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 ENVIRONMENT-INDIA: Home Garbage Composting - Not Going to Pot  
By Keya Acharya


**BANGALORE, Aug 29 (IPS) - A variation of the age-old concept of composting household garbage, using cheap earthen pots, is turning into a runaway success in this fast-expanding metropolis of seven million people.**

Poonam Kasturi's 'Daily Dump', consists of a set of attractive earthenware pots, punched with holes for aeration and one set atop another. Organic compost is filled into the topmost pot and then interchanged as the bulk of the garbage matures and declines.

The units need to be stirred at least once in 3-5 days. Maintenance also involves using natural 'neem' spray to mask any odour and the addition of an organic culture to accelerate the decomposition process.

A full cycle may take up to two months or more for significant decline in volume. Daily Dump offers service support and information on knowing and segregating home waste.

Poonam says her product is the first of its kind in Bangalore, a city which produces 3,000 metric tons of garbage daily. Once called the 'garden city' for its clean and green environment and salubrious climate, Bangalore has not been able to keep pace with its own rapid expansion and apart from unmanageable traffic, piles of household refuse can be seen scattered along residential streets.

Poonam, a professional designer, was prompted to create the composter when she realised that it was pointless segregating dry waste from wet in Bangalore where every type of garbage ended up getting mixed together and dumped on the streets.

To enhance acceptability she has the pots designed aesthetically through a community of traditional potter. "I am using craft systems that are ancient and selling a final product that gives


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better margins of profit and improved livelihood to ancient potter communities."

Potters from Palamaner in neighbouring southern Andhra Pradesh state, that Daily Dump deals with, say they have better margins than when making the conventional flower pots they sell for a living. Potters get 33 percent of total profits and customers perceive more value. Besides, all the material used is bio-degradable.

The whole project has made sound business sense, with Poonam initial investment of approximately 10,000 US dollars being recovered in the first year of operation.

What is also unusual is that her product is registered under a Creative Commons License on the Web, making its design free for anyone to use or adapt, a domain predominantly used for creating open source code for software programmes.

She wants the idea to spread. "I cannot withhold this just in case a big industry steals the know-how for its own profits," she says.

The power of the Web and the basic philosophy of the product, open to all on the Daily Dump website, [www.dailydump.org](http://www.dailydump.org), have seen over 4,000 hits in the last 15 days, with 820 of them coming from India, 1,576 from the United States, 102 from Denmark and 306 from Britain.

Others from the 91 countries that have enquired about her know-how include Asian countries like Malaysia and Korea.

"I come from Ireland and there are no products in the market like yours," Sinead Cormican e-mailed from Ireland earlier this month, calling the product a "fantastic idea" and wanting to know where she could access these pots.

Poonam says she wants the people who have enquired to manufacture the pots near wherever they are located to save on excessive consumption of natural resources for creating and transporting the units from Bangalore.

"I hope the process we are following will not produce very bad effects," she says.

Sinead is currently making enquiries on production through the Irish environmental government agency.

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Isbel Ingham, development director of a U.S.-based non-governmental organisation Next Step Recycling, wants to link Daily Dump products and know-how on their website.

It has helped immensely that Daily Dump was picked up as one of this year's nominees for the prestigious global innovative design award called INDEX, held at Copenhagen on Aug. 24.

Poonam is now working on an automatic method of home composting which takes care of stirring, aerating, cutting and chopping, "much like a washing machine, but using very little electrical power."

In Bangalore, venture capitalists are now evincing interest in Daily Dump which is now selling around 105 sets per month to householders. She believes that every household could do with a unit the same way as a commode or a washbasin.

"My aim now is better public communication and awareness of do-it-yourself composting, and including getting the concept into school programmes," says Poonam. (END/2007)

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