

Living in Poison

A Joint Fact-Finding Report on the Inhumane and Dire Living Conditions in Jawahar Nagar of Hyderabad caused by the Waste-to-Energy Plant and Dumping Yard

A fact-finding team comprising of representatives from Jawaharnagar Joint Action Committee of Anti-Dumping Yard, Navodaya Welfare Society, Bahujana Satta, Climate Front Hyderabad, Forum against Economic and Environmental Injustice towards the Marginalised Communities, and environmentalists have visited Jawaharnagar, a locality on the outskirts of Hyderabad, on 23rd March, 2025, to assess the situation of the place with respect to the issues caused by the Waste to Energy Plant and landfill there. We witnessed firsthand the multifaceted challenges that the residents of the area face, making the place uninhabitable for them.

A Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant is a facility that incinerates municipal solid waste to generate electricity. While these plants are often promoted as sustainable solutions for urban waste management, aiming to reduce landfill dependence and produce energy, they come with significant environmental and public health risks, especially for marginalised communities living nearby.



In Jawaharnagar, located in Jawahar Nagar Municipal Corporation, Kapra Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana, a WTE plant with an incineration capacity of 24 MW is already operational, and another plant with same capacity is currently under construction. This has raised serious concerns regarding the deteriorating living

conditions of the communities in the area. The combined impact of the WTE plants and the adjacent large dumping yard has led to growing fears about environmental degradation and adverse health effects, putting the well-being of local residents at risk.



The development of these facilities traces back to a Concession Agreement signed in 2009 between Hyderabad Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Limited (HiMSW Limited), a subsidiary of Ramky Enviro Engineers Limited (REEL), and GHMC for the creation of the Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management Project (IMSWMP). Following this, GHMC secured Environmental Clearance from the SEIAA, AP in 2012, for a phased waste processing system capable of handling 5,500 tons per day (TPD) of municipal solid waste. This plan included a Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant with an initial proposed capacity of 2×24 MW. The GHMC later decided to reduce the capacity of the power plant to 19.8 MW to comply with SEIAA regulations. However, the current capacity is 24 MW and the plant under construction¹ too will be the same.

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<https://environmentclearance.nic.in/DownloadPfdFile.aspx?FileName=7GXTSoIF0x5S0KOH8nHXMN+EUhj7OWmjRbYUgEYMqCkUNr+qPYjUVaagzZ9Al07vdlCQd/y0VckEj2bGjAljPmdAr/g5bleiOUIEiZ49bGI1M89xLbF/dhFHRfcV9nJDxxaMPy2MYrHSbOB6jxQ==&FilePath=93ZZBm8LWEXfg+HAIQix2fE2t8z/pgnoBhDIYdZCxzWF1OLE6RXe5MiAhSH8vdQ1>

Following the development of the Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management Project (IMSWMP), including the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant, the local communities have been facing significant environmental and health impacts, ranging from air and water contamination to the constant presence of ash and waste serious impeding their quality of life.

LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE RESIDENTS AND IMPACTS

The residents of the area have reported multiple grave issues emerging from the operation of the WTE plant and the dumping yard.

Impact on Residential Areas

Residents living within the vicinity of the plant, and even those as far as 7–8 km away, report a constant foul odour that spreads through the area, making daily life unbearable. Many have described experiencing suffocation and respiratory distress due to the persistent stench and air pollution.

Residents find a layer of ash coating their belongings, highlighting the extent of air pollution and contamination. The incineration process produces fine ash, which settles inside homes, covering furniture, electronics, and household items such as sofas, dining tables, refrigerators, and washing machines. This has not only caused damage to property but has also contributed to respiratory problems and skin irritation among community members. This shouldn't happen if the compliance standards are being adhered to, raising grave concerns of bypassing the regulatory standards of scrubbing of air-borne pollutants.



Further exacerbating the air pollution problem, residents who were officially permitted to visit the plant observed that the ash from incineration is not being properly disposed of. Instead of safe containment, the ash is reportedly being dumped onto existing garbage piles. Due to wind and air movement, this ash is dispersing across the region,

contaminating homes, streets, and water sources. The thick layer of ash settling inside homes is a testament to the widespread pollution.

The air quality near the plant has raised concerns, primarily because of the stack at the facility. According to officials, this stack is installed at a height of 60 m to disperse toxins, waste gases, and other pollutants released from the plant. The purpose of this installation, as residents stated that the officials claimed, is to spread the emissions across a wider area, reducing the immediate impact on nearby communities. However, the residents raised a significant concern that the height of the stack may not comply with the required environmental regulations.

