

Chapter 9

Status of Solid Waste Management in Myanmar: Key Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Myanmar, the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia, has been facing considerable challenges with the management of solid waste in the recent past because of increasing income and consumption patterns, urban growth, and lack of effective waste management policies, treatment, and disposal methods. Waste management is also a crosscutting issue that touches on many aspects of social and economic development, and as such is widely associated with a range of global challenges including public health, climate change, poverty reduction, food security, resource efficiency, and sustainable production and consumption. This country chapter therefore presents an overview of the current waste management in Myanmar, discusses key challenges and opportunities, and identifies some policy recommendations towards its improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Extending 677,000 sq. km (km²), Myanmar is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia based on land area. Strategically located between China and India (See Figure 1), Myanmar's wealth of natural resources, abundant labour force and fast-growing consumer market signal that the country is positioned to become the region's next "Asian giant". Myanmar's estimated population was 51.48 million in 2014 (Ministry of Labour Immigration and Population, 2015). More recent figures indicate that the population grew to 54 million in 2018, having increased by 0.71 percent annually, and may reach as high as 65 million by 2050 based on current birth rate trends (UNFPA Myanmar, 2017). A heterogeneous population made up of diverse ethnic groups speaking over 100 languages and dialects, one-third of Myanmar's inhabitants reside in cities; the remaining 70 percent are located in rural areas and remain largely dependent on subsistence farming (UNDP, 2019).

Myanmar is subdivided into one union territory (Nay Pyi Taw), seven states (Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan) and seven regions (Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi, and Yangon) for administrative purposes. Myanmar's smallest administrative unit is designated as a village. Several villages grouped together are classified as a township, of which the lowest division of government is generally stationed; as such, townships carry out many key public functions including birth and land registration, tax collection as well as the provision of some public services such as waste management. Clusters of several townships are organised into districts, which in turn form the

Figure 1. A location of Myanmar in the context of southeast Asia



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