

Local Power

Global Change

A City Leaders Handbook
for Climate Action



Acknowledgement

We are grateful to our civil society partners from the ClimateRISE Alliance - Biome Environmental Trust, Saahas, Water, Sanitation, Hygiene Institute (WASH Institute), and the Solid Waste Management Roundtable (SWMRT) - for sharing their experiences and contributing sectoral expertise to enrich this learning resource. Through their work with councillors, Urban Local Governments (ULGs), and communities across cities in India, they continue to demonstrate

how grassroots action and citizen engagement can drive systemic change in urban resilience, towards enabling hyperlocal climate action. Their commitment and insights, contributed by Mr. Avinash Krishnamurthy, Ms. Deeksha Gupta, Ms. Aarti Sachdeva, Mr. Praveen Nagaraja, and Akhilesh Ramesh have been invaluable in shaping the perspectives and knowledge captured in this handbook.



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Chapter 1: Meet Climate Chaya

Dear Councillors,

I am Climate Chaya, the keeper of Earth's delicate balance, and today I bring you both a challenge and an opportunity. The climate is changing, and with it, the balance of life itself.

Human activities have disrupted the earth's climate, causing more frequent and intense heatwaves, wildfires, floods, hurricanes, and droughts; threatening the cities we call home. Food and water security have become uncertain, while health risks from heat stress to the spread of waterborne diseases continue to rise.

But there's still a silver lining, we can establish balance once again and create a better future for the next generation, with your involvement and your efforts. I present this handbook before you, which is not just a guide; it's a companion in your journey of transformation.



The Handbook brings together the knowledge of successful climate champions, practical tools for change, and strategies that have turned challenges into opportunities. Its purpose is to inspire action by sharing real stories of councillors who have successfully led climate initiatives in their wards and cities. It also aims to provide easy-to-use tools and work-plans to help you turn ideas into concrete steps.

By showcasing proven solutions, it shows how these models can be adapted to the unique needs of your ward or city. Most importantly, it aims to strengthen your leadership by helping you involve your community and build lasting climate resilience.

1.1 Where Change Begins in Our Wards

Our journey began with a simple question: where could we make the biggest difference in our fight against climate change? We started talking about the parts of city life that affect our environment the most. As we dug deeper, the challenges seemed big and interconnected. Waste piling up on streets wasn't just about cleanliness - it was tied to health, livelihoods, and even dignity.

Water management wasn't just about saving rain - it was about protecting lakes, preventing floods, and ensuring every home had enough. Green spaces weren't just about trees- they were about children having safe places to play and neighbourhoods staying cool in the summer.

But instead of feeling overwhelmed, we broke them down into smaller, doable steps at the ward level - where real change begins. Piece by piece, we began to see the bigger picture. How these problems are interconnected and how solutions could give better results when people tackle these issues together.

The most exciting point came when we grouped the issues based on two things: how much they affected the environment, and how much they could get councillors and citizens involved. After all, we needed everyone on board to make real change happen.

After all this exploration, we found four key areas where we knew we could make a real difference: **Solid waste management (segregation, collection, composting), water management (rainwater harvesting and lake rejuvenation), urban greening (developing parks and green spaces), and disaster management (stormwater drains and local disaster response).**

These choices were not made at random. We selected them because they affected our everyday lives, could deliver visible improvements quickly, and were areas where councillors were eager to take action. That's how our way forward was shaped - not just by pointing out problems, but by finding opportunities to make our city cleaner, greener, and safer by working together.

1.2 Picture Your Ward as It Could Be

As ward councillors, you possess - the power of proximity. You hear their worries about waterlogging, waste, and heatwaves. This connection is your strength- it gives you the ability to turn concern into action.

The provisions under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA), are a toolkit for transformation. With it, you can:

- Turn empty plots into small forests that cool your neighbourhoods down during heatwaves.
- Replace garbage dumped corners with community gardens.
- Transform water shortage problems into solutions using innovative conservation methods.
- Build strong communities that stand strong against climate challenges.

And the best part? It's already happening. We've seen councillors mobilize their residents to set up waste segregation and community composting systems that

turned organic waste into rich manure. We've seen neighbourhoods once struggling with water scarcity thrive after adopting rainwater harvesting and reviving local lakes. - All these projects were small, steady steps that brought lasting change.

Your Ward Committees and Area Sabhas are spaces where ideas are shared and citizens participate actively. Residents can become partners in climate action, and local businesses can support sustainable solutions. These meetings can be the starting point for practical change.

The climate crisis is already affecting us, and timely action matters. Your role as a councillor carries both authority and responsibility. Even small initiatives taken today can improve your ward's situation and improve quality of life for the community. By leading with consistency and collaboration, you can help your ward set an example of how local leadership contributes to larger climate solutions.

Chapter 2:

Transforming Wards: From Waste Challenges to Clean Solutions

2.1 Solid Waste-Free Wards

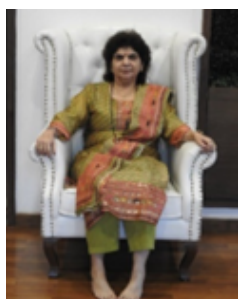
Have you ever stepped out of your home for a nice morning walk and been greeted by the sight of overflowing garbage bins? Or seeing plastic bags stuck in the trees, turning neighbourhoods into eyesores? Sadly, for many wards, this is the daily reality. But wait, now imagine something different – Walking on streets that are Instagram worthy, air that smells fresh, and communities that feel proud of their surroundings. This vision isn't impossible. As a councillor, you can lead your ward towards it by mastering solid waste management – a foundation for building healthier, cleaner, and more sustainable neighbourhoods.

Our choices regarding how we deal with waste have a profound impact on the environment. Overflowing landfills pollute water, spread disease, and release

methane gas, one of the most dangerous contributors to climate change. Unmanaged garbage clogs drains, attracts pests, and damages public health. The good news? With councillors leading the way and citizens working alongside them, wards can turn this challenge into an opportunity.

Here, a ward councillors' role becomes vital, who acts as the bridge between residents and the municipal system. But success lies in bringing people together – it comes from collaboration. By rallying households, waste workers, NGOs, and local businesses, you can transform your ward into a model for waste-free living. Together, your ward can move to become a leader in responsible disposal and recycling.

2.1.1. Mrs. Lakshmi Karadkar's Journey: Tackling Waste Management in the hills of Panchgani



In the quiet hill town of Panchgani, a valley once buried under mountains of waste is today a beautiful garden where tourists sip tea and enjoy the view. This remarkable transformation was led by Mrs. Lakshmi Karadkar, who turned what seemed like an impossible

problem into an inspiring success story. This change did not happen overnight – it was driven by her vision, persistence, and community support.

Mrs. Lakshmi shares:

"I've been the president of the Panchgani Municipal Council for 20 years. The journey began 35 years ago when I was married, and I came to Panchgani. Initially I was busy setting up the house and the business. My husband's family had been living there for three generations, so we had to expand our business a little. In 2001, when Vilasrao Deshmukh was Chief Minister, he announced direct elections for the Municipal Council.

Everyone had to vote for a councillor as well as for the President of the Municipal Council directly. So, by then

I was quite settled in Panchgani and business-wise I had proved myself. So, everyone said, why don't you stand because it was reserved for a lady, the post of the President... and I stood for the election with God's grace, I did become the President."

Chaya: Mrs. Lakshmi, your work in Panchgani is truly inspiring. Can you tell us about the challenges you faced when you first became the Municipal Council President in 2012?

Mrs. Lakshmi: You see, during that time Panchgani had only 15,000 permanent residents, but a tourist population of nearly 15 lakh every year. Government funding, however, was based only on our permanent residents. So, we had to manage the waste of lakhs of tourists with the resources meant for a small town.

