

Zero Waste in Action: Lessons from the Muddanda Hockey Festival

The Zero Waste initiative at the **Muddanda Hockey Festival** marked a significant milestone in demonstrating how sustainability can be embedded in large public events. Spanning 33 days and attended by thousands, the festival served as a powerful learning experience—and a testament to what's possible when intention meets action.

Despite several challenges—including short timelines for vendor engagement, inconsistent staffing, and unpredictable weather—the core goals of **waste reduction, segregation, and responsible disposal** were largely achieved. Thanks to dedicated groundwork, clear communication, and active involvement from the community and waste management teams, around **70% of attendees adhered to Zero Waste practices**.

With systems in place like the **Dry Waste Aggregation Shed** and **natural wet waste pits**, the event successfully diverted over **10 tons of waste from landfills**, categorizing it into 26 recyclable or compostable streams. Only **0.5 tons of mixed waste** ended up in the landfill—a number we're confident can be reduced to zero in future editions through stronger community participation and improved planning.

Beyond the environmental impact, the initiative also made a social difference—supporting the livelihoods of seven local workers and preventing over **2 tons of carbon emissions**. For an investment of around ₹3,00,000, the return—in terms of both ecological benefit and human dignity—was undeniably worthwhile.

This experience underscored the importance of **early coordination, structured training, and robust infrastructure** in implementing Zero Waste practices effectively. With continued collaboration between **Vedan Trust**, the festival organizers, and local partners, Muddanda has set a new benchmark for sustainable event management in the region.

A FESTIVAL OF HOCKEY CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

About the Kodava Hockey Festival

Hockey is more than just a sport in Kodagu—it is a proud legacy deeply woven into the fabric of the Kodava community. The Kodava Hockey Festival started in 1997 is a month-long celebration of hockey, tradition, and sportsmanship held in Kodagu, Karnataka. Recognized as one of the world's largest field hockey tournaments, the festival has earned its place in both the Guinness Book of Records and the Limca Book of Records. The first year's tournament had 60 teams, but in 2024, 364 teams participated, setting the Guinness record. What truly sets the event apart is its unique format: each team is made up exclusively of members from a single Kodava family, with no restrictions on age or gender—a powerful symbol of inclusivity and family pride.

Introducing the Muddanda Family

The Muddanda family is one of the most respected and prominent Kodava families, with a rich heritage that spans several generations. Originating from Arameri village in Virajpet Taluk, their history traces back over 200 years to their migration to Bhakti in northern Kodagu. Today, the Muddanda family has grown into a large community with over 100 nuclear families and around 400 members, many of whom have spread across India and internationally. Despite their global presence, the family remains deeply connected to their Kodagu roots, continuing to participate in local traditions and community activities.

Collaborating with Vedan for a Zero Waste Event

This year the Hockey Festival embraced a new dimension by integrating environmental responsibility through a Zero Waste initiative led by Vedan Trust, marking a significant step towards sustainable community events.

The collaboration between Vedan Trust and the Muddanda Hockey Festival was facilitated by Mr. Anand Dusi of Morgan Stanley, who first connected with Vedan during a Zero Waste Awareness session held at his workplace. Inspired by the concept, Mr. Dusi introduced us to Mr. Nagendra, who in turn connected us with Mr. Rashin Subbaiah and Mrs. Kanchan Appaiah—organisers of the Muddanda Hockey Festival under the Kodava Hockey Academy.



Muddanda Hockey Festival Organisers and Vedan Team members

From January 2025 to March 2025, the Vedan team and the festival organisers held several meetings to plan the transformation of the Hockey Festival into a Zero Waste event. These discussions laid the foundation for the execution strategy, which is outlined in the sections below.

PLANNING THE IMPACT: ZERO WASTE EVENT BLUEPRINT

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STEP 1: Initial Meeting of Vedan and Muddanda Hockey Festival Organisers

When the Vedan team first sat down with the Muddanda organisers, there was curiosity in the room—but also a bit of uncertainty. Could a large, lively event like this really go waste-free? To ease those doubts, we shared stories from our past work—how we helped make events like Kambala and the Ganesh Utsav Zero Waste. We talked through the details: the planning, the teamwork, the challenges, and the impact. Slowly, you could see the shift. The organisers started to imagine it—not as a burden, but as something exciting and achievable.

