For 40-year-old S. Murugan, a worker at the Integrated Resource Recovery Centre (IRRC) in Matale, handling waste is nothing new. Matale’s waste has provided livelihoods for generations of people,” says Murugan whose father and grandfather both earned their living from scavenging for scrap metal to sell to local scrap shops. “Before, I had no security,” says Murugan. “When I used to work on the streets, people didn’t respect my work.”

Building on the success of the first centre, a second IRRC recently opened in Matale. The new centre was developed with funds from the National Pilisaru Programme and is now also operated by MEC. In the Matale municipality, MEC and waste workers like Murugan are demonstrating how, if managed properly, organic waste – which makes up a majority of the municipal waste in Asian cities – can be put back into the economy in the form of compost.

“When I wake up in the morning I didn’t know if I would earn enough to feed my family. Now I have a salary and own my own home. I’m very grateful for this opportunity,” says Murugan. “When I used to work on the streets, people didn’t respect my work.”

“IRRCs provide job security and elevate the value of waste collection.”

S. Murugan, Matale, Sri Lanka

For more information please contact ESCAP’s Sustainable Urban Development Section, e-mail: escap-eedd-suds@un.org

“Don’t let opportunity go to waste.
Promoting Integrated Resource Recovery Centres in Urban Asia.”

Photographs courtesy of UNESCAP

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