To make things worse, our dumping ground had turned from a valley into a mountain of garbage. The stench, flies, and pollution were so bad that even nearby houses couldn't find buyers. And because Panchgani is in an eco-sensitive zone, we couldn't use methods like incineration or pyrolysis.

Chaya: That sounds overwhelming. How did you begin solving this waste management crisis?

Mrs. Lakshmi: We needed an urgent solution, and it came from an unexpected conversation with local farmers. They told me that green waste naturally becomes compost without any additives - if it is kept clean of plastic. That simple idea gave us direction. We set up a basic system with simple machines for crushing and segregation.

Chaya: The transformation of your landfill site into a tourist spot is remarkable. How did that happen?

Mrs. Lakshmi: "We took it step by step - first we cleared the garbage. After removing about 50 feet, we realised that the biodegradable waste below had naturally decomposed into compost. Then, we used traditional sieving methods to separate the plastic.

When we couldn't dig further, we covered the site with red mud that we fortunately got for free from a PWD road project and planted grass and trees. Today, what was once a mountain of waste is now "Swachh Bharat Point," where tourists sit, sip tea, and enjoy the view."

Chaya: Your approach seems very practical and replicable. What would you say to other municipalities facing similar challenges?

Mrs. Lakshmi: The key is to start with segregation at source. Use methods that work in your climate and conditions. For example, vermicomposting didn't work for us in Panchgani due to the climate, so we adapted. "You don't need fancy technology; our small crushing machine handles 3.5 tonne of waste every day. The project is financially sustainable too - we sell compost at ₹1,500 per tonne, and segregated dry waste adds more income."

Chaya: What makes you most proud of this transformation?

Mrs. Lakshmi: I think, it's seeing the citizens embrace the change. Once they realized that segregation was essential to eliminate the landfill, they embraced it. Today, Panchgani has no landfill sites at all. The people live healthier, cleaner lives. This proves that with community participation and simple, practical solutions, any town can achieve zero waste status. Size doesn't matter - our model will work; it doesn't matter whether it's a small town or a big-city ward. What matters is the commitment to make it happen.



2.1.2 Mrs. Sandra Da Cunha: Leading Solid Waste Management in North Goa



In Ward 30 of North Goa, residents were once struggling with open dumping and streets filled with mixed waste. Councillor Sandra Da Cunha tackled the problem head-on and showed how simple, practical steps can change community habits.

Chaya: Mrs. Sandra, when you first became councillor, what was the waste situation like in your ward?

Mrs. Sandra: Honestly, it was bad, there was open dumping everywhere. Everyone would throw wet and dry waste all mixed up—plastic, food scraps, everything together. Corners of the ward had piles that kept growing, and it felt like no one cared.

Chaya: That sounds challenging. How did you begin to take control of the situation?

Mrs. Sandra: I thought, if we don't start with segregation at source, nothing else will work. So, we began talking to households about keeping wet and dry waste separate. You know, "everyone in the ward was active on WhatsApp. We kept discussions going on our ward groups, and I shared reminders and updates regularly,

It made segregation easier for households because they saw others doing it too and people felt like I was directly talking to them."

Chaya: Once segregation began, how did you manage collection?

Mrs. Sandra: We streamlined the door-to-door collection. "The garbage vehicle now comes twice a day"—once in the morning and once in the afternoon after lunch. That way, families know exactly when to give their waste.

I also gave standing instructions to staff to close the larger dustbins after emptying the larger dustbins or turn them upside down. Otherwise, people would just throw waste in again, and bins would overflow.

Chaya: And what changes did you see after this, did the people cooperate?

Mrs. Sandra: Slowly, people got used to it. Today, most households segregate, the streets are cleaner, and dumping has reduced a lot. It's not perfect, but it's a big change from where we started.

2.1.3 Mr. Vijaya Kodavoor: Transforming Waste Management in Udupi

In Udupi, waste management is especially challenging because the city doesn't just serve its permanent residents. Every day, a large number of visitors and temporary residents add to the city's waste, creating far more garbage than the population count suggests. In this difficult setting, councillor Mr. Vijaya Kodavoor helped turn his ward into a model of success under the Swachha Udupi Mission (2018–2022). His work shows how committed local leadership can bring big results.

Chaya: When you became a councillor, what challenges did you face with waste management?



Mr. Vijaya: The waste was much more than what a small city like ours should normally have. This is because every day, so many people come and go in Udupi—visitors, students, pilgrims. We had

to manage all that extra waste with very limited capacity.

Chaya: That sounds like a big challenge. How did you

and your ward begin to respond?

Mr. Vijaya: I got involved through the Swachha Udupi Mission, the project that aimed at changing the waste situation in Udupi. We started small awareness campaigns, meeting with residents regularly, and talking lane by lane. I made sure to join these activities personally, not just leave them to staff.

Chaya: That's remarkable. Were there other people or institutions involved in the project?

Mr. Vijaya: We had strong support. "The Udupi City Municipal Council, the NGO Saahas, and Self Help Groups all worked with us. We also had help from HDB Financial Services. Together, we set up decentralised composting units, distributed subsidised bins, and trained households to manage their waste."

Chaya: And what difference did you see?

Mr. Vijaya: Slowly, people started trusting the system.

We set up monitoring teams at the lane level, and that gave residents confidence that things were being taken seriously. "Within a few years, we achieved 100% door-to-door waste collection and source segregation. The numbers were encouraging. In four years, about 9,200 metric tonnes of waste were diverted from landfills. More than 215 households started composting at home. And the amount of dry waste we sorted grew ten times—from 500 kilos a day to 5,000 kilos."

It wasn't only about the environment - it improved lives too; waste workers now have better working conditions

and earn more. And for households that joined in, the user fees actually came down.

Chaya: From your experience, what would you like to say to other councillors?

Mr. Vijaya: I'd say "councillors must get involved personally." When we stand with people and work alongside them, waste management stops being just a problem, it becomes an opportunity. Any ward can do this if councillors show the way.

2.14. What Worked



Communication & Awareness

- Continuous awareness campaigns
- Clear communication on waste
- Councillor involvement and visibility
- WhatsApp reminders and updates
- Building community ownership



Leadership & Commitment

- Councillor's hands-on role
- Strong local leadership
- Regular community meetings
- Feedback mechanisms with citizens
- Lane-level monitoring teams



Practical & Innovative Steps

- Fixed daily collection schedule
- Clear instructions to staff
- Closing bins after emptying to prevent re-dumping
- Street-level meetings for problem solving
- Setting up decentralised composting facilities



Multi-Stakeholder Approach

- Collaboration with Municipal Council
- Partnerships with NGOs and community Organisations
- Active role of residents
- Support from private contractors

2.15 Plan for My Ward - Waste Management

Step 01

Make a team and be a captain.

- Identify key groups and a: resident representatives, informal waste workers, NGOs, municipal staff.
- Understand who can help with what & define roles—for example:
 - Resident Representatives: Engage with the community, organize awareness programmes, and ensure waste segregation practices.
 - Waste workers: collect waste properly and keep bins closed.
 - NGOs/community groups: run awareness campaigns, training, and mobilise resources.
 - Municipal staff: provide vehicles, bins, and ensure regular collection.
- A short meeting or even a WhatsApp group can be enough to kick things off.

Step 02

Start Segregation at Source

- Give every household two bins: green for wet waste, blue for dry waste.
- Municipal staff: make sure bins are distributed and available at low cost.
- Keep the message simple: "Two bins at home = cleaner streets for all."
- Run awareness drives: door-to-door visits, community meetings, posters, or WhatsApp messages.

