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SWM in Kitwe: Building capacity for private participation

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LIKE MOST MUNICIPALITIES in the developing world, Kitwe City Council (KCC) in the Copperbelt Region of Zambia has over the past 2 decades become increasingly unable to provide refuse collection services, resulting in accumulation of waste on open land, in drains and in the residential areas, posing a serious health risk to the residents of the city. By 1999, the KCC was only able to collect about 10% of waste generated mainly from the Central Business District (CBD) and some strategic places like the main market in town and the general hospital. Recognizing both the inability of the KCC to deal with this problem, but more so the business potential of solid waste management, a number of private entrepreneurs have formed companies to collect refuse in the city. Impetus was given to this initiative by a Dutch funded project, the "Support to the Implementation of Habitat National Plans of Action (SINPA)-Zambia", which attempted to assist KCC better manage their solid waste by engaging the local University (Copperbelt University – CBU) to build the KCC's capacity to work in partnership with the private companies.

This article shares the experiences under this initiative. Among others, the paper identifies the hostile policy environment as one of the major challenges that local authorities have to deal with in Zambia. Increasingly unfriendly government policies over the last decade have placed a heavy burden on councils leaving them unable to offer any meaningful service as they have neither the financial nor human resources to do that.

The main strategy used under SINPA to foster stakeholder participation was the creation of a Task Force for SWM based at the KCC whose membership comprised various stakeholders from the city. It identified the CBD as an area where private sector participation could be easily achieved. Thus, the CBD was used as a pilot to test private sector participation. The major achievement of the initiative was that it created considerable awareness in the city on the potential that exists in dealing with the problem of SWM through the creation of partnerships. The problem is no longer seen as a local authority problem but one whose solution lies with all the citizens of the city. The attitude of the KCC also changed from one of defeatism to one of optimism in the opportunities that partnerships afforded them in dealing not only with the problem of SWM but also in the provision of other services. Some of the key lessons from the project were: (1) The need to do more work on

institutional development to change the attitude of the council so that they move their focus from service provision to that of oversight and monitoring; (2) The importance of complimenting capacity building activities with advocacy efforts to improve the policy environment in order to have sustainable capacity development, and (3) The need to give serious consideration to providing incentives to members of Task Forces to encourage their participation.

Privatisation of SWM: A Global Trend

In many countries authorities charged with the task of managing solid waste have become increasingly unable to cope. At the same time, most public solid waste agencies have not only recognised and accepted their incapacity, but are also moving towards a position that extends responsibility for solid waste management beyond themselves to other stakeholders. Privatisation and community participation have therefore emerged as key concepts in the solid waste sector (See for instance Cointreau 1994 and Mansoor et al 1999). The role of the local authority then is anticipated to change to that of being supervisory to make sure that all regulations are complied with and the environment is kept clean.

SWM in the City of Kitwe

The Local Government Framework in Zambia: The local government Act No. 22 of 1991 is the main statutory instrument that regulates the functions of local authorities and gives them responsibility for refuse collection. The Act places a lot of restrictions on what the local authorities can do. For instance it does not permit them to raise revenue without seeking approval from the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MoLGH). This has seriously constrained the councils' capacity to raise revenue and coupled with negative government policies¹ since 1991 has resulted in a severe drop in the quality of municipal services provided by councils.

SWM in the City of Kitwe: Kitwe is the third largest city in Zambia located in the north-western part of the country in the heart of the industrial core of the Republic of Zambia, the Copperbelt Province and covers an area of approximately 341Km². The city evolved from the late 1920s as a copper mining town and currently has a population of just over 388,000. The SWM problem in Kitwe is summed up in Table 1.0 below. A study, conducted on SWM in Kitwe, concluded that only 10% of the SW was being properly

disposed of by the KCC (Kazimbaya-Senkwe et al 1999). This problem has a very visible manifestation from heaps of garbage evident as one enters the city, which leads to blockage of drains, posing general health hazards.

Problem	Description
Weak Institutional and Administrative Structures	KCC has no financial, institutional or technical capacity; The MoLGH has no policy on SWM. The Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ) ² has inadequate capacity: lacks qualified staff; has no dedicated environmental management section. Crucially it has failed to enforce SWM legislation
Lack of coordination between the KCC and activities other stakeholders in solid waste services	Private companies and some CBOs and NGOs were getting involved in SWM without the involvement of the council

The New SWM Initiative in the City of Kitwe

The SINPA-Zambia Project: It is in this context that the SINPA project attempted to build capacity within the KCC for SWM. The SINPA project was born out of the Istanbul UN-HABITAT conference in 1996 and was meant to provide support to selected governments in the implementation of their National Plans of Action. It was funded by the Dutch government and was piloted in the City of Kitwe and worked with the KCC. The SINPA project was aimed at capacity development and thus it was housed at the Copperbelt University (CBU). This was also meant to develop capacity in the university to respond to future needs of councils. SWM was selected by city stakeholders as one of the 3 priority areas in which the KCC needed capacity development.