According to environmental guidelines such as the ‘Technical EIA Guidance Manual for Common Municipal Solid Waste Management Facilities’² issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), a buffer zone of at least 500 meters should be maintained between landfill facilities and residential areas. However, the landfill is located in close proximity to residential areas, exposing the residents to adverse effects of the landfill.



² https://environmentclearance.nic.in/writereaddata/User_EIA_Manuals/35.pdf

Impact on Health

Residents report a surge in respiratory problems, kidney failures, and severe skin allergies. Many suffer from persistent throat and mouth infections, making it difficult to even speak properly. The ash and toxic pollutants released from burning waste at high temperatures are a significant cause of this. This has also led to a rise in pulmonary diseases and other chronic conditions. Several residents reported that pollutants from the plant settle on their clothes after washing and drying them in the open. When they wear these clothes, the pollutants come into direct contact with their skin, leading to visible skin conditions, such as rashes and irritation. This further underscores the air quality deterioration and health hazards posed by the plant's emissions. These skin allergies, in particular, have become widespread, with residents attributing them directly to the ash and airborne pollutants.

Added to this, financial constraints prevent many affected individuals from seeking medical treatment. As a result, they continue to suffer without adequate healthcare. These health conditions, combined with the persistent foul odour and pollution, have significantly deteriorated the quality of life for those living near the facility.



Water Contamination

The presence of the WTE plant and dumping yard has led to severe water pollution in the surrounding areas. Ash and pollutants released from the plant have affected the quality of groundwater, making it unsafe for consumption or other uses.



Once the waste from the city reaches Jawaharnagar, it remains in the dumping yard for seven days before being processed in the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant. During this period, while the waste dries, it also releases water - called Leachate. This leachate is meant to be treated by the water treatment and sewage treatment plants. Regardless



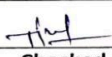

of the claims of HiMSW, it remains unclear whether such treatment is actually taking place as its processing is reported to be quite an expensive process.

The residents shared that the groundwater has turned completely unsafe for consumption or any other use. Residents report visible discolouration and contamination of water sources, highlighting the sanitation crisis in the area. The spread of pollutants into nearby wards highlights the far-reaching consequences of the WTE facility.



A recent groundwater test conducted in one of the Wards in Jawaharnagar, within 400–500 meters of the facility, revealed alarming levels of contamination. The test results indicate that the water is unsafe for consumption or any other use. Residents report visible discolouration and contamination of water sources, highlighting the sanitation crisis in the area. The spread of pollutants into nearby wards highlights the far-reaching consequences of

the WTE facility. This is not just an environmental concern, it is a looming public health emergency affecting a huge population of marginalised residents.

 Vista Labs Analytical • Biological • Environmental An ISO 9001:2015 & OHSAS ISO 45001:2018 Certified Lab		 Regn. No.23DQLD43		
TEST REPORT				
Name & Address Of Customer: [Redacted] Dhammaiguda, Keesara.		Page 1 of 1 Lab Ref. No: VIS/6985/2025 Reporting Date: 18/03/2025 Sample Received On: 17/03/2025 Your Ref No: Verbal Analysis Started On: 17/03/2025 Date of Sampling: 17/03/2025 Analysis Completed On: 18/03/2025		
Sample Description: Bore water Sample Condition At the time of Receipt: Found OK Sample drawn By: Customer		Quantity Received: 1Ltr X 1No.		
TEST RESULTS				
Sl. No.	Characteristic Physical & Chemical	Test method	Results	Requirement (Acceptable Limit) As per IS 10500:2012
1.	P ^H Value at 25°C	IS:3025(Part -11)-1983,RA 2017	6.41	6.50 - 8.50
2.	Electrical conductivity @ 25°C, µS/cm	APHA (23 rd Edn:2017) -2510 B	15680	Not specified
3.	Total Dissolved solids, mg/l	IS:3025(Part -16)-1984,RA 2006	10506	< 500
4.	Turbidity, (NTU)	IS:3025(Part -10)-1984,RA 2017	8.20	< 1.0
5.	Colour, (Hazen Units)	IS:3025(Part -4)-1983,RA 2017	50	< 05
6.	Odour	IS:3025(Part -5)-1983,RA 2018	Dis-Agreeable	Agreeable
7.	Total Hardness as CaCO ₃ , mg/l	IS:3025(Part -21)-2009,RA 2014	4000	< 200
8.	Alkalinity to Phenolphthalein as CaCO ₃ , mg/l	IS:3025(Part -23)-1986,RA 2014	Nil	Not specified
9.	Alkalinity to methyl orange as CaCO ₃ , mg/l	IS:3025(Part -23)-1986,RA 2014	1100	< 200
10.	Calcium as Ca, mg/l	IS:3025(Part -40)-1991,RA 2014	896	< 75
11.	Magnesium as Mg, mg/l	APHA (23 rd Edn:2017)-3500-Mg B	422.4	< 30
12.	Sodium as Na, mg/l	IS:3025(Part -45)-1993,RA 2014	1650.9	Not specified
13.	Potassium as K, mg/l	IS:3025(Part -45)-1993,RA 2014	195	Not specified
14.	Chloride as Cl, mg/l	IS:3025(Part -32)-1988,RA 2014	4260	< 250
15.	Sulphate as SO ₄ , mg/l	IS:3025(Part -24)-1986,RA 2014	460.8	< 200
16.	Nitrate as NO ₃ , mg/l	IS:3025(Part -34)-1988,RA 2014	322.4	< 45
17.	Fluoride as F, mg/l	APHA (23 rd Edn:2017)-4500-F D	2.90	< 1.0
18.	Total Silica as SiO ₂ , mg/l	APHA (23 rd Edn:2017)- 4500 SiO ₂ C	38.5	Not specified
19.	Iron as Fe, mg/l	APHA (23 rd Edn:2017)- 3500 Fe B	0.515	< 0.3
Note: 1. This report is valid for the tested sample(s) only. 2. Test report shall not be reproduced except in full & with written approval of VISTALABS. 3. This report should not be used for advertisement / judicial purpose. 4. Total Number Of Test(S) NINETEEN Only. 5. Lab will maintain unused portions of samples for 15 days after the report has been issued.		IS 10500: 2012 = Drinking water Specification ***** End of Report *****		
 Checked By		 Authorized Signatory		
VIS/LAB/F/047 # 4-9-6, Flat No. 103 & 104, Surya Towers, Adj. ANR Gardens, HMT Nagar, Nacharam, Hyderabad-500 076. Ph : 040-27173815, 42210081, E-mail : vistalabs@yahoo.co.in, vistalabs2004@gmail.com				