Step 03

Fix the Collection System

- Decide on a clear routine for waste collection in your ward. It can be once a day or twice a day, but it must be fixed and known to all households.
- Make sure wet waste and dry waste are collected separately. You can do this by:
 - Using different vehicles for wet and dry waste.
 - Or fixing different days for wet waste and dry waste.
- Plan the routes and timings in advance so that waste workers don't miss streets and residents know when to give their waste.
- Collection Centres: Set up centres for efficient collection and storage of dry waste.

Step 04

Handle Dry Waste Responsibly

- Promote recycling programmes within the community and encourage resident participation.
- Partner with local recyclers for paper, plastic, and metal.
- Explore links to waste-to-energy plants if possible.
- Inert Waste Disposal: Inert waste means things that do not rot or burn easily—like construction debris, stones, broken tiles, or ash. Make sure these are sent to a proper sanitary landfill, so they don't get mixed with household waste.

Step 05

Compost Wet Waste

- Wet waste (like food scraps and garden leaves) is 50% of municipal waste. If composted, it reduces landfill pressure and produces useful manure.
- Encourage home composting by distributing subsidized bins and giving simple training.
- Set up community level composting units, like parks or large residential complexes to encourage centralized bulk composting.
- Where large amounts of waste are generated, connect with agencies or set up centralized composting units to process it.

Step 06

Monitor and Improve

- Do quick spot checks and surveys to see if segregation and collection are working.
- Track simple signals like dust/smoke levels to track dumping or burning.
- Hold a monthly ward meeting to share numbers and fix issues.
- Keep a record of:
 - % households segregating
 - Compost made and sold
 - Dry waste sent for recycling

2.1.6 Ward Waste Management Worksheet

1. Stakeholder Mapping




Identification and Contacts

Stakeholder Type	Name / Organisation	Contact Info	Role in the Project	Support Needed
Residents Representatives	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____			
Community organisations / NGOs	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____			
Waste Workers	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____			
Municipal Representatives	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____			

4. Ways to Involve stakeholders

3. Notes and Ideas

2. Ward Waste Management Action Plan

Plan Stage	Key Activities	Add Your Own
Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form ward waste committee • Form ward waste committee • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness drives (door-to-door, events, social media) • Run segregation workshops • Start composting (training + unit) • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys on segregation • Track segregation, recycling, composting • Monthly review meeting • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

3. Funding and Budget Allocation


Funding Sources

Source	Amount
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____


Budget Allocation

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	Priority	Timeline
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

4. Vision for Your Ward

Short-Term Goals (1–2 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long-Term Goals (3–5 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2.2 The Way Forward: Practical Paths for Waste Management

Dear Councillor,

Waste may look like a problem, but in the hands of strong local leaders, it becomes an opportunity. Mrs. Lakshmi in Panchgani, Mrs. Sandra in North Goa, and Mr. Vijaya in Udupi show how councillors can turn everyday challenges into cleaner streets, empowered workers, and proud communities.

Mrs. Lakshmi Karadkar – Panchgani

When Mrs. Lakshmi first began organising waste workers, many dismissed her efforts. “Who cares about garbage?” was a common reaction. But she persisted. She trained women in her ward, gave them dignity as “Swachhta Warriors,” and built systems for household segregation. Today, 90% of waste in her ward is segregated at source, and those same women earn stable livelihoods while keeping streets clean. Each morning as they collect waste, they are also building a greener future.

Mrs. Sandra Da Cunha – North Goa

Mrs. Sandra’s ward once faced the chaos of mixed dumping and careless disposal. She knew the first step was awareness. Through public campaigns and constant

reminders on community WhatsApp groups, she encouraged households to separate biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. With persistence and steady follow-up, families learned the habit of segregation, turning what was once seen as a nuisance into a shared civic responsibility.

Mr. Vijaya Kodavoor – Udupi

As Project Lead of the Swachha Udupi Mission (2018–2022), Mr. Vijaya worked with a clear goal: make waste management systematic and community-driven. He led bi-weekly community meetings, held awareness events, and set up lane-level monitoring teams. The results were striking - 100% door-to-door collection, 9,200 metric tonnes of waste diverted from landfills, 215 households adopting home composting, and a tenfold rise in daily dry waste sorting. His work showed that waste management can deliver not just environmental results but also economic opportunities.

The Common Lessons

Though their paths were different, these councillors shared the same approach:

- Engaging their communities through door-to-door awareness.
- Partnering with waste workers and raising their status.
- Creating simple systems for segregation that even children could follow.
- Celebrating small wins, adjusting with feedback, and building trust.

This handbook carries real experiences from councillors who turned waste problems into workable solutions. The journeys of Mrs. Lakshmi, Mrs. Sandra, and Mr. Vijaya

show that progress comes through steady leadership, community involvement, and small but consistent steps. Segregation at home, composting of wet waste, and recycling of dry waste may seem basic, but together they create cleaner streets, healthier neighbourhoods, and more sustainable wards.

The methods are tested, the results are visible, and the opportunity now lies with you to adapt them for your own ward. Together, we can build wards that are cleaner, greener, and better for everyone.



Chapter 3:

Eliminating Water Waste & Rejuvenating Community Water Spaces

3.1 Restoring Ward Water

As you walk through your ward, you may notice a lake or pond that was once lively but now looks neglected. What used to be a space for biodiversity and a place where the community gathered has slowly declined. Encroachments have narrowed its edges, sewage and stormwater have polluted its waters, and solid waste has turned it into a health concern.

But even in this decline lies an opportunity. As a ward councillor, you can take steps to bring such a water

body back to life - turning it into a shared resource, an ecological asset, and a place the community can once again take pride in.

This is not far-fetched. Councillors in many cities have already done this work, showing that with consistent effort and community support, lakes, ponds, and wells can be revived and maintained. Their experiences prove that change is possible, one water body at a time.

3.1.1 Journey of Mr. Mohd. Sadik Khan, Ex-Councillor, Ward 73, Indore

Let's hear from Mr. Mohd. Sadik Khan, Ex-Councillor from Ward 73 in Indore, who implemented transformative community development initiatives focusing on waste and water management for environmental conservation, creating a model ward with many innovative approaches.

In Indore's Ward 73, water shortages and unmanaged waste once defined everyday life. Mr. Sadik chose to address both together, seeing them as connected issues.

Chaya: Mr. Sadik, your political journey is quite unique. Could you tell us how you started your career in public service?

Mr. Sadik: My journey began in 2004, but not in the usual way. I approached all three major parties for a ticket, but no one gave me one. So, I contested independently, and I won. I was only 21 at the time. Interestingly, my mother had contested her own election when she was just 19. Those early years were a struggle, but they taught me resilience.

Chaya: That shows remarkable determination at such a young age. How did your political journey evolve after that?

Mr. Sadik: There were ups and downs. After my independent victory, there was a gap, but later I received a ticket. It's been an interesting journey, what remained constant was my connection with people, especially

students. I always made it a point to understand their problems first.

Chaya: And during this political journey, you also managed to create India's first Zero Waste Ward. How did that come about?

Mr. Sadik: Yes, that was a proud milestone. While my political path wasn't always straightforward, my vision was clear - to make my ward an ideal ward recognised across India. When I received the award from the Prime Minister's Office, it validated that vision.

Chaya: How did being independent at first shape your approach to community development?

Mr. Sadik: It taught me to rely on people, not political machinery. That's why "I focused on practical solutions - like installing 3,700 rainwater harvesting filters, planting one lakh trees, and creating women-only gardens." Without political support, you learn to work directly with the community.



Chaya: The tree planting initiative is often spoken about. What was different about your approach when it came to involving the people?

