

Twitter Chat on "Zero Waste" in Collaboration with CSIRO

Development Alternatives conducted a Twitter Chat on "Zero Waste" in collaboration with Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) on 15 June, 2022. Development Alternatives partnered with CSIRO, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, The Energy and Resources Institute, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Technology Sydney to build a roadmap for circular economy of plastics in India, which highlights the significant challenge of waste management in Indian cities. The objective of conducting this Twitter Chat was to reach out to policymakers, community groups, circular business modelers, and understand consumer behaviour. The dimensions covered in the Twitter Chat were waste collection, segregation, and the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) principle.



Twitter Chat Poster

The following were the discussion points of the chat:

Is a world without waste truly achievable?

India's population is expected to grow by 25%, with reference to 2011, by the report of the technical group on population projections dated July 2020, which is giving rise to various dimensions of waste! To some extent, the solutions to the problem of waste can be achieved by circular economy technologies, life cycle assessment techniques, adaptation of best practices, and application of the 10R principle (Refuse, Rethink, Refurbish, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recover, Recycle, Remanufacture and Repurpose). Besides this, zero waste should be our goal, and it comes down to how we value our resources. What we call 'waste' now can be valuable inputs for other uses. We need to design out waste and make significant changes to our consumption and production systems. It is achievable if we really work on it and become aware of our actions. We should strive for a world where "waste" is seen as a valuable resource, and understood as a wasted opportunity. Circular economy principles, sustainable business models along with indigenous knowledge and practices could help us achieve the same.

Necessity to segregate waste at source level

It reduces the amount of waste that reaches landfills which also takes up lesser space. Source segregation is critical to enable high recovery rate of recyclable items and organic materials. It provides cleaner and more valuable streams of these materials and also help reduce litter in the landfill.

How refusing excess and reusing are key to sustainability?

Avoiding, refusing, and reusing are top of the waste hierarchy! So, they are the highest priority actions we can take, as they can achieve the biggest sustainability benefits. Reduce and reuse are the best ways to minimise the amount of waste one generates.

How should we deal with excess?

With improved living standards and purchasing capacity, there has been an exponential increase in direct and indirect natural resource consumption. It is crucial to evaluate your needs (not greed) and consume consciously. We need to rethink the systems that create excess, and aim for sufficiency - having just enough for everyone. This means shifting away from excessive production, and driving cultural change towards sufficient consumption, including avoidance and reuse.

Why is plastic waste a wasted opportunity?

There is no dearth of ways in which plastic waste can be utilised today. Take for instance, sand-filled plastic bottles are being used to build houses both in India and elsewhere. Each bottle not put back into the circularity cycle is an opportunity cost.

“To catalyse transition to circular economy, private sector needs to advance eco-friendly alternatives and innovative business models to support reuse and recycling. Enabling investors to align with government interests and create value from used plastic, and most importantly, pave way for a more sustainable future”.

