

## **A LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT APPROACH TO QUANTIFY THE EMISSION OF GREENHOUSE GASES THROUGH MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN CHATTOGRAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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Life cycle assessment (LCA) is a systematic and frequently applied tool to assess the environmental attributes of waste management options. The OpenLCA is a powerful LCA tool for scrutinizing performance and identifying environmental hotspots by appraising waste treatment options in any desired city. In this study, the current waste management options in Chattogram City Corporation have been evaluated by this software (OpenLCA version 2.0) to determine the most critical environmental impact. Being Bangladesh's second largest metropolitan city, the city generated a solid waste of 1069 tons/day, which is increasing day by day. Currently, the municipal solid waste management options for this city are the open dumping sites, which are situated in Ananda Bazar at Halishahar and Arefin Nagar at Pahartali. The OpenLCA analysis shows that, considering the eighteen prime environmental impact categories, climate change (Global Warming Potential) has grossed the highest with a total of 535 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>/day and a net amount of 195275 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. The other important categories that have been found too major for the environment are human toxicity, marine ecotoxicity, and freshwater ecotoxicity. Whereas water depletion, natural land transformation, and freshwater eutrophication impact categories have shown a minimal impact on the environment. This highlights the vital need for an efficient waste-handling system within urban areas, as open dumping sites are no longer a sustainable solution for a growing city like Chattogram. To ensure sustainability in waste management, such as open dumping, which is a current practice, it's imperative to enhance other existing waste management solutions, such as incineration or sanitary landfilling. This study shows that the rising global warming potential is deeply concerning for both the country and the world, highlighting the urgent need to improve waste management practices to protect the environment and public health.

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**Keywords:** *OpenLCA; Greenhouse Gas; Open Dump; Waste Management; Carbon Emissions*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid urban growth and shifting consumption patterns have led to a steady increase in municipal solid waste (MSW) around the world. The World Bank's (What a Waste 2.0) report notes that global waste generation was about 2.01 billion tons in 2016 and could reach roughly 3.40 billion tons by 2050. This projected rise underscores how urgently countries need stronger waste management strategies and more sustainable treatment options (Kaza et al., 2018). Waste mismanagement and open dumping directly affect greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, mostly methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), a significant source of global greenhouse gases and an important area to focus on for reducing emissions soon (IPCC (WGIII), 2022).

In South Asian countries, numerous challenges make waste management difficult, such as a large amount of waste being organic, limited and improper source separation, and most waste still being dumped into open dumps or unsanitary landfills (Idris et al., 2004; Siddiqua et al., 2022). Regional plans highlight the need to strengthen 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) strategies and increase investment in waste-management infrastructure to help cities move away from uncontrolled dumping (Hossain et al., 2024; Shumshunnahar, 2024). Analyses by the Asian Development Bank also show that better MSW systems are closely connected to achieving SDG 11.6, which aims to reduce the environmental impacts of urban areas (Jagath & Gamaralalage, 2020).

In Bangladesh, waste generation has been increasing progressively for many years. The "Bangladesh Waste Database 2021" shows that the urban waste generation rate is rising, and several major cities now generate more than 850 tons of waste per day (Waste Concern, 2021). Limited collection efficiency and poor waste separation continue to push many areas toward open dumping and burning (Roy et al., 2022).

Chattogram, is the second-largest city of Bangladesh which also has a major seaport, reflects these waste challenges sharply (Laurent et al., 2014). The Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) has been depending on two dumping sites, Anandabazar (Halisahar) and Arefin Nagar (Pahartali), both of which have a very low sanitary landfill standard (Alam et al., 2024). Both the Arefin Nagar (73 acres) and Halisahar (10 acres) sites have no leachate management system, so polluted liquid can easily spread and affect the environment (Ali Ashraf et al., 2015). Daily waste generation (2,500–3,000 t/day) far exceeds safe handling capacity, with most still ending up in unsanitary dumping sites.

Over the years, many researchers have turned to life cycle assessment (LCA) to get a clearer picture of how different waste-management systems perform in practice. LCA has been used to look beyond simple disposal and compare options like landfilling, composting, incineration, and recycling by weighing both their benefits and their trade-offs. These studies show how each method carries its own environmental footprint, and they help reveal whether a system remains sustainable as waste volumes grow and conditions change (Wu et al., 2015). LCA provides a way to assess the entire solid waste management pathway, from generation to final disposal, and identify the stages that produce the greatest environmental impacts.

