

OBA-MSWM: For Sustainable Waste Management



The Output-Based Aid in Municipal Solid Waste Management (OBA-MSWM) has completed one year of launching the project though the agreement was signed about four years ago. Though the project is said to be beautiful on paper, it is yet to be fully implemented as it aimed to do so.

The World Bank will provide the technical and financial support to implement the project in Nepal. Though it was planned to launch in five out of 130 municipalities—Dhankuta, Tansen, Lalitpur, Pokhara and Lekhnath as a pilot project, it has been launched in Dhankuta and Tansen municipalities in the first batch.

The project mainly focuses on making the municipalities independent and sustainable in waste management by collecting fees from the waste producers as people are paying tariff for drinking water and electricity. The per capita solid waste production is 320 grams per day, a report says. The total population of Nepal is 26,494,504 according to the 2011 census by Central Bureau of Statistics.

Badri Maharjan, the Project Manager said that the project has not yet made a significant progress in the first year but the situation is not too disappointing. He shared that training on landfill site management and orientation programmes have been completed in the municipalities. He added that municipalities are in a process of receiving advance from the Town Development Fund (TDF).

Upendra Khanal, Environmental Section Chief at Dhankuta Municipality and Project Coordinator said that Dhankuta has been collecting 30 per cent of the total cost of waste management since the starting of project. “We are collecting Rs 1 million from people and soon we are increasing it to Rs 1.6 million,” he explained. He believes that the project has given some reasons of hope for the project implementing municipalities.

Khanal said that they have been burying goods worth Rs 1 million annually in the form of waste. “It has now created employment for 10 people. This kind of projects can be successful. Once Dhankuta becomes a success, it can be replicated at Sisdole of Kathmandu,” he added.

Project officials agree that the implementation progress in the first year has not been as productive as expected. Being a soft project, they said, there is very little visible progress made so far, although there are some development made in the first year.

OBA in Nepal is the second experimental project on the waste management in the world after a pilot project was launched in Palestine.

Major Hiccups

In order to implement the project, the municipalities should have a sanitary landfill site, robust complaint tracking system, waste segregation from the household levels and being accountable towards what they do. However, they are yet to be properly managed and addressed the problems despite people’s curiosity to make their city clean and tidy.

Dipendra Bahadur Oli, Project Coordinator said, that three years were spent only for preparations. “Preparatory works went on for seven to eight more months even after the implementation period began. Being a new project model, it is a new exercise for us, for the municipalities as well as the World Bank.”

Maharjan alleged the lack of inter-ministerial coordination as one of the reasons for delay. Similarly, he suggests improvement of documentation process in both the local bodies as well as the central government units to expedite similar development projects.

“The untimely release of fund is also posing a challenge for speeding up the project,” said Maharjan. He added that one of the major challenges of the project has been on the human resources front. Necessary human resource has not been mobilised because of the lengthy hiring process. Maharjan expects to hire more experts by the end of next month.

Output Based Aid

The grant-based project of USD 5 million is unique on its model. “Unlike other projects, this requires municipalities to produce results before receiving development fund,” he said. “This is an appropriate model for Nepal as other development project experience shows that seriousness is lacking about proper utilisation of the development fund,” he added, “In this project, grant is received only after achieving results so, there is a compulsion to work.”

Upon the completion of project, Maharjan said that municipalities will be collecting 60 to 70 per cent of the total amount of money needed for waste management from the people. Remaining cost will be managed through municipalities’ budget. The idea behind this project is putting the responsibility of waste management on the sources of waste - general public.

According to Maharjan, municipalities have expressed commitments to the project. It is one of the prime objectives of the project to make waste management self-sustaining.

The project funded by the World Bank in partnership with the government is a first of its kind in Nepal in the waste management sector. Maharjan, said that the WB's similar partnership was in the drinking water and road projects of Nepal.

It is taken as a break in the trend of partnering with the private sector. Earlier, the WB had partnered with the private sector in Gaza Strip of Palestine. Maharjan opines that the waste management being a necessary service, where the private sector is involved very little anywhere in the world, it was decided to work with the government.

Implementation

The project in its first phase is being implemented in two municipalities, Dhankuta and Tansen. Similarly, the project will be implemented in Lalitpur, Pokhara, Lekhnath and Ghorahi municipalities in its second phase. Maharjan said that the second phase will begin within the next nine months.

The World Bank's implementation status report reads, "Most of the of the start-up actions (including approval of project budget code, budget authorization and release and opening of designated account) have been completed; and two out of the five municipalities initially targeted have prepared their Service Improvement Plans (SIP) and signed tripartite project implementation agreements with the TDF and the Solid Waste Management Technical Support Centre (SWMTSc)."

In the initial stage municipalities will be taking advance from the Town Development Fund (TDF) for the development of physical infrastructure and fulfil the basic requirements for achieving the project objectives. However, the municipalities are tired of the lengthy and impractical process of TDF to receive advance to implement the project. If they fail to meet the criteria set by the project, their advance taken from the grants will be turned to be a loan, according to the participating municipalities. "We need money to implement the project and to work for it, but we are afraid of the TDF process to take advance in order to make the project successful," said the municipal officials.