Mr. Sadik: "We gave two plants per house but made it personal. Each tree was planted in memory of a loved one." When a child plants a tree for their grandmother, or a family plants one for their father, it creates an emotional bond. We weren't just planting trees; we were planting memories.

Chaya: You also mentioned on women-only garden. Could you share more?

Mr. Sadik: In every ward, we created gardens exclusively for women-safe spaces where they could walk, exercise, or do yoga. These are managed by women's committees, and even I visit only after their dedicated hours. It was about dignity and safety.

Chaya: What about water situation? As a councillor, how can you strengthen water management in your ward?

Mr. Sadik: You can improve water management in your ward by following a few steps. First, look at how water is used and where it goes. Then, make a plan to collect rainwater and take care of our water bodies. Finally, work

with the community to make sure everyone understands and helps with these plans. By focusing on water management, you can make your ward a better place to live, reducing problems with floods and water shortages while also protecting our environment for the future.

Chaya: Looking back, what message would you share with aspiring community leaders?

Mr. Sadik: Never let rejection stop you. "Understand your community's needs and think creatively about solutions." Whether it's zero waste, rainwater harvesting, or women's gardens, there's always a way forward. Most importantly, staying connected with your people, governments may come and go, but your relationship with the community is what truly matters.



3.1.2 Mr. Narayanswamy and Mr. Nagesh : Reviving lakes in North Bengaluru



In the heart of Devanahalli, two councillors transformed the way their community thought about water. Mr. Narayanswamy from Ward 8 (Maralu Bagilu) and Mr. Nagesh from Ward 23 (Kodimanchenahalli) turned neglected water bodies into thriving community assets,

showing how local leadership can turn scarcity into sustainability.

Together, their work in Devanahalli became more than an infrastructure project. It was a lesson in partnership, resilience, and innovation. They proved that when councillors combine local wisdom, community ownership, and technical expertise, even dying lakes can be brought back to life.

Chaya: Mr. Narayanswamy, how did your journey to revive Sihineer Kere begin?

Mr. Narayanswamy: The lake had been neglected for years. "With support from Biome, a local Organisation, we started carefully rejuvenating its borewell system."

We brought in well diggers, pushed for desilting with the municipality, and ensured the community was part of the process. I don't take the credit alone; the real heroes are the workers on the ground: the water line teams, pump house keepers, and pourakarmikas.

Chaya: That humility is powerful. Nagesh, what about your work with Doddakere?

Mr. Nagesh: I'd say, I approached it systematically. We identified sites for new borewells, revived old connections, and cleaned up abandoned infrastructure.

My farming background helped me think differently - "many borewells fail not because of major issues, but because of poor-quality pumps. By insisting on reliable, high-kilowatt submersible pumps, we reduced breakdowns and ensured water kept flowing."



Chaya: Both of you seem to highlight how partnership can do wonders. How important was collaboration? Mr. Narayanswamy: Essential. Without community involvement and local expertise, this wouldn't have been possible.

Mr. Nagesh: Exactly. Working with Biome and keeping doors open for other organisations showed that

technical knowledge and local leadership together can create real change.

3.1.3 What Worked

- Start with a clear vision – define a long-term goal for water security in the ward.
- Build strong community relationships – involve residents and keep them engaged at every step.
- Think creatively about resources – make the most of what is available locally.
- Focus on sustainability – choose solutions that last, not just quick fixes.
- Empower local stakeholders – give responsibility to community members and workers on the ground.
- Blend traditional wisdom with modern solutions – combine local knowledge with technical expertise for stronger results

3.1.4 Plan for My Ward – Water Management

Step 01

Understand Local Water Bodies and Needs

- Survey all lakes, ponds, wells, and borewells in your ward.
- Identify key problems: sewage inflow, pollution, encroachments, or poor water quality.
- Talk to residents, communities and stakeholders to understand what water problems they're facing.

Step 02

Promote Rainwater Harvesting & Rejuvenate Water Bodies

- Ensure houses, apartments, and businesses install rooftop harvesting systems.
- Provide incentives or subsidies where possible.
- Hold simple demonstrations to show low-cost methods.
- Prioritize revival of ponds and lakes.
- Plan rejuvenation using hydrogeological assessments - Study of how water moves underground.
- Work with NGOs, community groups, and municipal staff for execution.

Step 03

Use Technology for Monitoring

- Apply GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping to track water bodies and catchments.
- Introduce water quality and level sensors levels in critical water bodies.
- Maintain a simple ward database to update in committee meetings.

Step 04

Engage the Community

- Organise ward meetings and awareness workshops to educate residents on water conservation techniques.
- Form Water User Associations (WUAs) to involve citizens.
- Run campaigns via social media like Instagram, moj etc., and local media and WhatsApp groups.

Step 05

Collaborate and Advocate

- Push for ward-level policies on rainwater harvesting and lake revival.
- Seek funding from schemes (AMRUT, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jal Shakti Abhiyan) or CSR.
- Partner with schools and colleges for awareness and technical help.

Step 06

Monitor and Evaluate Progress

- Set up a ward water committee or task force to oversee the implementation of water management projects.
- Review progress monthly or quarterly and set objectives.
- Collect feedback from residents to improve the ongoing projects.

Step 07

Plan for Long-Term Sustainability

- Integrate water management into ward development plans.
- Explore Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for larger projects.
- Document best practices to guide future councillors.

Step 08

Reporting and Documentation

- Prepare detailed reports on water management activities, outcomes, and expenditures.
- Publish progress updates on the ward's website and social media platforms.
- Engage with local media to highlight successes and challenges in water management.

3.1.5 Ward Water Management Worksheet

1. Stakeholder Mapping




Identification and Contacts

Stakeholder Type	Name / Organisation	Contact Info	Role in the Project	Support Needed
Community leaders	1. _____ 2. _____			
NGOs	1. _____ 2. _____			
Environmental Experts	1. _____ 2. _____			
Funding Agencies	1. _____ 2. _____			
Others	1. _____ 2. _____			

Ways to Involve Stakeholders 

Notes and Ideas 

2. Ward Water Action Plan

Plan Stage	Key Activities	Add Your Own
 Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map and list all water bodies (lakes, wells, borewells) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify problem areas (pollution, sewage, neglect) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Form a Ward Water Committee 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan awareness campaigns and rejuvenation priorities 	
 Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote rainwater harvesting in homes, schools, and public buildings 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean and revive lakes, ponds, and open wells 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install recharge pits and strengthen borewells 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct awareness drives (door-to-door, street events, workshops) 	
 Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Track groundwater levels, harvesting systems, and lake condition 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold monthly committee review meetings 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain basic records, photos, and updates 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share progress in Ward Committee meetings 	

3. Funding and Budget Allocation


Funding Sources

Source	Amount
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____


Budget Allocation

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	Priority	Timeline
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

4. Vision for Your Ward

Short-Term Goals (1–2 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long-Term Goals (3–5 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3.2 The Road Ahead: Securing Tomorrow's Water

Dear Councillor,

Water is one of our most precious resources, and also one of the most overlooked. Yet across India, some councillors are showing that local leadership can turn scarcity into abundance, and polluted lakes into thriving community spaces.

Here are the stories of three such changemakers: Mr. Sadik Khan in Indore, Mr. Narayanaswamy and Mr. Nagesh in Devanahalli. Their efforts have turned stagnant ponds into restored lakes, rooftop runoff into collected rainwater, and scattered citizens into engaged communities.

