfare, Vaccines; Hygeinic working conditions; Complete uniform; Advocating for their rights, E-Waste ProgramEvent Waste Management.

Our Projects

- **Government Projects**-We currently provide services to 6 Panchayaths and 2 municipalities which include about 100 residential associations and 40 apartments. The nature of services varies from complete collection of dry waste to providing consultancy services to the bodies on how to manage waste sustainably.
- **Bulk Waste Generators**-We have among our clientele various bulk waste generators including 30 hotels, restaurants and bakeries, 10 city hospitals, more than 30 retail shops.
- **3. Segregation Units**-Currently we have 13 segregation units spread over 5 districts. 3 of these units run from hospital premises and exclusively manage their waste. About 50 tons of combined waste is segregated in these 13 units daily.
- **Recycling Units**-Presently, we have 2 plants to recycle 4 grades of plastic. About 22 tons of plastic is recycled each month in these plants. Green Worms specializes in recycling low grade plastics like milk sachets, poly bags etc which otherwise have few takers in the recycling industry because of low rates. In fact ours is the only such facility in northern Kerala. Rest of the segregated recyclable material is sold to third party recycling units.
- **E-Waste Program**-We have partnered with Karo Sambhav, a Delhi based E-waste management organisation for E-waste collection. As their Kerala partner we:
 - Provide training workshops to students of 50 schools on e-waste management
 - Collect e-waste from these schools and colleges
 - Collect e-waste from 30 shops dealing with electronic material
- **Event Waste Management**-Till date Green Worms has managed waste for more than 100 big and small events including weddings, conferences, food festivals, school festivals and private parties. Our expertise lies in not just managing event waste, but planning for zero waste events.
- Decentralised Wet Waste Management
- All the wet waste or food waste is managed in the same premises of it is generated in i.e. in a decentralized manner. Based on the amount waste generated there are two solutions that we currently deploy:
 - Community composting, whereby we provide community bins to bulk waste

producers like hotels, restaurants, hospitals, apartments etc. The housekeeping staffs of these establishments are trained to use these bins. For those who need, we also collect the end product on request.

- For individual households we provide single household composting units procured from Daily Dump in Bangalore.
- **Awareness Programs and Training**-To bring mindset change in our future and present generations regarding waste and its management, we conduct regular awareness sessions. These sessions are conducted with school and college students, residents and households, waste workers and government officials.

Catalysts Foundation for Education and Research is the professional consultants of Green Worms, guiding company to execute the projects.

Impact

From our first challenge, Markaz Conference at Kunnamangalam, there was good response on everyone after the conference seeing the surroundings trash free even after such a huge gathering. Our company further provided-Employment to more than 150 workers, 80% of who are women, 450 tons of waste collected and segregated every month, 22 tons of waste recycled in a month internally, More than 100 awareness sessions have been conducted which have been attended by more than 5000 individuals, Waste managed for more than 100 events .

Economic aspects

For our first challenge at the Markaz conference we charged a fee of Rs 25,000. The Markaz also received Rs 16,000 from the sale of compost.

Conclusion - Future plan of work or any other aspect

Today Jabir is an arrow which would normally hit the garbage. Green Worms also provided waste management service for The Youth Conference of Markaz. The company has received orders from various events like marriages etc. The truth is while lakhs and crores are spent on events, people are reluctant to spend even a penny for waste management. We are seeking your support to make environment CLEAN & GREEN. Help us TOUCH THE ROOTS OF DIRT. In a tie up with a local shop owners' association Green Worms will be handling waste for 1000 shops in Calicut.

Our Future

Green Worms aspires to become a premier organisation for solid waste management combining research, innovation, action and advocacy to make world solid waste free.