LCA is a systematic method used to evaluate the environmental impacts of a product, process, or system throughout its entire life cycle, from resource extraction to final disposal (Klinglmair et al., 2014). Building on this approach, many studies have applied LCA to assess environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions in MSW (Gautam & Agrawal, 2021; Yadav & Samadder, 2018; Zhao et al., 2009). Paul et al. (2025) conducted an LCA of MSW management in Khulna City, using OpenLCA and the ReCiPe midpoint method. In their study, they modeled the environmental impacts associated with different end-of-life (EOL)

treatment scenarios for 1 ton/day of MSW, including open dumping, sanitary landfilling, and hybrid combinations.

This study examines the environmental impacts of the current MSW management system operated by the CCC using an LCA approach using OpenLCA software. The goal of this study is to understand how the existing system affects the environment, identify the main hotspots, especially those contributing to climate change, and determine which waste management processes create the greatest ecological burden.

Through this assessment, the study evaluates how the current waste system in Chattogram contributes to carbon emissions, identifies the stages that generate the highest carbon-related environmental burdens, and determines which components of the system pose the greatest overall climate risk. This approach makes it possible to systematically identify environmental hotspots throughout the entire waste management process, from household generation to final disposal, reflecting the real-world operations of the CCC.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Area

Chattogram, located in southeastern Bangladesh along the Bay of Bengal, is the country's largest seaport and its second-biggest city. Covering about 155 square kilometers, it now has a population of over five million people. As the city continues to grow, so does the amount of MSW, reaching roughly 1,069 tons each day (Alam et al., 2025). Most of this waste is taken to two major open dumping sites, Ananda Bazar in Haliashahar and Arefin Nagar in Pahartali, as shown in Fig. 1, where everything is disposed of together without any form of sorting. This approach has created significant environmental and public health challenges. The region's hot, humid weather and intense monsoon seasons worsen the situation by increasing both leachate generation and greenhouse gas releases from the unmanaged waste piles.

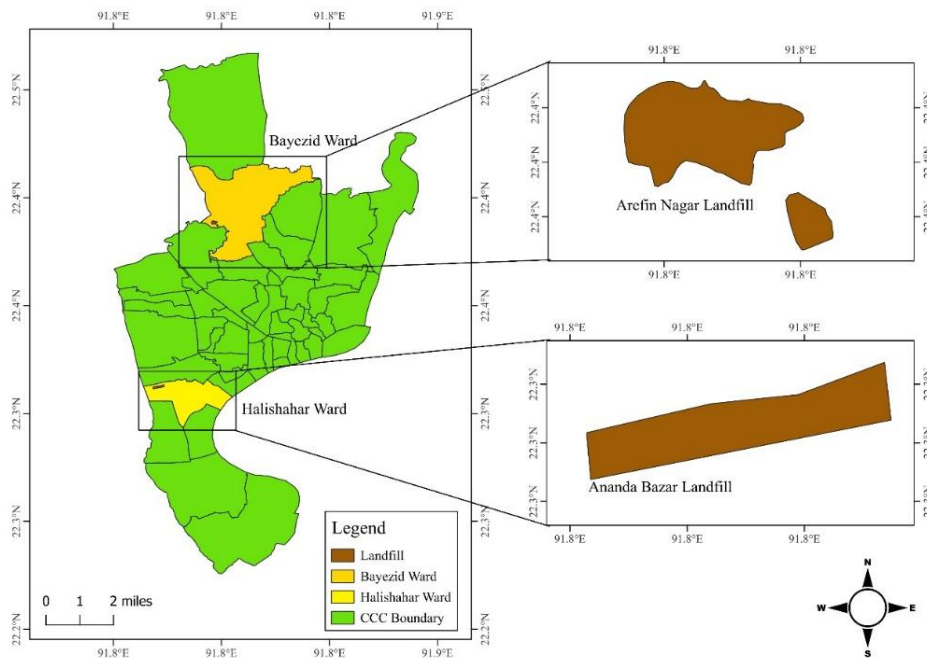


Fig. 1: Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) Landfill

## 2.2 Functional Unit

In this study, the functional unit was set as the total amount of MSW generated each day in CCC, 1,069 tons. This represents the city's average daily waste production and serves as the baseline for evaluating environmental impacts. The modeled waste stream reflects the reported composition of MSW in Chattogram, dominated by food waste (approximately 78%), followed by plastic (8%), paper (4%), fabric (3%), wood (2%), and other materials (5%), which were used to define material fractions entering the system (Alam et al., 2025). All inputs, emissions, and outputs within the system boundaries were calculated based on this amount. These composition shares were directly incorporated into the life cycle inventory through the background datasets rather than modeled as separate foreground processes.