Mr. Sadik Khan – Indore

Mr. Sadik began his public service journey at just 21, when political doors were closed to him, but the trust of his people remained open. He went on to create India's first Zero Waste Ward - but his story didn't stop at waste. Seeing the link between urban flooding and water shortage, he led the installation of 3,700 rooftop rainwater filters, turning seasonal rains into a year-round asset.

Mr. Sadik's innovation wasn't just technical - it was emotional. He encouraged families to plant trees in memory of loved ones, creating personal stakes in environmental protection. His model showed that participation grows when solutions feel meaningful and connected to everyday life.

Mr. Narayanaswamy & Mr. Nagesh – Devanahalli

In the town of Devanahalli, councillors Mr. Narayanaswamy and Mr. Nagesh took on a challenge many had given up on - reviving dying lakes like Sihineer Kere and Doddakere. Mr. Narayanaswamy partnered with Biome, a technical Organisation, to restore the borewell system of Sihineer Kere, mobilising local well diggers, municipal staff, and residents.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nagesh brought insights from his farming background to identify low-cost solutions, like replacing faulty motors with high-capacity submersible pumps. He cleaned abandoned infrastructure, revived old bore connections, and helped the community trust in the lake again.

Together, they built not just water systems, but

community ownership, showing that technical improvements work best when people are involved at every step.

Common Lessons

Despite working in different contexts, these councillors had a common playbook:

- Engaging their communities through ward meetings, awareness drives, and everyday conversations about water use.
- Working with what they had - from old borewells to rooftop runoff - instead of waiting for perfect conditions.
- Choosing long-lasting solutions like rainwater harvesting and lake rejuvenation over short-term fixes.
- Connecting people emotionally by linking water efforts to memory, pride, and place.

- Bringing in the right partners - blending traditional knowledge with expert support to strengthen results.

The examples of Mr. Sadik, Mr. Narayanaswamy, and Mr. Nagesh show that transforming water systems isn't just the job of engineers or bureaucrats. Ward councillors like you have the power to lead meaningful change. By championing rainwater harvesting, lake rejuvenation, and community ownership, you can make your ward more resilient, livable, and water secure.

This handbook gives you tested tools, simple checklists, and real success stories. Your journey may look different, but the goal is the same: a ward where water flows wisely, and every drop counts.



Chapter 4: Towards A Greener Ward

4.1 Building Greener Wards for Healthier Communities

Have you noticed how quickly the streets heat up in summer? Without trees or shaded spaces, the heat rises to record temperatures each year. With only a few trees and hardly any shaded spaces, the area feels bare. Children lack safe places to play, and the air seems heavy with dust and pollution.

As a councillor, this is where you can make a difference. By promoting tree planting, protecting existing green cover, and developing community parks, you can create spaces that keep neighbourhoods cooler, cleaner, and more inviting. Green spaces are not just about beauty – they are about health, safety, and improving everyday life for your residents.

4.1.1 Mr. Nawal Kishore Khandelia : Tree Plantation and Community Development, Sivasagar Municipality

In the busy town of Sivasagar, Assam, councillor Mr. Nawal Kishore Khandelia saw how pollution, traffic, and a lack of greenery were affecting everyday life. Determined to change this, he began small but meaningful greening initiatives - from tree plantation drives to promoting rooftop gardens - while also linking them to larger community development goals. His efforts show how councillors can balance growth with sustainability.



Chaya: Mr. Nawal, your journey from businessman to councillor is quite unique. What inspired you to enter public service?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: It all began naturally. I started in my father's business in 1998,

modernising it with barcoding systems - a first in Assam at the time. But by 2010, through my interactions with politicians and exposure to social issues, I realised there was much more I could do for the community.

Chaya: What was the turning point that brought you into politics?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: My role as General Secretary of the Assam Chamber of Commerce in 2018 was the real catalyst. At that time, the economy of our district was struggling because ONGC had shifted from permanent

positions to short-term contracts. The town started losing vitality as people stopped settling here. That's when we started pushing for a Medical College - not just for healthcare, but to create an ecosystem for education, jobs, and economic growth.

Chaya: When you became a councillor, what were your first steps in environmental work and what inspired you to do so?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: This is something I'm passionate about. My ward is in the town centre, where vehicular pollution is high. One of my first actions was to plant 320 trees. It may sound modest, but in a small ward it made a difference. About 150 survived, and I plan another plantation drive before the next rainy season.

Chaya: How did you manage to maintain those trees?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: By involving the community. "Shopkeepers and residents cared for the trees near their properties. When people feel ownership, they take



better care. As I say: "Unless people know they are part of something, they don't take care of it."

Chaya: You've spoken about sustainability before. Could you share your broader vision?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: While we have good green cover, Assam is still not carbon-negative. I want to follow the ACM survey model of greenery. For example, "rooftop gardens should be mandatory in commercial complexes - they are wasted spaces that can add to our green cover."

Chaya: How do you balance environmental work with the economic pressures your district faces?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: It's all interconnected. We are

pushing for institutions like IITs and IIMs to boost the economy, but at the same time we need sustainable infrastructure. Urban flooding affects the poorest residents most. So, for me, it's not just about trees - it's about resilient urban infrastructure and balancing growth with sustainability.

Chaya: Finally, what message would you give to councillors starting their own journeys?

Mr. Nawal Kishore: "Start where you are, with what you have." When I began, I used 30% of my councillors' monthly remuneration for community projects. It's not about resources; it's about taking the first step and involving people. Every small step counts, and every community member can contribute.

4.1.2 Mr. Shahnawaz Shaikh: Green Jamalpur Abhiyan, Ahmedabad

In rapidly growing cities, green spaces are often the first casualty of development. Former councillor Mr. Shahnawaz Shaikh from Jamalpur, Ahmedabad, faced this very challenge. Instead of accepting the loss, he turned it into an opportunity by launching a structured, community-driven greening effort that put vacant plots to use and created parks that truly served residents.

Chaya: Namaste Mr. Shahnawaz! Before we speak about



your greening work, can you tell us how your public service journey began?

Mr. Shahnawaz: Sure, my journey started with student activism in 2001, when I joined the Indian National Students' Organisation. In 2003, I became the General Secretary for Ahmedabad city, then State General Secretary in 2006, and later All India General Secretary in 2009. These roles taught me how policies affect people, and how organizing communities can bring change.

Chaya: May I ask how did you transition from student leadership to city politics?

Mr. Shahnawaz: Yes, from 2010 to 2015 I served as a Senate Member, appointed by the Governor. It gave me experience in governance and how institutions actually implement policy. That helped me later when I entered city politics.

Chaya: And then came your role as a municipal councillor. What motivated that transition?

Mr. Shahnawaz: In 2015, I was elected as councillor from Jamalpur. That's when I saw how our waste management

site was affecting our ward's air quality, which led to our environmental initiatives. The polluted air and poor conditions made it clear we had to take action.

Chaya: Speaking of which, can you tell us about your "Green Jamalpur Abhiyan" campaign?

Mr. Shahnawaz: You know, it wasn't a choice - it was a necessity. The movement that went far beyond just planting trees. We started with a survey of vacant plots and underused spaces and held community meetings. Residents told us what they needed: safe parks for children, walking paths for elders, and clean air. From there, we created green spaces where everyone had a stake.

Chaya: What made your approach different?

Mr. Shahnawaz: "We built an ecosystem of involvement. Schools, parents, businesses - all had roles. Governance, to me, means decentralising power." Every ward should have regular committee meetings with doctors, teachers, activists, and local leaders. Without people's participation, even the best policies fail.

Chaya: And what change did you see as a result?

Mr. Shahnawaz: Today, those trees provide shade and clean air. Children play in parks, and elders walk safely. But the biggest change is in people's mindset. "Residents now teach their children how to plant and care for trees." That sense of ownership is real success. Without this grassroots participation, even the best policies fail.