STEP 2: Official Request Letter provided to Vedan

With interest turning into intent, the organisers were ready to take the next step.

The idea of a Zero Waste Hockey Festival was no longer just a possibility—it became a shared goal. We received an official letter from the organisers, formally inviting Vedan Trust to take charge of Zero Waste management for the event.

STEP 3: Roles and Responsibilities

Once we received the green light to proceed, we clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of both the Organisers and Vedan to ensure the smooth execution of the Zero Waste Event.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ORGANISERS AND VEDAN

Sl.No	Responsibilities of Organisers	Responsibilities of Vedan Trust
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Pre-Event Preparations

01	To grant Vedan access to the event site for an initial visit and to provide a detailed explanation of the event layout.	To analyse the event layout and strategically plan the requirement and placement of barrels, bags, placards, and banners, ensuring ease of access for attendees to drop the waste correctly.
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02	To provide Vedan with the list of Vendors that are setting up stalls at the event.	To analyse the Vendors and provide them with a list of alternate categories for their single use waste and inform the vendor of: • The reason for the requirement of Zero Waste management • Principles of Zero Waste management • Alternate sources to their usual single use items and details of where such alternate sources can be purchased from, along with the cost benefits
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03	To arrange for the accommodation and food provision for Vedan Supervisor and other team members at the event.	To assign a Vedan team member to be on the field for the duration of the event and supervise the Zero Waste management, as per the request of Mr Anand. To ensure this team member will supervise the housekeeping and dry waste shed staff while collecting data for reporting purposes.
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04	To prepare a temporary structure to be used as a Dry Waste Aggregation Shed in the event premises. To prepare three pits in the premises to be used to dispose of wet waste for compost.	To arrange for staff trained in Zero Waste management principles to sort and store the waste in the Shed correctly
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05	To provide 31 barrels to be used as waste collection bins.	To prepare and put up the banners, placards with instructions of waste disposal and the waste collection barrels and bags in the planned locations.
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During the Event

06	To provide four to six housekeeping staff for the duration of the event.	To train the housekeeping staff in the correct methods of waste collection as per Zero Waste management principles. To prepare a timetable for the staff to follow to ensure the whole premises is cleaned daily.
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07	To make regular announcements throughout the day reminding attendees that the event is a Zero Waste Event and to encourage them to dispose of waste in the appropriate barrels and bags located across the venue.	To provide the script for the announcements and to make similar announcements where possible.
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08

To impose the Zero Waste management principles and rules onto the Vendors.

To provide awareness to the Vendors.

09

To arrange for the payment of the barrels, cost of maintaining dry waste shed and housekeeping staff.

To arrange for the payment of our team's transportation, accommodation, food and cost of stand, bags, banners, placards and the dry waste shed labour charges.

STEP 4: Site Survey to plan the Zero Waste Event

Once the roles and responsibilities was clear, it was time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

The Vedan team headed to the festival grounds for a detailed site survey. Walking through the space where thousands would soon gather, we began mapping out what it would take to manage the waste—quietly and effectively, behind the scenes.

This wasn't just logistics—it was laying the foundation for a cleaner, smarter festival experience.

STEP 4: Site Survey to plan the Zero Waste Event

Our next step was people management.

At the event location we met up with the stall vendors, the people who bring life and flavour to the festival. After all, their role was crucial. If the event was going to be Zero Waste, they needed to be part of the mission.

There we held an orientation session on Zero Waste management. We introduced the concept, explained what materials to avoid, suggested practical alternatives, and even shared where to get the alternatives. It was more than just a briefing—it was a conversation. We talked about how it is their responsibility to reduce the waste generated in their towns. Once we keep our homes clean, we can demand the same of the tourists.

There was a sense of momentum. Questions flowed, ideas sparked, and a shared sense of purpose started to take root. It felt like the beginning of a real cultural shift.