## 2.3 System Boundary

In this study, the system boundary in Fig. 2 encompasses the waste generated at households through to final disposal at open dumping sites. The assessment includes household waste collection, transportation to temporary transfer points, and final hauling to the Ananda Bazar (Halishahar) and Arefin Nagar (Pahartali) dumping locations. Due to the absence of primary data on fuel consumption, transportation-related fuel use and emissions were estimated using a freight lorry with a load capacity of 3.5–7.5 metric tons compliant with the EURO 1 emission standard, based on the ecoinvent 3.8 cut-off regional datasets. Recycling, composting, and energy recovery processes were excluded from the system boundary, as these practices are not implemented at a meaningful scale within the current MSW management system of Chattogram. Additionally, the major emissions associated with this system are outlined in Fig. 2.

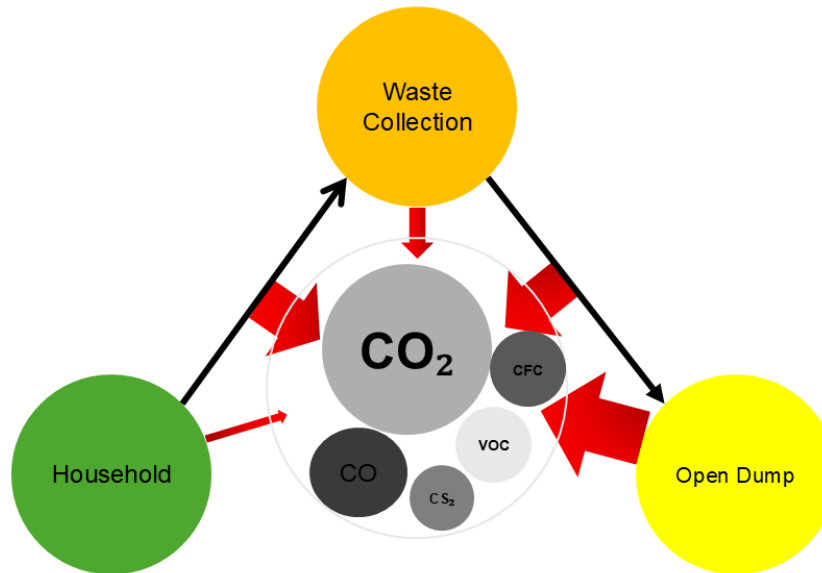


Fig. 2: Conceptual system boundary and major emission pathways for municipal solid waste management in Chattogram City

## 2.4 Impact Assessment Method

The environmental impacts of Chattogram's MSW management system were assessed using the midpoint approach in OpenLCA (version 2.0). Among the prime eighteen environmental impact factors, the carbon-related emission factors have been considered for this study to identify the carbon profile, which includes Climate Change, Ionizing Radiation, Photochemical Oxidant Formation, Particulate Matter Formation, and Ozone Depletion. To quantify these impacts, the ReCiPe Midpoint (H) methodology was used, which

provides factors to translate emissions and resource use into measurable environmental impact scores (Huijbregts et al., 2017). Data on waste collection, transportation, and disposal were modeled using the ecoinvent 3.8 cutoff region database, ensuring reliable and consistent life cycle inventory data (Wernet et al., 2016).

### 3. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The carbon-equivalent emission profile of the selected impact categories from the municipal solid waste management system in CCC is illustrated in Fig. 3. The results are expressed on a logarithmic scale to emphasize the relative magnitude of each environmental impact. The five major categories considered in this study include Climate Change (GWP100), Ionizing Radiation (IRP), Photochemical Oxidant Formation (POFP), Particulate Matter Formation (PMFP), and Ozone Depletion (ODP<sub>inf</sub>).