Chaya: Your approach to governance seems very systematic. Could you share your thoughts on effective local governance?

Mr. Shahnawaz: Municipal governance is about power decentralization. A councillor needs to understand both policy and implementation. "Every ward should have at least 12 committee meetings annually, involving local stakeholders" - doctors, teachers, social activists, religious leaders. Without this grassroots participation, even the best policies fail.

Chaya: That's a powerful insight. What would you say to aspiring local leaders?

Mr. Shahnawaz: "Leadership is not about power; it's about empowerment." Councillors are closest to the people - they must understand budgets, policies, and

also how to bring communities together. If you do that, greening isn't just possible, it becomes inevitable.

Chaya: Any final thoughts on combining environmental actions with political leadership?

Mr. Shahnawaz: The trees we planted are now providing shade, cleaning our air, and creating spaces where community can gather. But perhaps the most important impact isn't visible - we changed how people think about their role in protecting the environment. When you see a resident teaching their child how to plant a tree, you know you've created lasting change. This is what political leadership should aim for - enabling communities to create sustainable change.

4.1.3 Mr. Shibram Sahoo: A Beacon of Environmental Stewardship and Community Empowerment

In the forest-surrounded town of Redhakhol in Odisha, Mr. Shibram Sahoo stepped into leadership as Chairperson with a clear mission: to blend conservation with community empowerment. Drawing from his background in wildlife protection, he launched large-scale greening initiatives that not only restored the environment but also gave residents a sense of pride and ownership.

Chaya: Mr. Shibram, before we talk about your role as Chairperson, can you tell us about your connection with the environment?



Mr. Shibram: Long before I entered politics, I worked closely with the Wildlife Trust of India on conservation projects. We focused

on protecting sloth bears and preserving precious tree ecosystems. That work gave me a deep sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Chaya: And how did that passion bring you into local governance?

Mr. Shibram: For me, the shift felt natural. In 2022, I contested the direct election for Chairperson of Redhakhol Notified Area Council, in Odisha. Redhakhol is a town surrounded by reserve forest - known for its natural beauty and clean air. Becoming Chairperson gave me the opportunity to turn my environmental passion into structured, community-driven action.

Chaya: What were your first steps as Chairperson?

Mr. Shibram: "I wanted to make greening practical and inspirational. We planted over 5,000 trees, carefully choosing a mix of fruit-bearing and timber species. This way, trees would not only restore ecological balance but also benefit local livelihoods."

Chaya: How did you get the community involved?

Mr. Shibram: We designed a simple but powerful approach. "Community members could "adopt" a sapling by naming it after themselves or their elders. That personal connection made each tree a living legacy." The only commitment we asked was that they water and protect the tree for 2-3 years. Suddenly, planting a tree wasn't just environmental work - it was about family pride and memory.

Chaya: That's very innovative. Who else supported this initiative?

Mr. Shibram: Local schools and institutions became vital partners. By teaching students, the importance of maintaining forest cover, we were planting values along with trees. We also made adoption easy - anyone with an Aadhaar card could access saplings. With a small contribution of ₹200-250 for a tree guard, people ensured their sapling's survival.

Chaya: What do you think sets your approach apart?

Mr. Shibram: I think about tackling an issue from all angles and thinking about long term impact is also very important. Planting trees is only one part. "True conservation means building a system where the community is engaged, young people are educated, and responsibility is shared." It's about creating a sustainable ecosystem of participation and care.



- Start small, dream big – even a modest plantation, like 320 trees, can transform a ward.
- Make it personal – allow people to name trees after loved ones to build emotional connections.
- Keep it affordable – low-cost contributions (₹200–250 for tree guards) encourage wider participation.
- Map before you act – survey available spaces and community needs before planning.
- Use data to guide decisions – regular surveys and feedback improve initiatives.
- Think beyond planting – design diverse green spaces for children, elders, and all age groups.
- Leverage existing resources – reclaim rooftops, vacant plots, and neglected areas.
- Simplify documentation – use basic IDs like Aadhaar to make participation easy.
- Build partnerships – involve schools, businesses, and resident associations.
- Ensure accessibility – create green spaces usable by elderly and differently-abled residents.
- Mix tree types – plant fruit-bearing and timber species for ecological and economic value.
- Connect with education – engage schools to instill awareness in young minds.
- Track progress – monitor tree survival, environmental improvements, and community satisfaction.

4.1.5 Plan for My Ward – Greening Our Cities

Step 01

Map and Assess

- Conduct a “green audit” of parks, gardens, and vacant plots.
- Use surveys and satellite tools to count trees, check health, and identify empty lots or rooftops for greening.
- Engage residents to understand what kind of green spaces they want (playgrounds, pocket parks, walking paths).

Step 02

Partner and Plan

- Collaborate with schools, housing societies, and businesses to identify available land.
- Involve local experts to choose native species for resilience.
- Form a ward-level green committee with residents, NGOs, and councillors.

Step 03

Prepare and Plant

- Clear and prepare sites for planting.
- Procure native saplings, seeds, and basic infrastructure like soil, compost, and guards.
- Organise community planting drives to build ownership.

Step 04

Build Green Infrastructure

- Add walking paths, benches, and play areas for inclusivity.
- Integrate sustainable features—rainwater harvesting pits, composting units, solar lighting, and CCTV for safety.
- Promote rooftop gardens in commercial complexes and institutions.

Step 05

Maintain and Monitor

- Create a maintenance plan with ward committees or NGOs for pruning, weeding, and cleanliness.
- Encourage residents to adopt trees or small green patches.
- Track progress: survival rates of trees, biodiversity, air quality improvements, and citizen satisfaction.

4.1.6 Ward Greening Worksheet

1. Stakeholder Mapping

Identification and Contacts

Stakeholder Type	Name / Organisation	Contact Info	Role in the Project	Support Needed
Community leaders	1. _____ 2. _____			
NGOs	1. _____ 2. _____			
Environmental Experts	1. _____ 2. _____			
Funding Agencies	1. _____ 2. _____			
Others	1. _____ 2. _____			

Ways to Involve Stakeholders 

Notes and Ideas 

2. Ward Greening Action Plan

Plan Stage	Key Activities	Add Your Own
 Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map stakeholders (schools, RWAs, NGOs, businesses) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct green audit of parks, trees, and open spaces 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey residents for needs (parks, gardens, play areas) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new sites (vacant lots, rooftops, unused land) 	
 Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare sites (clear, level, enrich soil) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure and plant native saplings 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build basic infrastructure (paths, benches, toilets) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add sustainability features (rainwater pits, composting, solar lights) 	
 Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain with teams or NGOs (watering, pruning, cleaning) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage residents in upkeep (drives, clean-ups, nature walks) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track survival, biodiversity, air quality, and temperature 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect community feedback and share updates in meetings 	

3. Funding and Budget Allocation


Funding Sources

Source	Amount
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____


Budget Allocation

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	Priority	Timeline
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Vision for Your Ward

Short-Term Goals (1-2 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long-Term Goals (3-5 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4.2 A Call to Action: Nurturing Canopies, Sustaining Generations

Dear Councillor,

Urban greening is about much more than trees and parks - it is about building healthier, safer, and more liveable communities. Across India, councillors are proving that local leadership can transform barren spaces into vibrant community assets.

Let's recap how the climate champions made their wards greener for their people. Their efforts have turned empty plots into green parks, saplings into living memories, and passive residents into active stewards of their environment.

Mr. Nawal Kishore – Sivasagar

Mr. Nawal Kishore began with just 320 trees in his small ward, funded partly from his own councillors' salary. "Start where you are, with what you have," he says. His true success lay not in numbers, but in creating a sense of community ownership that made every tree matter.

