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*The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Enhancing Local Government
Service Delivery
The Case of Solid Waste Management (SWM) in Nairobi, Kenya*

By A. Karanja and R. Okoth

Background

Low levels of collection, inadequate coverage, and inappropriate disposal practices including indiscriminate dumping and open burning typify the solid waste management situation in Nairobi, Kenya. Only a small fraction of the ever-growing amount of solid waste generated in the city is collected and appropriately disposed. The rest is left lying in open spaces, markets, bus stops, drains and roadsides forming huge foul-smelling and unsightly mountains that can be observed in almost all parts of the city with implications on environmental health, including public health. Moreover, a high proportion of the waste collected is disposed in undesignated waste disposal sites, including roadsides, drains and other public utility areas. The local authority in charge of the solid waste management has also not been able to operate and maintain an adequate and equitable level of waste management services to its population of 2.14 million people. The least served are the low-income areas particularly informal settlements or slums where a disproportionately high proportion of approximately 60-70% of the city's population resides. A large proportion of the population therefore does not have regular garbage collection services from the municipality. This has created room for non-municipal or non-public actors in the form of partnerships to engage themselves in various activities related to SWM, including the collection, transportation and disposal, as well as recovery, re-use and recycling of waste materials. Most of these partnerships, however, are not officially recognised. Their activities are unregulated and the socio-economic, environmental and public health impacts of these activities are unknown. This is because in Nairobi, the municipality's legislative and

regulatory systems as well as the instruments for service delivery are focused on traditional or conventional public health objectives rather than on integrated solid waste management and sustainable development. This means that the existing regulatory and institutional framework is not oriented to the environmental aspects of SWM such as waste reduction, source separation, recovery and recycling.

The Research Problem

Given the fact that non-municipal partnerships have now become critical players in SWM in Nairobi in recent years, this study examined the role that formal and informal partnerships between the public and private sectors played in improving local government service delivery and poverty reduction in Kenya. The study investigated contributions made by various actors and institutional arrangements engaged in differentiated domains of urban solid waste management to improve service delivery and the living and working conditions of residents, including the people directly involved in solid waste management. Central to the study was therefore the need to investigate the extent of collaborative action between actors and the extent to which these bring about efficiency, effectiveness and equity in service delivery and in the generation of socio-economic benefits. The impact of the governing institutions, i.e. formal and informal rules and regulations, on these activities was also examined.

These Policy Briefs are a product of the MDP multi country research project, which was funded by the Government of the Netherlands and coordinated by the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa. They are intended to inform, contribute and provoke dialogue on strategies for enhancing local government capacity for effective service delivery and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. The views expressed here are those of the researchers and should not be attributed to the MDP secretariat.



Research objectives

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the role of public-private partnerships in improving local government service delivery and in reducing poverty in Kenya, but with special reference to the city of Nairobi. The more specific objectives included the following:

- To investigate the role, potential or actual, that formal and informal partnerships in solid waste management play in the improvement of service delivery as well as poverty reduction; and
- To investigate impacts of the governing institutions, that is formal and informal rules and regulations on the activities of the formal and informal partnerships involved in solid waste management in Nairobi.

Research Methodology

The study utilized the case study based participatory action research techniques to collect data on the numerous actors. The views of the stakeholders on the usefulness and possible ways of nurturing partnerships in service provision and delivery in the city were captured through this way. The survey method using structured, semi- and unstructured interviews served as the main medium of primary data collection. Other methods included focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The review of existing literature was carried out throughout the study period in order to obtain information on the contemporary debates on waste management, including resource recovery and recycling and as a source of basic data on solid waste management policies and solid waste management practices in the country. The study also made use of media reports as well as photography. Most of the formal and informal partnership categories studied were sampled purposively. The process of sampling was aided greatly by the consultative workshop held in Nairobi a few months into the study. This workshop proved valuable in expanding on the list of stakeholders and accessing data sources and also in cross checking the data collected prior to the workshop and linkages between actors.

Research Findings

- There exists in the SWM domain in the city, both public and non-public actors engaged in the collection, transportation and disposal of SW as well as the recovery, re-use and recycling. The latter exist and operate extra-legally.
- The actors and their activities are organised differently according to type of activity and are governed in their operations by both formal and informal rules and regulations.
- Their relationships with the public sector are only informal with the exception of the formal contract between the local authority and a private firm for the collection and disposal of SW and street cleansing in the central business district.
- Currently, these public and non-public actors and partnerships contribute only modestly to SWM and sustainable development
- The potential for partnerships and the enhancement of their contributions to solid waste management exists but requires the creation of an enabling environment. This should entail the official recognition and expansion of the regulatory and legislative policy framework to encompass more fully the private sector in collection and disposal as well as the recovery, trade and recycling sectors

Recommendations

- Both the legislative and regulatory systems as well as the instruments for service delivery are focused on traditional or conventional public health objectives rather than integrated solid waste management and sustainable development and do not pay attention to environmental aspects related SWM e.g. waste reduction, source separation, recovery and recycling. It is therefore recommended that the legal framework be reformed so that it can start to facilitate rather than hinder the activities of

the new players emerging in the solid waste management arena in Nairobi.

- It is recommended that central government start to coordinate with other relevant bodies in drafting policies to facilitate more effective involvement of the private sector in the city's solid waste management arrangements given the fact that official policies are now increasingly acknowledging the potential of the private sector.
- Improved feasibility and viability of partnerships in Nairobi will depend to a large extent on the creation of more enabling legal and regulatory framework. It is therefore recommended that the responsible authorities should come up with a clear demarcation of roles especially that of the public sector as overall regulator of the activities of the numerous private actors
- It is apparent that the conditions necessary for partnerships to form and thrive do not exist in the case of Nairobi. The absence of clear decentralisation policies for instance not only affects the administrative and management capacity of municipalities but their financial base and management, and thus capacity to attract and sustain partnerships. Therefore in order for sustainable partnerships to emerge a clear decentralization framework must be put in place as a matter of urgency in Kenya.

About MDP

The Municipal Development Partnership for Sub-Saharan Africa was launched in 1991 as a multi year partnership between municipal governments and associated institutions and bilateral and multilateral donors. The Partnership was designed to be an alternative model of development assistance, operating regionally and nationally, dedicated to building local institutional effectiveness in Sub Saharan Africa. The Partnership is organised in two units both of which share the same objectives and methodologies. The Eastern and Southern Africa unit covers 25 countries and is based in Harare Zimbabwe. The Western and Central Africa Unit covers 22 countries and is based in Cotonou Benin

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