Vedan team member **Ms Suhasini** explaining the rules of Zero Waste Management to the vendors ahead of the event.

TURNING VISION INTO ACTION : STEPS TOWARDS A CLEANER GREENER EVENT

STEP 1: Vedan Team members arrived at the event location in advance to execute the planned activities

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STEP 2: We started by placing the Waste Management Infrastructure in strategic areas throughout the grounds and the stalls areas.



Barrels and placards placed strategically throughout the event premises.



Banners placed throughout the event premises.

STEP 3: To maintain the aesthetics in the stadium area, we placed customised stands with bags for waste collection



Customised stands with bags placed in the stadium area

STEP 4: Training the Housekeeping Staff

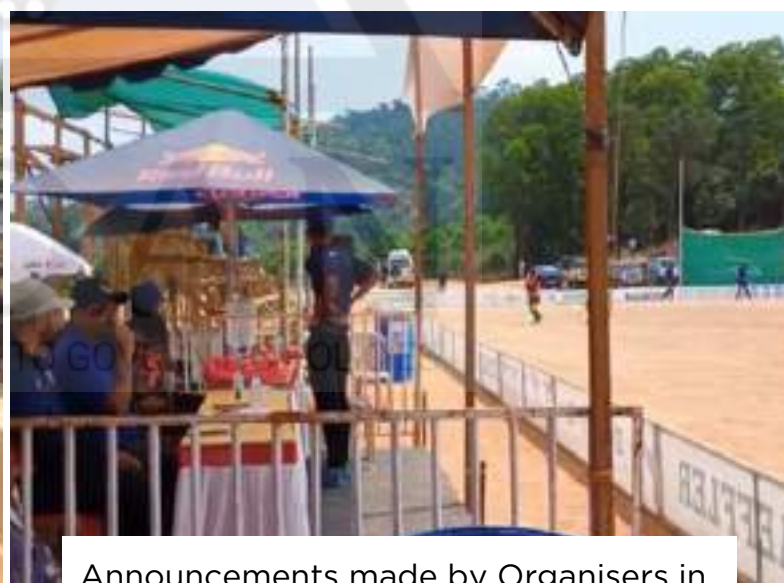


Vedan team member training the housekeeping staff.

STEP 4: Training the Housekeeping Staff



Announcements made by Vedan near the stall area



Announcements made by Organisers in the field

STEP 6: Special bags made by Pourakarmikas of Moodubidire

We engaged the Pourakarmikas of Moodubidri to produce the customized waste collection bags, supporting their small business initiatives and contributing to local livelihood development. These bags were placed in the parking lots of the premises to collect the waste.



The Pourakarmikas preparing the bags during their free time.

STEP 7: Collection of waste from barrels

We had trained the housekeeping staff on the correct methods of collection of waste from the barrels into separate collection bags. Vedan team member supervised them to ensure they dropped dry and wet waste into separate bags correctly. This is a crucial step in the waste management process, as many times, even when the waste is dropped correctly, if it is not collected correctly, the process breaks down and we are left with higher quantity of mixed waste.



STEP 8: Transportation of all collected waste to the Dry Waste Shed

After collection of waste from barrels, stand bags and parking area bags, both the wet waste and dry waste was taken to the Dry Waste Shed. The wet waste was weighed and then disposed of in the Wet Waste Pits. The dry waste was taken and dumped in the Dry Waste Shed for further sorting, weighing and storage.



Both the Dry and Wet Waste collected from the grounds are taken to the Dry Waste Shed.



The Wet Waste is weighed at the Dry Waste Shed



The Wet Waste once weighed is taken to the Wet Waste Pits and dumped into the pits.

STEP 9, 10 and 11: Dry Waste Sorting, Weighing and Storage

The images below illustrate the waste collection process. Throughout the day, waste is collected from the designated barrels and bags placed across the venue. The housekeeping staff then transport this waste to the Dry Waste Aggregation Shed. At the shed, trained staff carefully sort the collected waste into 26 distinct categories, after which each category is weighed and stored separately.



