

The Perceived Role of Communities and Government Officials in Solid Waste Management in Ghana, West Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of community members and government officials in sustainable solid waste management and identified options to improve waste management in Ghana. Mixed-methods approach was used in research design, data collection, and analysis. Data was collected from 81 community members drawn from three areas (Kanda, Asylum Down, and Nima) in the Accra Metropolitan Area and four government officials. Data sets were analyzed using manual transcription, coding, and Microsoft Excel. The study revealed that communities are actively involved in managing waste. However, education and enforcement measures have not been effective due to political interference and a lack of resources. Furthermore, the study found that greater support from local government and stakeholders is needed in managing waste. The study recommends educating community members and integrating waste pickers into Ghana's waste management stream to reduce the costs involved in SSWM and gain social and environmental benefits.

KEYWORDS

Africa, Community Participation, Local Governments, Solid Waste Management, Stakeholders, Sustainable Solid Waste Management

INTRODUCTION

Solid waste management (SWM) is a global concern, particularly because rapid urbanization is greatly concentrating the amount of waste generated. When improperly managed, this waste can harm both people and the environment. World cities generate about 1.3 billion tons of solid waste per year, and this volume is likely to increase to 2.2 billion tons by 2025 (Bhada-Tata & Hoornweg, 2012). Studies indicate that growth in population and escalated material consumption in developing countries has greatly increased their waste production (Bhada-Tata & Hoornweg, 2012; Moh & Abd Manaf, 2014). Therefore, improving SWM in developing countries is an urgent priority. Not only can higher volumes of waste have negative impacts on health, but it also requires more money for waste management, thus impacting national and regional economies.

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Ghana exemplifies many of the potential crises related to SWM. In recent decades, Ghana's population has grown rapidly, and demographic characteristics indicate that this will continue. Nearly 40% of the population is under the age of 15, thus the nation's population is projected to grow from 30.4 million in 2019 to 51.3 million in 2050 (World Bank, 2019; United Nations, 2017). With each additional person, the amount of waste increases and underscores the need for informed stakeholders to be actively engaged in SWM.

Indeed, the government of Ghana has programs in place for sustainable waste management and these programs are supposed to be implemented and supervised in each community by the relevant local government entities (i.e., metropolitan and municipal Assemblies). These programs were established to minimize the trash that lingers on the street and communities in Accra, Ghana. However, in many locations there has been no improvement despite the programs (National Report for Waste Management in Ghana, 2010). In fact, the challenge of waste management continues and has exacerbated flooding due to choked gutters as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Choked gutter in Asylum Down (Photographed: X, Y 2019)



Figure 2. Indiscriminate dumping on the streets of Accra, Makola market (Photographed, 2019)



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