Mr. Shahnawaz Shaikh – Jamalpur, Ahmedabad

Faced with rapid urbanisation and shrinking green cover, Mr. Shahnawaz Shaikh saw opportunity where others saw only concrete. Through careful surveys and community consultations, he transformed neglected plots into vibrant green spaces - playgrounds for children, walking paths for elders, and accessible areas for all, including the differently-abled.

Mr. Shibram Sahoo – Redhakhol

Mr. Shibram built greening efforts around emotional connection. By letting families name trees after their elders, he turned saplings into living legacies. With just

an Aadhaar card and a ₹200–250 tree guard, he made participation simple and accessible to all.

Common Lessons

Though their contexts were different, these councillors shared a similar approach:

- Engaging communities through surveys, meetings, and hands-on participation.
- Starting with what they had and making the most of local resources.
- Focusing on long-term sustainability rather than quick fixes.
- Creating emotional connections so that communities felt pride and ownership.
- Building partnerships with schools, businesses, and local groups to multiply impact.

The examples of Mr. Nawal Kishore, Mr. Shahnawaz, and Mr. Shibram show that greening is not just the job of city planners or engineers. Ward councillors have the power to lead this transformation.

By championing tree planting, pocket parks, rooftop gardens, and community stewardship, you can make your ward not just greener, but also healthier, more welcoming, and more resilient.

This handbook gives you proven tools, step-by-step action plans, and inspiring stories. You may face different challenges than these climate champions, but rest assured, this handbook will help you tackle them and transform your ward into a place where green spaces flourish and communities thrive.



Chapter 5:

Strengthening Disaster Management and Building Disaster Ready Cities

5.1 Building Flood-Resilient Neighbourhoods

As a ward councillor, you know how unforgiving the monsoon can be. Inadequate stormwater drains often turn streets into rivers, flood homes, and disrupt daily life. With climate change bringing more frequent and intense rainfall, the challenge is only growing.

Yet within this challenge lies an opportunity. By strengthening stormwater management, you can reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, and even create greener, healthier neighbourhoods.

5.1.1 Councillor P.M. Brindhhaa Shri: Tackling water logging in Chennai

Ward No. 160 in Alandur, Chennai, once dreaded the rains. Floodwaters would rise to hip level in homes, especially in low-lying Madhavaram, leaving underprivileged families vulnerable year after year. For nearly two decades, residents lived with this reality



Councillor P.M. Brindhhaa Shri decided to change the

story. Drawing inspiration from her father's long career in public service, she entered politics with the belief that "change begins when you become the change you seek."

Chaya: Councillor, when you took office, water stagnation was your ward's biggest challenge. How did you begin addressing it?

Brindhhaa Shri: The first breakthrough came through collaboration. With the support of Minister Mr. Thamo Anbarasin, "we installed pumping stations and new stormwater drains." In Madhavaram, a pumping station now directs water to the GST Road. "Within the first year, 85% of the flooding problem was solved."

Chaya: That's a remarkable improvement. But I notice you didn't stop at infrastructure solutions. Can you tell me about your green initiatives?

Brindhhaa Shri: Ah yes, Alandur is densely populated, so we made use of every small space. We converted dumping sites into green patches with grass and protective fencing. Our GCC engineering staff and NULM teams maintain them regularly. These green spaces not only prevent dumping but also add beauty to our ward.

Chaya: You've also worked with schools to connect with the younger generations. Can you share more about it?

Brindhhaa Shri: This is actually one of our proudest achievements. At JAL School, "we started a terrace gardening project. Each class tends to its own patch of vegetables, which are later used in their midday meals providing the kid with proper nourishment." And the children love it, they're learning about food, nutrition, and sustainability in a hands-on way. Some have even started gardens at home.

Chaya: That's beautiful - you're nurturing both, the environment and future environmentalists. What about plastic waste? That's must also be a significant issue in many urban areas.

Brindhhaa Shri: "We've taken a community-based approach there. We've encouraged event halls to switch to paper cups and plates instead of plastic and created awareness about using biodegradable alternatives." It's a gradual process, but the community is responding well. People are realising that every small change helps.

Climate Chaya: Has the community been supportive of these changes?

Brindhha Shri: Absolutely! even when we faced challenges, like during the highway department's stormwater drain construction near Gandhi market, the vendors cooperated despite it affecting their business. We supported them by conducting regular fogging to control mosquitoes, and they understood that short-term inconvenience would lead to long-term benefits.

Chaya: I also heard your work received wider recognition by public figures, tell us a bit about that.

Brindhha Shri: Yes, Actor Vivek, inspired by Dr. Abdul Kalam,

visited as part of his tree-planting mission. He appreciated our efforts and planted several trees, which we've carefully fenced and maintained. Today they're thriving.

Chaya: Looking ahead, what is your vision for Alandur?

Brindhha Shri: "With the new stormwater system, I believe we can keep waterlogging at bay for the next 20 years." But more importantly, I want to nurture a culture of environmental responsibility. When I see students proudly eating vegetables they've grown, or residents maintaining green corners, I know that resilience isn't just about infrastructure - it's about people coming together.

5.1.2 Mr. V. Kaviganesan: Revolutionizing Disaster Management in Thiruvottiyur



In Thiruvottiyur's Ward 12, recurring floods, mounting garbage, and water scarcity once felt like insurmountable problems. For most, these were signs of neglect. For Councillor Kaviganesan, they became opportunities to reimagine his ward as a resilient, people-powered community.

From the beginning, his approach was holistic. He recognised that waste mismanagement, clogged drains, and frequent flooding were interconnected issues. Instead of treating them separately, he built an integrated strategy that combined waste management, stormwater systems, and disaster preparedness.

Chaya: Councillor, your ward faced multiple challenges at once. How did you begin?

Mr. Kaviganesan: "The first step was listening. We held ward meetings with everyone from pourakarmikas to assistant engineers. Civil engineering students joined us to map every street, drain, and manhole. Instead of top-down instructions," we created door-to-door conversations. People began to feel like they're a part of the change.

Chaya: That's a very community-led approach. What

were you able to achieve with this?

Mr. Kaviganesan: Within just 18 days, we had a clear plan of action. Conservancy workers, once invisible, became community heroes. We recognised their role; this elevated their dignity, and they were more committed than ever. At the same time, we invested ₹20 lakh in rainwater harvesting infrastructure. This wasn't just about reducing floods; it also recharged groundwater and strengthened our ability to tackle less rains.

Chaya: You often describe your ward as a living system. Can you share more about that philosophy?

Mr. Kaviganesan: My belief is simple - "My ward is my home." Waste is not just garbage; it blocks drains and creates health hazards. Stormwater drains are not just infrastructure; they are lifelines for resilience. By treating these systems as connected, we turned multiple problems into one coordinated solution.

Chaya: How did you ensure that this vision lasted beyond the immediate projects?

Mr. Kaviganesan: We institutionalised it. "I proposed forming a standing committee on solid waste management in the council." The idea was to make waste a core part of resilience planning, not an afterthought. When residents see that their efforts are part of a larger framework, they stay motivated.

5.1.3 What Worked

1. Infrastructure + Nature-Based Solutions

Widening and desilting drains, installing pumping stations, and introducing rainwater harvesting were paired with green spaces and bioswales - showing that hard engineering and natural solutions work best together.

2. Community Ownership

From door-to-door awareness to turning schoolchildren into terrace gardeners, residents became active partners rather than passive beneficiaries.

3. Empowering Frontline Workers

Pourakarmikas and conservancy staff were given visibility and dignity, transforming them into respected champions of resilience.