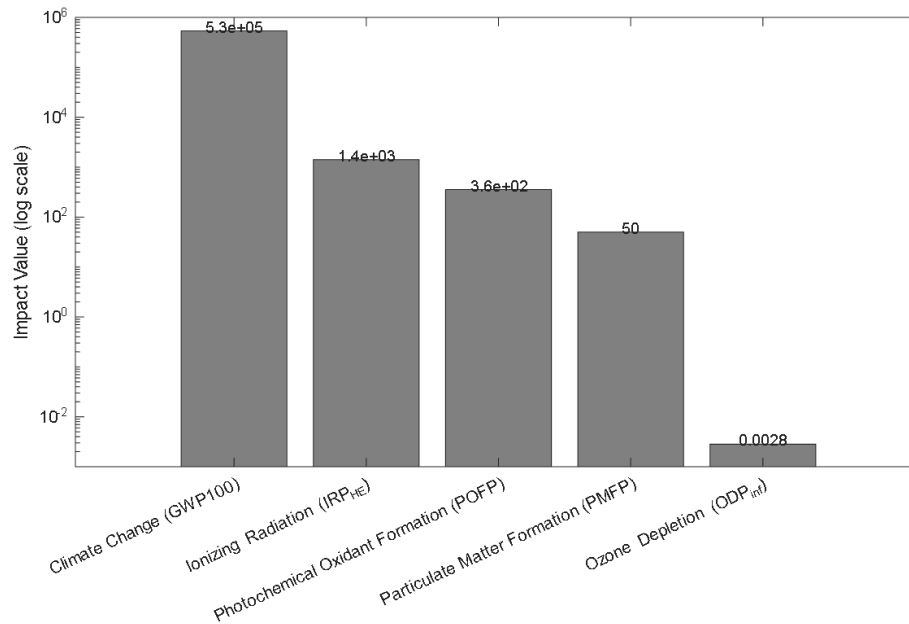


Fig. 3: Carbon-equivalent emission profile of impact categories (logarithmic scale)

#### 3.1 Climate Change (GWP100)

Climate change emerged as the dominant impact category in Fig. 3, with the highest equivalent emission of approximately  $5.3 \times 10^5$  kg CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per day, indicating that current waste management practices in Chattogram are strongly climate-intensive. This result is caused by open dumping and uncontrolled anaerobic degradation of organic waste, which generates substantial methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) emissions. Given methane's significantly higher global warming potential relative to CO<sub>2</sub>, even partial degradation under unmanaged landfill conditions leads to disproportionately high climate impacts.

Table 1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Existing MSW Management System in Chattogram

Metric	Emission Rate
Daily CO <sub>2</sub> -eq emissions	535-ton CO <sub>2</sub> -eq / day
Annual CO <sub>2</sub> -eq emissions	195,275-ton CO <sub>2</sub> -eq / year
Daily waste (functional unit)	1,069-ton waste/day
CO <sub>2</sub> -eq per ton of waste	0.500-ton CO <sub>2</sub> -eq / t waste ( $\approx 500.5$ kg CO <sub>2</sub> -eq/t)

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CO <sub>2</sub> -eq per person per year (pop = 5,000,000)	0.039-ton CO <sub>2</sub> -eq / person / year ( $\approx$ 39.1 kg)
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CO <sub>2</sub> -eq per person per day (pop = 5,000,000)	0.000107-ton CO <sub>2</sub> -eq / person / day ( $\approx$ 0.107 kg)
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Similar magnitudes and dominant contributions from methane emissions have been reported in LCA studies of MSW systems in Khulna and other South Asian cities, where open dumping and limited gas capture were identified as the main drivers of GWP (Paul et al., 2025; Khandelwal et al., 2019). The consistency of these findings suggests that the elevated GWP observed here reflects structural characteristics common to rapidly urbanizing cities with disposal-oriented waste systems. A detailed breakdown of daily, annual, per-ton, and per-capita carbon emissions is provided in Table 1, further illustrating the scale of climate burdens associated with the existing system.

### **3.2 Ionizing Radiation (IRP)**

Ionizing Radiation (IRP) ranked as the second-highest impact category in Fig. 3 with a value of around  $1.4 \times 10^3$  Bq Co-60-eq. This elevated contribution is mainly caused by upstream electricity generation embedded in transportation and waste handling processes, which are modeled using grid-based energy mixes dominated by non-renewable sources in the background datasets. The absence of energy recovery or controlled treatment means that all waste transport and handling burdens are directly borne by fossil-based electricity and fuel systems, amplifying indirect radiation-related emissions. Compared to particulate matter and photochemical oxidant formation, ionizing radiation remains higher because it captures cumulative upstream energy supply effects rather than direct emissions alone. These results indicate that reducing transport intensity or shifting toward cleaner energy sources could substantially lower IRP impacts, even without major changes in disposal practices.

