

Key Challenges in 2026

- **Infrastructure Saturation:** While many units have been established, their actual utilization is often hampered by **inadequate source segregation** and the high volume of low-value plastics, such as multi-layered packaging, which are difficult to process.
- **Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Gaps:** Many PWM units struggle with long-term O&M due to a lack of dedicated funding, technical expertise at the Gram Panchayat level, and unresolved land issues.
- **Informal Sector Integration:** Over 60% of recycling is handled by the informal sector, which remains largely unintegrated into formal PWM unit operations, leading to suboptimal practices and lack of social security for workers.
- **Economic Viability:** High costs for recycling versus the low cost of virgin plastic often make PWM unit operations financially unsustainable without external subsidies or strong [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#) support.

Forward Linkages & O&M Strategies

To ensure the sustainability of these units, the following pathways are being prioritized:

- **Waste-to-Wealth Linkages:** Units are being linked to end-users such as **road construction** agencies (using shredded plastic in bitumen) and cement kilns (using non-recyclable plastic as refuse-derived fuel).
- **Formalizing Partnerships:** Strengthening forward linkages by connecting PWM units directly with **registered recyclers** and Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs) to ensure a steady market for baled and shredded plastic.

Way Forward for 2026

1. **Results-Oriented Planning:** Shifting focus from "target-centric" building of units to a "results-oriented" approach that prioritizes functionality and effective utilization of assets.
2. **Mandatory Recycled Content:** Implementing regulations that require manufacturers to include a minimum percentage of recycled plastic in new products to boost demand for PWM unit outputs.
3. **Capacity Building:** Training front-line workers and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to manage PWM units as [viable micro-enterprises](#).