These test results echo what the people of Jawaharnagar have been saying all along, that they are being slowly poisoned, not just through the air they breathe but also through the water they drink and the soil they live on. This is not a sudden crisis, but a long, drawn-out erosion of health, dignity, and safety, one that has silently taken hold of their bodies, their homes, and their livelihoods.

Industrial Waste and Animal Waste

In addition to municipal solid waste, industrial waste from across Hyderabad is being brought to Jawaharnagar, as this is the only site where leachate treatment facilities exist. Similarly, animal waste is also being mixed with municipal waste and handled at the same site. Residents report that despite government claims of diverting animal waste, this is not happening in practice. During festival seasons, the situation worsens, with the increased presence of animal remains making the stench even more unbearable.

Ecological Destruction

The Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant and landfill have caused severe ecological degradation in the surrounding areas. Even stones and small rock particles in the vicinity have eroded to the point of crumbling upon touch, indicating the high levels of toxins in the area. The road leading out of the plant is covered in ash, and it is evident how much pollution has spread onto the roads, with everything coated in a thick layer of dust.



Residents report that just 10 m from the landfill lies an area that once had a green cover, resembling a small forest. They recall that this place was ecologically thriving until the establishment of the landfill. They also report how wildlife once flourished in the region.



Another alarming effect is on a nearby pond, which once served as a water source for wild animals. The locals report that leachate from the landfill has been flowing directly into this pond. Visible signs of oxidation can be seen on surrounding rocks.

Farming continues in the region, but the landfill's contaminated runoff has severely impacted agricultural activities. The catchment area near the landfill drains polluted water, raising serious concerns about groundwater contamination. Fearing the long-term effects of toxic exposure on crops and soil health, farmers have stopped using local groundwater for irrigation. Instead, they are forced to rely on alternative water sources, increasing costs and adding to their struggles. This contamination not only threatens their livelihoods but also raises concerns about food safety for consumers.

Residents also noted that the waste-to-energy plant operates primarily at night, when it releases visible smoke. During the day, operations are halted, suggesting an attempt to avoid scrutiny. This raises serious concerns about regulatory compliance and the deliberate concealment of pollution levels.

RESISTANCE BY THE RESIDENTS

The residents have made significant efforts to resist the environmental degradation caused by the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) plant and the dumping yard. They have engaged in numerous struggles, forming joint action committees to amplify their voices. These committees organised rallies, staged protests, and even shut the gates of the plant in a bid to draw attention to the issue. Despite their efforts, the government and political parties have been inconsistent in their response.

The community has also filed a complaint with the National Green Tribunal (NGT), Chennai Bench against the location of the dumping yard, demanding its relocation to a site far from residential areas where it would pose less of a threat to public health and the environment. The petition is still under review, and hearings on it are going on.