### **3.3 Photochemical Oxidant Formation (POFP)**

Fig. 3 shows that photochemical oxidant formation (POFP) reaches approximately  $3.6 \times 10^2$  kg NMVOC-eq, making it one of the dominant atmospheric impact categories. This impact is primarily driven by VOC and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions from diesel fuel combustion during waste collection and long-distance transport to disposal sites. Given that Chattogram's MSW system relies heavily on road-based transport with limited emission controls, these precursors substantially contribute to ozone formation in the lower atmosphere. The elevated POFP values, therefore, reflect the transport-intensive nature of the current waste management system, which highlights crucial air quality deviation depending on fuel-oriented collection and disposal systems.

### **3.4 Particulate Matter Formation (PMFP)**

Fig. 3 indicates that particulate matter formation (PMFP) reaches approximately 50 kg PM<sub>10</sub>-eq, reflecting a substantial air-quality burden in this system. This impact is mainly driven by diesel exhaust emissions from waste collection and long-distance transportation, as well as uncontrolled waste burning at open dumping sites, both of which are known sources of fine particulate matter. Similar PMFP dominance has been reported in LCA studies of MSW systems, where fuel-intensive transport and open disposal practices were identified as the primary contributors to particulate emissions (Hamanaka & Mutlu, 2025). Fine particles released from these sources can significantly degrade air quality and pose serious health risks, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. The elevated PMFP observed in this study, therefore, underscores the strong linkage between disposal-oriented waste management, transport dependence, and urban air-pollution exposure in Chattogram.

### 3.5 Ozone Depletion (ODP<sub>inf</sub>)

Ozone Depletion (ODP<sub>inf</sub>) has the lowest observed impact among all the categories in Fig. 3, with an equivalent emission value of 0.0028 kg CFC-11-eq. Although the magnitude is minimal, this impact category is still environmentally significant. The release of halogenated compounds from certain waste materials and discarded appliances contributes to the breakdown of stratospheric ozone, which shields the Earth from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation (Breivik et al., 2004). Ozone layer thinning can lead to increased UV exposure, causing skin cancer, cataracts, and adverse effects on marine life.

### 3.6 Carbon-Based Elementary Flow Analysis

Fig. 4 presents the aggregated carbon-based emissions across all elementary flows reported in the life cycle inventory. A logarithmic scale was applied to account for large differences among flows, ranging from  $10^{-16}$  to  $10^0$  kg. Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dominate the profile, followed by biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> and non-fossil CO<sub>2</sub>. Carbon monoxide (both fossils and non-fossils) also contributes noticeably. Carbon disulfide and soil-bound organic carbon appear in trace quantities but remain relevant for toxicity-related impact categories.

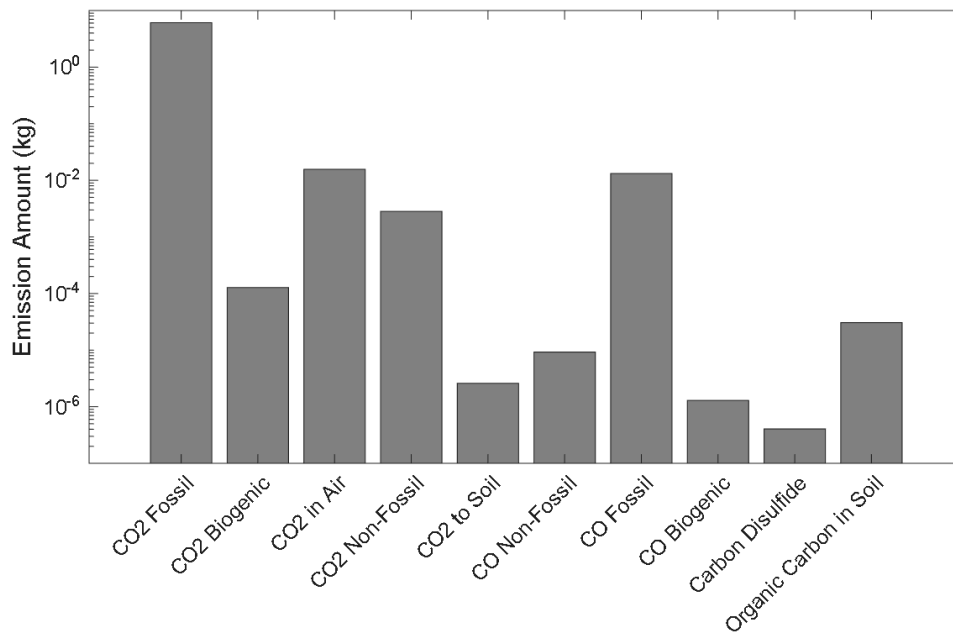


Fig. 4: Distribution of Carbon-Based Elementary Flows in the MSW System (Log Scale)