Step 9 : Pictured above is the dry waste shed staff, taking out a pile of the mixed dry waste and sorting it into the different categories of dry waste.



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Step 11: After being weighed they are stored category-wise in separate bags.



End of day shed photo – after waste collected from barrels, sorted, weighed and stored separately, ready to be sent for recycling.

WHAT WE FOUND MIGHT SHOCK YOU: REAL DATA FROM THE GROUND

GROUND EXPERIENCE TO GOVERNING POLICIES

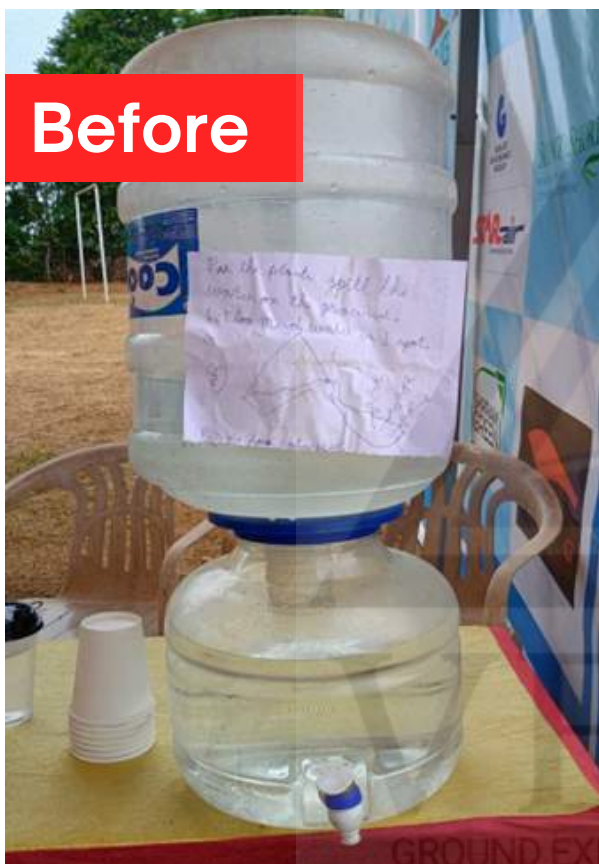
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Before switching to steel cups, the multiple paper cups were used and disposed on the grounds.

By removing paper cups and replacing it with reusable steel cups, we have saved 4 fully grown trees in these past few weeks!



We all want to do our part for the environment—but planting four trees isn't always easy. Instead, we can make a real difference by preventing trees from being cut down in the first place. One simple way to do this is by avoiding single-use paper products like cups and utensils and choosing reusable alternatives instead.



The calculation of the 4 trees



Data Collected

Sl.NO	Description of data	Value
A	Number of water stations	7
B	Each Water can quantity	20 L
C	Number of cans at each station on a normal day	2
D	Number of cans at each station on a busy day	3
Daily water intake based on above		
E	-On a normal day ($A \times B \times C$)	280 L
F	-On a busy day ($A \times B \times D$)	420L
G	Number of normal days	31
H	Number of busy days	2
I	Paper cup quantity	250ml
J	Weight of 10 paper cups	50 gms
K	Number of cups per day on a normal day (E/I)	1,120
L	Number of cups per day on a busy day (F/I)	1,680
M	Number of trees required for 1000 Kgs of paper	22
N	Quantity of cups from 1 tree ($1000/22$)	45kgs

Our Calculations

Sl no	Description	31 days of 280 L	2 days of 420 L
O	Number of cups per days (K and L from above)	1,120	1,680
P	Total number of cups for the days (O x G) and (O x H)	34,720	3,360
Q	Weight of cups in Kgs ((P/10 x J)/1000)	173.6 Kgs	16.8 Kgs
R	Number of trees required for the cups (Q/45) (45 kgs of cups per tree)	3.85	0.37

Total of item R is 4.22 trees.

REALITIES ON THE GROUND: CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

1. Spectators

To guide the audience with the correct waste disposal, we had taken every effort,

- We made several announcements,
- We had placards displaying the correct disposal of waste and
- We had placed waste collection bags and barrels at frequent intervals throughout the premises.