Ramky has been notoriously pulled up at multiple instances in the past at various geographical locations for fraudulent practices in the waste management sector including the World Bank³. They have also had been implicated in serious financial malpractices⁴.

³

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/engineering/world-bank-group-imposes-20-month-debarment-on-ramky-enviro-engineers/articleshow/88199505.cms?from=mdr>

⁴

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/ramky-group-faked-rs-1200-cr-loss-to-evade-tax-i-t-dept/articleshow/84281568.cms>

A CALL FOR JUSTICE

While the landfill has been a long-standing issue, its existence has caused immense harm to the surrounding communities, contributing to severe water contamination, health risks, and ecological destruction. However, the introduction of the WTE plant, presented as a solution to the landfill problem, has raised new concerns about air quality, the burning of large quantities of waste, and the release of toxic emissions that could potentially worsen the situation.

The community in Jawaharnagar, which has borne the brunt of this environmental degradation, is least responsible for the waste that is being dumped in their area. Marginalised communities, socially and economically disadvantaged, are disproportionately affected by this issue. These communities are pushed to the periphery to bear the burden of the waste they do not produce. This raises fundamental questions about equity in waste management practices. The responsibility for waste processing must shift to those who generate the most waste. Furthermore, companies that produce vast quantities of plastic and non-biodegradable packaging must be held accountable in the spirit of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). They cannot be allowed to externalise the costs of their profits onto marginalised communities and fragile ecosystems. True responsibility requires that producers take back, recycle, or safely dispose of the waste they generate, instead of allowing it to end up in landfills and incinerators that harm people and the planet. Bulk waste generators, including gated communities and large apartment complexes, should be required to manage their wet waste at the source through composting and other sustainable practices. Without such measures, the unchecked expansion of WTE plants will only replicate the crisis in Jawaharnagar across other locations.

In fact, the potential expansion of the WTE plant to handle even larger quantities of waste poses a significant risk of further environmental degradation. The emissions from this facility, along with the toxicity released, could have devastating consequences on both the health of the community and the surrounding environment. Therefore, the WTE plant should not be viewed as a simple solution to a complex problem but as a potentially hazardous continuation of the environmental injustices that the community has been subjected to for decades.

Jawaharnagar is not an isolated case. The state government's push for more WTE plants—including those planned at Dindigul (15 MW), Pyaranagar (15 MW), Yacharam (12 MW), and Bibinagar (11 MW)—signals the replication of these environmental and social injustices across the city, creating unlivable conditions for more communities.

Across the country, communities from Delhi, Ahmedabad and Chennai are raising their concerns against WTE Plants. Apart from Jawaharnagar, people from Narsapur Municipality too are protesting against the Pyaranagar proposed WTE plant cum waste processing facility in Telangana.

The affected communities from and around Jawaharnagar demand an **immediate halt to the WTE plant's operations** and a fundamental shift in waste management practices. They call for alternatives that do not rely on large-scale landfill sites or incineration, which disproportionately impact marginalised communities. Instead, decentralized waste management approaches such as dry waste collection centres, zero-waste initiatives, and local composting solutions should be explored.

The unchecked expansion of WTE plants is not just an environmental failure, it is a blatant act of environmental violence and perpetuation of structural violence against the marginalised communities. Instead of solving the waste crisis, these incinerators poison the air, contaminate water, and push vulnerable populations further into distress, all while masquerading as 'green solutions.' The government's reckless push for these toxic plants, without any regard for their long-term consequences, is deepening environmental and social injustice. Waste-to-energy is not a solution—it is a disaster. The only real path forward is a decentralised, community-driven approach that prioritises sustainability over corporate profiteering and human suffering.



Signatories:

1. **Swarna Gavvani**, Anti-Dumping Yard Joint Action Committee Jawaharnagar
2. **Kethupalli Padmachari**, Anti-Dumping Yard Joint Action Committee Jawaharnagar
3. **P. Shelesh Sandeep Raj**, President, Navodaya Welfare Society
4. **Rama Krishna**, President, CNR Colony Welfare Association
5. **Bandakindi Singariah Gowd**, Bahujana Satta
6. **Ruchith Asha Kamal**, Climate Front Hyderabad

7. **Anjaneyulu Madduluri**, Social Activist
8. **P. Shankar**, Dalit Bahujan Front
9. **R. Vivek**
10. **Arunya Jyothi**, The Voice of Earth
11. **Aparna**, Forum Against Economic and Environmental Injustice Towards
Marginalised Communities
12. **John Michael**, Forum Against Economic and Environmental Injustice Towards
Marginalised Communities

Dated 24th April 2025, Hyderabad