#### 3.6.1 CO<sub>2</sub> Fossil

Fossil carbon dioxide is the most dominant emission in the profile in Fig. 4. This mainly comes from fuel use during waste collection and transportation, as the trucks rely heavily on diesel. Emissions also arise indirectly from electricity use in system processes, when electricity is generated from fossil-based power sources. Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> is of particular concern because it directly contributes to climate change, adding long-lasting greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

#### 3.6.2 CO<sub>2</sub> Biogenic

Fig. 4 indicates that biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> is the second-largest carbon-related emission in the MSW system, mainly arising from the decomposition of organic waste such as food, yard waste, and paper at open dumping sites. In Chattogram, the high organic fraction of MSW combined with poorly controlled disposal conditions leads to substantial biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> release, reflecting inefficient recovery of biodegradable materials that could otherwise be composted. Similar dominance of biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> from unmanaged organic waste has

been reported and emphasizing the influence of disposal-oriented systems on carbon emissions (Wu et al., 2015).

### 3.6.3 CO<sub>2</sub> in Air

In Fig. 4, CO<sub>2</sub> in air represents one of the highest carbon-related flows, indicating substantial release of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere under open dumping conditions. Continuous exposure of waste to air promotes aerobic degradation of organic matter, resulting in sustained CO<sub>2</sub> emissions throughout the decomposition process. In contrast, other carbon flows shown in Fig. 4 contribute comparatively less, highlighting that atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> release dominates carbon exchange in the current system. The prominence of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air reflects the absence of waste covering, gas control, or biological stabilization in Chattogram’s disposal sites and is consistent with observations from unmanaged dumping systems reported in previous LCA studies (Friedrich et al., 2011).

### 3.6.4 CO<sub>2</sub> Non-Fossil

Non-fossil CO<sub>2</sub> comes from materials that are made from biomass but don’t break down as quickly as typical organic waste, as wood products or some types of paper composites. As these materials slowly decompose in dumpsites, they release carbon over a longer period, which still adds to the total CO<sub>2</sub> entering the atmosphere (Ximenes et al., 2018). The impact of this emission in Fig. 4 is also quite high compared to other categories, as these emissions fall somewhere between fossils and fully biogenic sources in their impact, but they still play a noticeable role in the overall greenhouse gas footprint of the system.

Table 2: Carbon-Based Elementary Flows in the MSW System of Chattogram

Carbon Flow Type	Description	Source Type
CO <sub>2</sub> , fossil	Emissions from fossil-based materials (plastics, synthetic textiles, etc.)	Fossil
CO <sub>2</sub> , from soil or biomass stock	Release due to decomposition of organic waste and soil respiration	Biogenic
CO <sub>2</sub> , non-fossil	Biogenic CO <sub>2</sub> from natural degradation and composting	Biogenic
CO, fossil	Residual gases are formed due to the incomplete burning of fossil-derived carbon	Fossil
CO, non-fossil	Byproduct of the incomplete degradation of organic waste	Biogenic

### 3.6.5 CO<sub>2</sub> to Soil

CO<sub>2</sub> to soil represents carbon retained in the soil matrix at dumping sites due to incomplete degradation or burial of organic waste. In Fig. 4, this flow shows a comparatively lower contribution than CO<sub>2</sub> to the air, indicating that most carbon is released to the atmosphere rather than being stabilized in soils under open dumping conditions. The limited magnitude of CO<sub>2</sub> storage reflects the unmanaged nature of dumpsites in Chattogram, where fluctuating moisture and temperature hinder long-term carbon sequestration and can later remobilize stored carbon. Similar low soil-carbon retention relative to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> release has been reported for unmanaged disposal systems in developing cities, underscoring the instability of soil carbon storage in open dumps (Ma et al., 2024).