For the most part, the effort paid off.

- 70% of the audience followed the rules, thoughtfully separating their waste and using the right bins
- Remaining 30% told a different story.

Despite the constant reminders and visible infrastructure, we still found waste strewn across the ground near the stands, and mixed waste dumped into the wrong bins.



Pictured above is the waste disposed on the grounds below the stand despite the waste collection barrels kept right next to the stands.

2.Labour –

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Pictured above is the attendance (photo attendance was taken at the start and end of working day), it can be seen that we did not have consistent labour on all days.

3. Heavy Rain –

- Water accumulation in the dry waste barrels rendered the contents unsortable, effectively turning them into mixed waste.
- Water seepage into the shed meant no work could be done in the shed for that day.
- The wet waste pits weren't spared either—they flooded quickly as the rain intensified. But here, our planning paid off. Since the pits were natural in-ground structures, the excess water was gradually absorbed into the soil, preventing long-term disruption and allowing the pits to continue functioning effectively once the rain subsided.



Flooding in shed, pits and grounds resulted in extra mixed waste.



4. Actual waste sent to landfill

this event generated around 500 kgs of mixed waste that could not be sorted and had to be sent to the landfill. If the waste was dropped in the correct bins, most of this waste could have been salvaged and sent for recycling or compost.

Approximately 200kgs of this waste is from Flex Banners, which cannot be recycled. This waste could have been avoided by using cloth banners or digital banners.



Pictured here is a pile of mixed waste being sorted through by the dry waste shed staff.



Flex banners being taken away by municipality to be dumped into the landfill.

BINS BEHAVIOUR AND BIG SURPRISES

BINS

Team Vedan and the Organisers put in every effort to help attendees understand and follow the rules of the Zero Waste Event. From clear signage and announcements to on-ground guidance, the systems were in place. But as the event unfolded, we were met with a series of recurring challenges.

Some attendees continued to drop waste on the ground, despite the availability of barrels nearby. Vendors, too, added to the problem—discarding mixed waste into a natural pit behind their stalls, ignoring the designated collection points. But perhaps the most significant challenge was the persistent issue of mixed waste in the barrels, contributed by both vendors and attendees. Even with all our communication, proper segregation was often overlooked, compromising the very goal of a Zero Waste Event.



Mixed waste in the barrels

BEHAVIOUR

One of the unexpected challenges we faced during the event came from the behaviour of the stall vendors. Despite our efforts—several rounds of conversations, clear signage, and placing waste barrels just a few steps away at the front of each stall— 3/12 vendors chose to ignore the system. Instead of using the designated bins, many mixed their waste and tossed it behind their stalls, making it hard to reach and clean.

It wasn't a matter of inconvenience—the barrels were barely ten steps away. Yet, for reasons likely rooted in habit or haste, the rear areas became unofficial dumping grounds. This not only undermined the Zero Waste effort but also created a logistical headache for the housekeeping team, who now had to navigate cramped and cluttered spaces to retrieve the improperly discarded waste.

We also encountered significant resistance from vendors regarding the ban on single-use items and the requirement to adopt eco-friendly alternatives. While most vendors had nodded along in agreement during the orientation session, not all followed through. Interestingly, the one vendor who had initially pushed back—a woman concerned about the cost of alternative materials—was the only one who actually made the switch. She showed up with reusable plates, committed to the idea even before others who had agreed more readily.



Pictured above is the waste thrown in the natural pits behind the vendor stalls – as seen, it is very difficult for anyone to go down and collect the waste from there

BIG SURPRISES

The disappointing surprises didn't end there. It's a simple truth—existence generates waste, and that's something we cannot avoid. What we can do, however, is take responsibility for how that waste is disposed. Our request wasn't complicated: just use the correct bins, so the waste can be properly processed, easing the burden on the Earth.

To support this, we had clearly labelled bins and bags placed in the washroom areas, specifically for reject waste such as diapers and sanitary pads. Despite these efforts and prominent signage, we still found used diapers discarded in the dry waste barrels—an unfortunate mistake that compromises the effectiveness of waste segregation and processing.