Activities Undertaken under SINPA: The project appointed consultants who produced a report that established the state of affairs of the city in terms of SW. One of its key recommendations was that the KCC should adopt a participatory approach and should encourage participation of communities and the private sector in SWM. The main strategy used under the initiative was the establishment of a Task Force in December 1999 based at the KCC. It drew its membership from different stakeholders in the city and it decided to pilot the participation of the private sector in the CBD since some private contractors were already involved in this area³. The CBD also houses the main market of the city

(Chisokone) which generates a huge amount of waste. Some of the main activities undertaken by the task force were:

1. The KCC registered all private contractors (PCs) already involved in waste collection. In total 9 companies of various sizes and capacities were registered.
2. A training workshop was held by SINPA in January 2000 for KCC officers, councillors and PCs.
3. The Task force used the local community radio station to raise awareness.
4. In February 2000, the KCC created a database for all businesses in the CBD and in March 2000 these had a meeting with the Mayor and Town Clerk on the new SWM initiative.
5. 4 PCs were selected (at this moment without any formal contract) to go ahead and provide the service in the CBD. Selection criteria included the capacity and expertise of the concerned companies in solid waste collection and their registration with the Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ)⁴.
6. In May 2000, by-laws and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) regarding SW collection were passed by the taskforce and sent to the full council for approval.
7. In June 2000 SINPA initiated a survey to assess how many business houses were registered with the private companies to check whether the initiative was working.
8. SINPA further decided to conduct a training need assessment among council staff involved in SWM and produced a training manual to be used by both council staff and CBU. It also conducted a SW generation study for the city.

What have been the main achievements of the SWM initiative?

Before the initiative, although the problem of the SWM was recognised⁵ by most stakeholders as being very serious, they also regarded it as a problem of the KCC. Through the various activities under the initiative the stakeholders have been made to realize that they too have a role to play in the improvement of SWM in the city. The KCC also recognized the important role that the public and private sector institutions can play in dealing with the problem of SWM. There now exists in the City a wide array of institutions doing various types of work in SWM who are working with and being encouraged by the KCC. The activities of the SINPA project has also attracted the UN HABITAT who will work with the KCC and CBU in SWM under the Sustainable Kitwe Project (SKP). The second main achievement of the initiative was that the management of the KCC also became aware of immense possibilities in the

¹ Since 1991 the government has stopped giving grants to councils; forced them to sell houses cheaply; given wholesale exemptions to institutions from paying rates; withdrawn sale of road licenses from councils and forcibly retired very experienced staff.

² The ECZ is a statutory body charged with the responsibility over environmental issues in the country

³ The CBD was chosen as it was considered that it would be relatively easy to collect charges by private firms and also because it would require less effort and resources from the KCC. This was thus going to be a flagship SWM project for the city to encourage private sector participation.

⁴ It is a requirement under the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Act (EPPCA) for companies to be registered by ECZ for collection and transportation of solid waste.

use of participatory decision-making and creation of partnerships. These are methods that they are using in dealing with other problems in the city such as the problem of revenue collection in markets and bus stations. Of particular note was the arrangement that developed between the market committee of Chisokone and the PCs. The market committee went into partnership with a PC who collected SW and was paid by the market committee with the KCC playing an oversight role to make sure both parties fulfilled their roles and the market was kept clean. This arrangement is now virtually self sustaining.

Major problems in the process of implementing the initiative

The first problem was that the KCC was unable to change its role from that of collection of the SW to that of regulation and oversight except for the Chisokone market. The management of the KCC exhibited a lot of inertia and as a result failed to take some crucial steps that would underpin the initiative such as having the MOUs and by-Laws approved by the full council and the full implementing of the framework for private sector participation in SWM earlier agreed with SINPA. This is because the KCC like other councils in the country is staffed by personnel who are either de-motivated or lacking in skills due to reasons given above. The KCC did not fully embrace the participatory approach and largely continued with the traditional top-down approach until towards the very end of the SINPA project. The second problem was that, the strategy of using a Task force had problems in that the members were expected to volunteer their time. As a result it was not always possible to have meetings. This affected the pace at which the initiative was implemented. The third problem was that there was resistance from most businesses (clients) to switch over to the new system insisting that they were already paying the KCC for SWM. This was a sign that the KCC had not done sufficient sensitization and consensus building to win over those who were likely to resist the change.

What are the lessons for the future?

Use of the strategy of a Task force: It was wrong to work on the assumption that members would volunteer their time and it became clear towards the end that consideration should have been given to the provision of some form of incentive to members of the task force.

Capacity and attitude of KCC management: This should have been one of the main issues that the project dealt with from the beginning. The initiative concentrated on getting the task force to work and the new SWM system to be set up and neglected to directly develop the capacity of the KCC, change their defeatist attitude and deal with their inertia. This, in the end, made it difficult for some very important decisions to be implemented. It also meant that the KCC failed to change their role to that of supervision and oversight defeating the purpose of the initiative. Proper sensitization and early involvement of the potential clients should have also been properly done so that they did not resist moving over to the new system.

Advocacy: One of the key lessons from this project was that in pursuing improvements in the performance of a local authority it is important that the local government environment is seriously considered. A key reason why it was very difficult to get any significant improvement in the SW collection in the city was the very debilitating environment as a result of very negative government policies which have left the local government sector virtually paralysed.

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⁵ A survey of the citizens of Kitwe conducted in 1998 by one of the authors showed that they regarded SW as one of the major problems the city was facing.