### 3.6.6 CO Non-Fossil and CO Fossil

Both fossil-based and non-fossil carbon monoxide are present at noticeable levels in Fig. 4. CO is mainly produced when combustion is incomplete, like when waste is burned in the open or when vehicle engines

run inefficiently. This gas is harmful to human health because it reduces the body's ability to carry oxygen, and it also affects the atmosphere by influencing how long methane stays in the air (Wang et al., 2023). Even though the amounts are smaller than CO<sub>2</sub>, the presence of CO highlights potential air-quality issues around these waste-handling activities.

### **3.6.7 CO Biogenic**

Biogenic CO is formed when organic waste breaks down in areas with little or no oxygen, which usually happens in tightly packed waste piles. Even though the amounts are small compared to other categories in Fig. 4, the presence of this CO shows that there are anaerobic spots in the dump conditions that can later lead to methane production, a much more potent greenhouse gas (Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology, 2023).

### **3.6.8 Carbon Disulfide**

Carbon disulfide shows up only in tiny amounts, but it's still important because of its toxicity in Fig. 4. It can come from industrial residues that end up in household waste or from chemical reactions as the waste breaks down. Even in these small quantities, carbon disulfide is hazardous and can have harmful effects on the environment (Chen et al., 2025).

### **3.6.9 Organic Carbon in Soil**

This refers to organic carbon that gets stored in the soil instead of being released immediately as a gas. While soil carbon can help with long-term carbon storage, open dumping sites are unpredictable, so much of this carbon could eventually be released back into the atmosphere (Wang et al., 2013). Its presence shows that some organic matter is partially buried and hasn't fully decomposed within the dumpsite, which is illustrated in Fig. 4.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study clearly shows that Chattogram's current MSW system is contributing heavily to carbon emissions and related environmental pressures. Using OpenLCA to assess the city's daily waste load of about 1,069 tons, it becomes evident that fossil CO<sub>2</sub> is the dominant carbon output. This results in a large presence of plastics and other petroleum-based products in the waste stream. Substantial releases of biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> also occur as organic material decomposes in the open dumping sites. Smaller emissions of carbon monoxide, carbon disulfide, and soil-stored organic carbon further reveal the complex mix of breakdown processes happening within the unmanaged waste piles. When these emissions are translated into environmental impact categories, the picture becomes even more concerning. Climate change stands out as the most critical category, reaching roughly 535 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per day, around 195,000 tons annually. This aligns with the strong fossil-carbon presence found in the emissions analysis. Several other categories, including ionizing radiation, photochemical ozone formation, and particulate matter formation, also show notable impacts, illustrating that the consequences extend well beyond global warming alone. Although ozone depletion is comparatively small, its presence still indicates that trace compounds from unmanaged waste are escaping into the atmosphere. Overall, the findings reinforce that open dumping cannot contain or reduce emissions. Chattogram's humid tropical conditions, continuous decomposition of organic waste, and the absence of gas collection or treatment systems allow carbon to escape freely into the air. This study not only quantifies the city's substantial carbon footprint but also sheds light on how carbon moves through the system from plastics, from decaying organic matter, from soil pathways, and ultimately into the atmosphere. These insights underscore the urgent need for Chattogram to shift toward more sustainable waste management strategies, such as sanitary landfills with gas capture, composting for organics, or controlled thermal treatment. Without meaningful intervention, waste-related emissions will

continue rising alongside population growth and increasing waste generation, placing greater strain on both local air quality and the broader climate.

### **UNCERTAINTY AND LIMITATIONS**

The results of this study are subject to uncertainty due to data limitations and modeling assumptions. Inventory data were primarily derived from secondary sources and generic datasets, which may not fully capture local variability in waste composition, transportation efficiency, and landfill operating conditions. Landfill emissions were modeled assuming average performance, whereas actual conditions in Chittagong may vary spatially and seasonally. As no formal uncertainty analysis was conducted, the results should be interpreted as relative comparisons between scenarios rather than absolute values; however, the consistent modeling framework ensures robust comparison of scenario trends.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE**

Future research can be done to build a more refined carbon flow model, which can differentiate emissions by waste type, seasonal variation, moisture content, etc. This would help identify which fractions of the waste stream contribute most to overall emissions.

### **AI DECLARATION**

The author declares that generative AI tools were used only for language editing and improving clarity and readability. All research design, data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions were developed and approved by the author without the use of AI, and the author takes full responsibility for the work's accuracy and integrity.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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