Diaper in blue dry waste barrel despite having a yellow reject waste bag and other bin specifically labelled for those waste in the washroom area.

VENDOR HIGHLIGHTS: CHAMPIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Though we faced issues getting the stall vendors onboard and following the Zero Waste management rules and principles, there were a few vendors that personally took steps to be eco-friendly.



Frost and Flourish

(Manipanda, Parth & Vivek)

This vendor had replaced the plastic wrappers for the ice-creams with paper wrappers which can be recycled. This did not reduce the flavour, and the customers were happy that their joy did not contribute negatively to the earth.



Chodra Thini

(Shaila)

This Vendor who had initially push-backed on Zero Waste practices due to concerns of higher cost, turned up with re-usable plates to provide the food! She took the initiative to do her own research and found an option that was financially viable and ecologically responsible.



Yellowgate Cafe and Bistro

(Darshan)

We appreciate this vendor who used bagasse plates instead of single use items and helped the environment!

TRACKING THE TRASH: DETAILED WASTE COLLECTION DATA

The Muddanda Hockey Festival 2025 held from 28 March to 28 April (33 days), generated the following waste:



33 DAYS EVENT

**RESOURCE
RECOVERED**

11 TON



**21 TREES
SAVED**

WET



8.5 TON

DRY



2.5 TON



**8-9 FAMILY
LIVELIHOOD**

MIXED WASTE

0.5 TON



3,022 KG

CARBON REDUCTION

Drop it in the right bin
or watch it rot in a
Landfill for years.

**AMOUNT SPENT ON
WASTE MANAGEMENT
₹ 2,61,477**



1. Dry waste was sorted into 26 categories and a total of 2,410 kgs of waste was collected.

Sl no	Waste	Kgs
1	Colour paper	356
2	Kadak Plastic	4
3	Kitchen white plastic	152
4	Natural glass	99
5	Paper cup	126
6	Paper plates	100
7	Pet bottles	441
8	Black plastic	6
9	Can/ tin	55
10	Glass bottle	621
11	LD plastic	48
12	Milk packets	24
13	Oil packets	0.3
14	Soda bottles	150
15	Tetra pack	25
16	Cardboard	183
17	White plastic	2
18	L Core	3
19	Straw	3
20	Bottle caps	0.16
21	MLP	1
22	Spoon and leftover waste	3
23	Thermocal	0.05
24	Plastic spoons	0.08
25	Steel plates	6
26	Bullet valve caps	2
	Total	2,410

Wet waste in the form of Arecanut and Baggase plates and bowls and sugarcane waste came up to 8,325 kgs over the 33 days, i.e. 252 kgs per day.

STRAW



MILK PACKET



PAPER PLATES



WHITE PLASTIC



CAN / TIN



KADAK PLASTIC



PLASTIC WRAPPERS



KITCHEN WHITE PLASTIC



PET BOTTLES



GLASS BOTTLES



PAPER GLASS



L CORE



CARDBOARD



TETRA PACKS

Mixed Waste - this event generated 506 kgs of mixed waste. This is actual waste generated that ended up in landfill. If this was dropped properly in the right bins, we could have recovered this and avoided this from being sent to the landfill as well.

Approximately 200kgs of this waste is from Flex Banners, which cannot be recycled. This could have been avoided by using cloth banners or digital banners.



Pile of mixed waste sent to the landfill and picture of the landfill.

BEHIND THE BINS: EYE OPENING DISCOVERIES IN WASTE SEGREGATION



Description	Values
Volume	182 cubic feet
Manpower	1
Time taken	8 hour 30 mins
Recovered Dry Waste	72.5 kgs
Mixed Reject Waste	21 kgs

It takes no more than ten extra seconds to place your waste in the correct bin. Just ten seconds. Now imagine what happens when that simple step is skipped.

Meet one of the waste sorting staff members. His job begins where our carelessness ends. Every day, he stands in front of piles of mixed waste—just like the one in the photo. This single section, filled with one day's waste, must be sorted by hand.

