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Suthra Punjab Programme Hits Operational Snags

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The Suthra Punjab Programme, launched by the Punjab government to ensure uniform sanitation services across rural and urban areas, is grappling with operational hurdles, including resource shortages and inadequate infrastructure, according to The Express Tribune. These issues threaten the initiative's goal of a cleaner province.

Initiated in December 2024 by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Suthra Punjab Programme aims to revolutionize waste management through modern technology and outsourcing. The Express Tribune reported on May 16, 2025, that the programme, with an annual budget of Rs21 billion, has faced criticism in Dera Ghazi Khan Division for failing to deliver promised machinery and infrastructure. A private contractor, tasked with servicing 12 tehsils, has not provided essential equipment, leading to garbage being

dumped in open fields, exacerbating environmental concerns. Residents like Dr. Abbas Khan Barmani expressed frustration to The Express Tribune, noting that the Dera Ghazi Khan Waste Management Company lacks the authority to enforce contract compliance.

In Lahore, the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) struggles with manpower and technical shortages, despite collecting 4,500 to 5,500 tonnes of the 6,000 tonnes of daily municipal waste, as per a 2024 Urban Unit study cited by The Express Tribune. A government official, speaking anonymously, revealed that a composite plant at Lakhodair landfill, capable of recycling 500 to 800 tonnes daily, was shut down due to plans by the Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) to decommission the site. Another offer from a cement company to process 1,000 tonnes of waste into fertilizer was ignored, further hampering progress.

Punjab Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafique, in a July 2025 meeting reported by Business Recorder, acknowledged these challenges but emphasized ongoing efforts to improve waste collection, including twice-daily operations in commercial areas. The programme's second phase, launched in July 2025, focuses on recycling, with plans for a biogas-producing facility at Lakhodair and a recycling park near Lahore, potentially generating Rs1 billion annually through carbon credits, according to ProPakistani. Despite these ambitions, public dissatisfaction persists, with residents like Kamran from Allama Iqbal Town reporting inconsistent cleaning services.

The government's vision for a cleaner Punjab remains bold, but operational gaps must be addressed to restore public trust and achieve sustainable sanitation goals.