4. Survey and Mapping for Action

Street-by-street surveys and infrastructure mapping provided a clear picture of vulnerabilities, enabling precise interventions.

5. Small Changes, Lasting Impact

Switching to biodegradable alternatives, reclaiming dumping sites as green corners, and celebrating student-led gardens-built momentum for long-term climate resilience.

5.14 Plan for My Ward - Ward Stormwater Management

Step 01

Engage Stakeholders and Mobilise Resources

- Partner with NGOs, environmental groups, and CSR initiatives.
- Involve resident welfare associations, schools, and local businesses.
- Run awareness campaigns on why stormwater management matters.
- Allocate funds from ward budgets and tap into state/national schemes.

Step 02

Assess and Map Your Ward

- Document existing drains, culverts, and stormwater channels.
- Identify flood-prone hotspots, blockages, and choke points.
- Map lakes, ponds, parks, and other recharge areas.
- Track greywater/blackwater discharge points and treatment capacity.

Step 03

Implement Practical Solutions

- Upgrade and widen old drains; build new ones where needed.
- Introduce nature-based solutions like permeable pavements, bioswales, and retention ponds.
- Promote rooftop rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge.
- Involve community volunteers in desilting, cleaning, and maintenance.

Step 04

Integrate with Urban Planning

- Work with planners to embed SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) in new layouts.
- Push for climate-resilient building codes and standards.
- Expand urban greening and tree cover to improve water absorption.
- Ensure stormwater systems are linked to disaster preparedness plans.

Step 05

Monitor, Report, and Scale Up

- Use GIS mapping, mobile apps, and citizen reports for real-time monitoring.
- Share progress through ward meetings and community dashboards.
- Start with pilot projects in the most vulnerable areas and expand ward by ward.
- Document lessons to guide city-wide adoption.

5.1.5 Ward Stormwater Management Worksheet

1. Stakeholder Mapping




Identification and Contacts

Stakeholder Type	Name / Organisation	Contact Info	Role in the Project	Support Needed
ULGs/ institutions	1. _____ 2. _____			
NGOs	1. _____ 2. _____			
Corporate and private sector	1. _____ 2. _____			
Community	1. _____ 2. _____			
Others	1. _____ 2. _____			

Ways to Involve Stakeholders 

Notes and Ideas 

2. Stormwater Management Action Plan

Plan Stage	Key Activities	Add Your Own
 Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upgrading and widening of drains 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community initiatives for desilting drains 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constructing bioswales 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintaining green infrastructure 	
 Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Widen and desilt existing drains 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Widen and desilt existing drains 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add SUDS (bioswales, permeable pavements, retention ponds) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add sustainability features (rainwater pits, composting, solar lights) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote 'Keep Drains Clear' drives (signage, events, social) 	
 Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitor hotspots during monsoon (date + photo log) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Track maintenance: desilting and cleaning schedules 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect citizen feedback and address in ward meetings 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share monthly progress updates 	

3. Funding and Budget Allocation


Funding Sources

Source	Amount
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____
_____	₹ _____


Budget Allocation

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	Priority	Timeline
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Vision for Your Ward

Short-Term Goals (1–2 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long-Term Goals (3–5 Years) 

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5.2 Reflections: Building Wards That Withstand Storms

Dear Councillors,

Stormwater management is not just about drains and pumps - it is about creating neighbourhoods that can withstand the unexpected and thrive in the long run. Every widened drain, every pocket park, every conversation with residents is a building block for resilience.

The journeys of **Councillor P.M. Brindhaa Shri in Alandur** and **Councillor Mr. Kaviganesan in Thiruvottiyur** prove this. By combining infrastructure upgrades with green innovations, and by involving communities at every step, they transformed flooding from a yearly crisis into an opportunity for renewal.

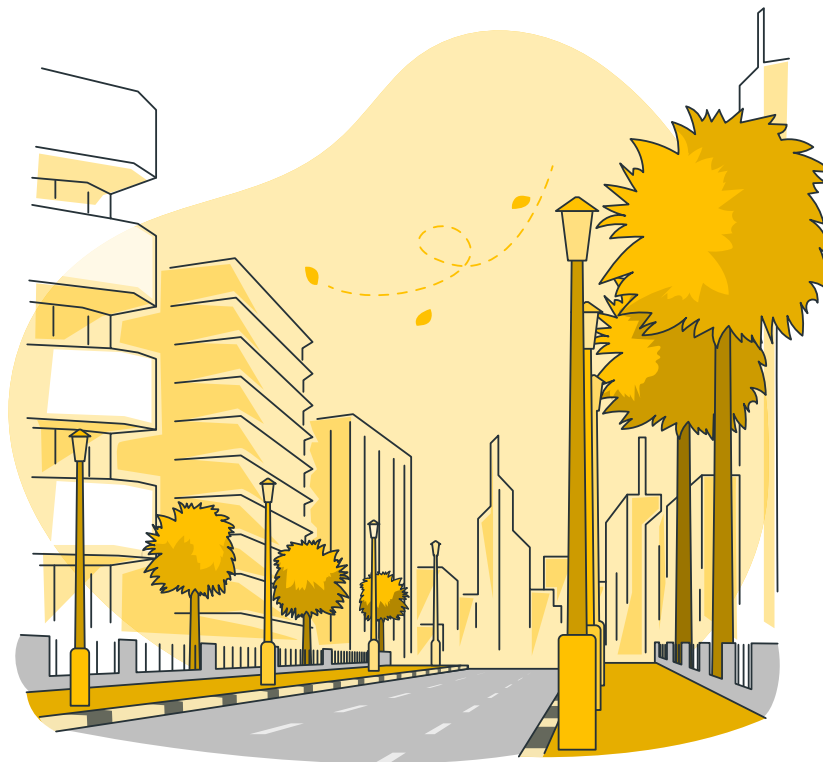
Their experiences teach us three important lessons:

- **Resilience is about adaptation.** Like water finding its path, communities must learn to adjust and evolve.
- **People are the heart of solutions.** Councillors, residents, schools, and frontline workers are all catalysts of change.
- **Every action counts.** A green corner, a rainwater pit, or a terrace garden may seem small, but together they reshape entire wards.

Climate change will continue to test our cities. But as

these stories show, the answer lies in local leadership and community spirit. When we see stormwater not as a threat but as a resource, and when we view neighbourhoods as living ecosystems, we unlock new possibilities for safer, healthier, and more inclusive urban futures.

Your ward can be next. With vision, collaboration, and persistence, even the toughest challenges can be transformed into opportunities for growth and connection.



Closing Remarks: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

Climate change is affecting our cities in ways we can no longer ignore. For councillors such as you, this is not only a test - it is an opportunity to lead with purpose. Your role goes beyond administration. You are the link between plans on paper and change on the ground, between infrastructure and the everyday lives of people.

Every stormwater drain strengthened, every tree planted, every community awareness programme adds up to something greater. These are not small acts; together they shape safer, greener, and more liveable communities.

Resilience is not about stopping every flood or preventing every challenge. It is about preparing your ward to respond, adapt, and recover. It is about building systems that are flexible, communities that are engaged,

and neighbourhoods that look after one another.

This handbook is a guide built on the lived experiences of councillors like you. By assessing your ward, mobilising resources, and working with your community, you can create solutions that last.

As you carry this work forward, remember: collaboration matters, persistence matters, and leadership at the ward level matters most of all. Your ward is not just a collection of streets and buildings - it is a living community, one that can be nurtured into resilience and pride.

The future will bring challenges, but also possibilities. With thoughtful leadership and steady action, you can turn today's uncertainties into tomorrow's opportunities for growth and care.



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