To begin, he pulls a portion out, drops it on the floor, and starts the process. Item by item, he separates it into one of 26 different categories. Then he does it again. And again. For eight and a half hours. Surrounded by the smell, the mess, the chaos we leave behind because we're "too busy" to sort it ourselves.

Is that fair?

A few seconds of our time can spare someone else from spending their entire day buried in what we throw away. The choice is ours.

A Day In The Life – of a Waste Sorting Staff



Pictured above is the dry waste shed staff, taking out a pile of the mixed dry waste and dropping it on the ground for sorting.



Pictured above is the dry waste shed staff, squatting on the ground for hours to sort the waste into the different categories of dry waste.



The individual categories are then weighed.



After being weighed they are stored category-wise in separate bags.



End of day shed photo - after waste collected from barrels, sorted, weighed and stored separately, ready to be sent for recycling.

WHERE IT REALLY GOES: STUNNING FINDINGS FROM ZERO WASTE EVENT

If we don't do something now, the only mountain available in the future will be The Mountain of Trash



Reducing Mixed Waste can Reduce the Mountain

Once the waste drops from their hand, most people do not care to understand what happens to the waste. For many, it's out of sight, out of mind. For us, that moment is where the real work begins—and it's the very reason we do what we do.

Mixed waste and reject waste doesn't just disappear, it gets sent to landfills or gets burnt in fields – polluting our soil, our groundwater, and the air we breathe. While some amount of reject waste is, unfortunately, unavoidable given today's lifestyles, mixed waste is a problem we can solve.

It starts with one simple action: dropping waste into the correct bin. It's all literally in our hands. When each person takes that tiny extra moment to dispose responsibly, the collective impact can be enormous.



Mini-mountain of mixed waste generated at the Hockey Festival.

SORTING FACT FROM FICTION: WHAT ZERO WASTE EVENT ACTUALLY TAUGHT US

No need of a gym, just sign up to collect waste off the ground

Despite having waste collection barrels and bags placed throughout the event premises, we were disheartened to find large amounts of waste carelessly discarded on the ground—particularly in the parking areas. The housekeeping staff had a tough time navigating these zones, bending down every couple of feet to collect scattered waste of all kinds.

What made the situation even more challenging was the waste thrown into nearby natural pits. These areas are difficult to access, and retrieving waste from them not only takes time but also poses safety risks for the housekeeping team. It was a stark reminder that infrastructure alone isn't enough; awareness and personal responsibility must go hand in hand to make Zero Waste efforts truly effective.



Looks can be deceiving

How much waste do you think this bag holds? At first glance, it looks pretty normal in size—until you notice it's nearly half the size of the dry waste shed staff standing next to it! This seemingly modest bag was filled during just one morning's round of waste collection of waste dropped on the ground, and it weighed in at a whopping 15 kilos.

It's a powerful visual reminder of how much waste can accumulate in such a short span of time—and why every bit of proper disposal truly counts.

In one single day, 3-4 such bags were collected and the waste has to be sorted into different categories, weighed and stored away by the end of the day, everyday. The below set of images shows as the dry waste shed staff struggles to pick up and flip the heavy bag and pours the waste onto the ground to be sorted into 26 different piles based on the type of waste.



The Real Challenge: Changing Habits, Not Just Systems

The below before and after photos highlights one of the main issues. The bins are there, so why is the ground still so dirty?

Before



After



WRAP IT UP!

Now that the event has come to a close, it's time to pack up and send the waste to their new homes. Each type of waste has a destination carefully chosen to ensure it's processed responsibly.

The dry waste will be collected by our partnered vendor, who will sort and distribute the materials to the appropriate recycling and processing centres. The wet waste pits have been closed with mud, and over time, they'll naturally decompose into compost, enriching the soil with nutrients. As for the small amount of mixed waste, it will be collected by the municipality and sent to the landfill—a reminder of the work still ahead to fully eliminate unsorted waste.

STEP 1: The Dry Waste shed was cleaned and all the waste stored in bags for collection.



STEP 2: The stored waste was weighed again before being loaded into the lorry and taken to next processing centre



STEP 3: The mixed waste was collected by the municipality.

