



# **THE FINAL REPORT**

**[LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES]**

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# **PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT IN FIJI: A STUDY OF JAPAN'S BEST PRACTICES**

## **Introduction**

Local government system in Fiji comprises of 13 Municipalities, including 2 city councils and 11 town councils. The 13 Municipalities under the Ministry of Local Government (Central Government) are governed by the Local Government Act 1972 ('Act') and responsible for providing basic services such as waste management, grass cutting, road sweeping, litter collection, maintenance of Council buildings, Drainage System, Street Furniture, Parks and Garden. In addition, the Municipalities provide local services, infrastructure and urban development to ratepayers and communities.

As highlighted in my initial report, waste management practices remain a significant challenge due to limited resources, waste infrastructure and lack of public awareness. Improper waste disposal is commonly caused by increase in informal settlements in the urban areas because of urban drift.

Currently, the Municipalities in Fiji rely heavily on one landfill (Central) as the primary source of waste disposal, with centralized dumpsites located on the outskirts of towns. These 7 dumpsites, however, are frequently unsanitary and are not environmentally friendly, contributing to pollution of nearby waterways and ecosystems.

The waste collection is provided by the 13 local Municipalities in their respective town and city boundaries and disposed at their existing landfill and dumpsites. However, in 2018, the Municipalities were given additional delegated areas for waste collection. These delegated areas are outside town boundaries and were managed by the rural local authorities (part of government) before assigned to the Municipalities. The Central Government provides subsidy to the Municipalities for coverage in these areas. However, coverage can be inconsistent due to poor access road in informal settlements or peri-urban areas.

The most common types of waste include household rubbish, plastic waste, food scraps, and industrial byproducts. Unfortunately, much of this waste is not properly disposed of, leading to pollution and environmental degradation. Additionally, waste segregation at the source is rarely practised, making recycling and composting efforts difficult to implement effectively. This means that recyclable materials, such as plastics, paper, and metals, often end up in landfill/dumpsites instead of being repurposed or reused.

Most importantly, people tend to improperly dispose rubbish even though rubbish bins are placed in most areas. This shows that people are not disciplined and to realise the impact of their actions. Other challenges faced in my country are illegal dumping, lack of proper waste separation and recycling facilities, inadequate regulations and weak penalties. Therefore, this report would feature the case study in waste management system in Japan and how it can change the behaviour of the people back home; the minimum level of waste infrastructure

relevant to Fiji and how government can implement in terms of policy to address this issue of Waste Management.

### **Change of people behaviour**

Looking back at the great effort of Japan and its history of Tokyo Waste War, we can figure out how serious Japan concerning the issue of waste management. In the mid-1950s, the Incineration Plant was the quick solution as initiated by Tokyo Metropolitan Government due to the large volume of waste being produced. However, this was opposed by the residents of Takaido and even reached a boiling point in 1971. With more collaboration and meaningful dialog over few years, it ended successfully. This collaboration and awareness are a success story that I will take back home as part of our strategy of changing people's behavior.

Secondly, it is worthy to note that Japan integrates environmental education into school curricula, teaching children from a young age the importance of cleanliness, recycling, and respect for shared public spaces. This early education builds lifelong habits and a strong sense of personal responsibility for the environment. In addition to regulation and education, Japan has fostered a culture where cleanliness and order are seen as a reflection of social responsibility and community pride. In Fiji, we have 3Rs as part of our school program however, it is hardly practiced. So I believe, if it is regulated, then the mindset of the people will change. Another important aspect is collaboration and community participation. Even though it is practiced in my country, people are not taking it seriously, so more communication dialog with citizen and civic education awareness is vital. As such, I believe adopting Collaboration Law will make a difference.

### **Improving Waste Infrastructure**

As mentioned above, the history of proposing the construction of the Incineration Plant resulted in a Waste War. As a tool that mitigate the combustible waste here in Japan, the benefit is commendable as it generates energy that are sold to power companies. This might be challenging strategy for us due to the cost however, investing on the Incineration will eliminate the issue of having too many dumpsites in my country.

Another aspect is having more recycling facilities with the guide of the Japanese basic laws in promoting the creation of a recycling-oriented society in Japan. Our recycling act does not specifically define which products to be recycled but definition is termed generally such as cans and bottles. Therefore, broadened the recycling act will assist us and therefore, implementing more recycling facilities will surely assist in minimizing waste ended up in the landfill. Dumpsites are frequently unsanitary and are not environmentally friendly. Therefore, the structure of landfill disposal sites in the Outer Central Landfill Disposal and New Sea surface Disposal Site managed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is such an eye opener. Significant point to take back is that landfill disposal sites are categorized into 3 types depending on the level of impact and consist of double steel-tubing sheet piles to prevent leachate, water from seeping out of the landfill. Having more transfer stations is another

strategy will allow us to solve solution in sorting, streamline waste transportation and save transportation cost.

### **Policy Recommendations**

In Japan, regulation of waste activities also contributes to the success in their waste management system. In the legislation and government policy pertaining to waste in Japan, it highlights the roles and responsibilities of all the entity. This ranges from individuals, communities, business companies and schools. It regulates “Changes in Social Conditions in Japan” and Issues and Legislation Pertaining to Waste Management. Recycling acts are also part of the legislation. With the mindset and the behaviour of our citizen, regulating waste activities in waste separation, strengthen 3Rs, strengthen public awareness and civic education and review of regulation to have high penalty for improper waste disposal. I strongly believe that this is a road to success for improvement on waste management Fiji.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

To conclude, Japan has successfully transformed the behaviour and mindset of its citizens toward proper waste disposal through a combination of strict regulations, education, and community-based systems. The country enforces detailed waste separation rules, which vary slightly by municipality but generally require households to sort garbage into multiple categories such as burnable, non-burnable, plastics, cans, bottles, and paper.

In addition to regulation and education, Japan has fostered a culture where cleanliness and order are seen as a reflection of social responsibility and community pride. Neighborhood associations often play a key role in organizing waste collection, monitoring adherence to rules, and spreading information about changes in disposal procedures. Public campaigns and media also reinforce the message that proper waste disposal is everyone's duty. By embedding these practices into everyday life and creating social norms around cleanliness, Japan has cultivated a disciplined and environmentally conscious society where improper disposal of rubbish is rare and socially unacceptable.

Therefore, as the way forward, Fiji needs to learn from Japan's practices and adopt the following recommendations: formulate regulations based on the basic law of promoting the creation of a Recycling oriented society in Japan; high penalty for illegal dumping; waste separation as mandatory; strengthen 3Rs in the regulation as mandatory; methods of landfill disposal (Japan System); strong public awareness and civic education should be mandatory through regulation; more recycling facilities and transfer stations; adopting collaboration Law and as Long Term Solution – Incineration Plant (might be challenging – costly). In conclusion, having a clean environment is not a one-man task. It requires the entire community and collective effort of all individuals.

### **References**

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- Suginami Incineration Plant, Clean Authority if Tokyo/Tokyo waste War, History and Future center
- Topic 2. Legislation and Government Policy Pertaining to Waste [[t02 en.pdf](#)]