



Collaborative Working Group
on Solid Waste Management in Low-
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**Capacity development and
advocacy for improved solid waste
and resource management**

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#14 ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF A RESOURCE RECOVERY PROJECT, KAMPALA UGANDA.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Advocacy, communication and capacity development

The roles of advocacy, communication and capacity development are becoming increasingly valued in solid waste management as a means of achieving higher standards through social mobilisation. This paper illustrates how advocacy, capacity development and effective communication can initiate and support better waste solid management practices at a community level. The paper does not guarantee that the experience shared here will automatically work in other communities in improving solid waste management, since many local factors are involved. However, it provides an example of how a community mapped out the most effective advocacy, capacity development and communication strategies to suit their own circumstances.

Advocacy and communication activities need some form of media or channel of communication (McKee, 1992), such as mass media, community media, and interpersonal communication. While much of the communication effort on solid waste management is concerned with transmitting a series of messages to people affected by the problem of waste, it should be stressed that, to be effective, communication should be understood as a two-way process, with “participation” and “dialogue” as key elements. Programme communication, advocacy, and capacity development originate from effective communication.

Programme communication is concerned with informing, and creating awareness among, the general public or particular communities about solid waste management challenges, and empowering them to take action. Programme communication also works to create an environment through which communities – particularly affected communities – can discuss, debate, organize, and communicate their own perspectives about the problem. It is aimed at changing behaviour and catalyzing social change.

It should be noted that any advocacy, capacity development and communication strategy

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designed to confront solid waste management challenges should be focused on changes in both corporate and individual behaviour. Action by a community is needed to overcome most waste management problems.

1.2 Description of the project /activity

The project was conducted in Kifumbira Zone, a Kampala suburb with a population density of 500-600 people/km². The area is a slum and most of the residents have low incomes. The main economic activity in the area is petty trade with most of the people trading in fresh food and agricultural produce. Others run retail shops, in which basic items such as sugar, salt, and flour are sold. The population is also characterized by low educational levels with most of the youths are unemployed. The area is governed under one political administrative unit, the Local Council 1². The Local Council 1 is responsible for the implementation of all government policies at zone level.

The project aimed to develop the capacity of members of the community to manage their solid waste sustainably. The specific objectives included:

- ♦ to sensitize the community members on sustainable solid waste management practices,
- ♦ to train and sensitize community leaders (Local Council 1 officials) to support the solid waste management practices in Kifumbira zone, and
- ♦ to train local council officials to get involved in a media advocacy campaign.

By the end of the project, members of the community had learnt sustainable practices like waste minimization, sorting of waste, recycling, waste segregation, and the differences between various types of solid waste. As a result the community supported a resource recovery project concerned with turning waste into charcoal briquettes and implemented by *Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda* (PROBICOU)³. The activity thus increased the capacity of the community to manage its waste.

2 Methods used in advocacy, communication and capacity development

Communication, mobilization and motivation mechanisms were implemented at the community level by networks of community facilitators, task force members⁴, and local authorities, all supported by the use of appropriate local mass media.

2 In Uganda's local government system, in rural areas each village is administered by a Local Council 1, and in an urban setting, the equivalent of a village is a zone.

3 A non governmental not-for-profit organization that was implementing the project. PROBICOU's aim is to create a safe and healthy environment for human beings to live in. The membership of the organization is open to adults of 18 years of age and above, who share similar objectives. Membership is open to both individuals and organizations.

4 Members of a task force were selected from each subzone –to form one group (taskforce) to champion the struggle for the whole zone.

2.1 Media used for advocacy and sensitization

2.1.1 Newspaper articles

News paper articles were published in both local and national newspapers. The articles were mainly exposing the solid waste management status of Kampala city and dangers arising from the mismanagement of solid waste, as well as describing means of turning waste into a resource and the role of community leaders and individuals in overcoming the problem of solid waste. Some news articles were circulated in local news flyers and magazines such as “Kawempe news”⁵. The aim was to expose the problems so that waste management would be included on the development agenda for Kampala city.

2.1.2 Radio and television talk shows

Media advocacy included the use of television and radio. Live phone-in talk shows were conducted. The project team would ask for air time on television and radio especially during the times designated for environmental education and sanitation programmes. In all, five radio talk shows and three TV talk shows were broadcast by various radio and TV stations. Each radio talk show lasted for one hour, whereas each TV talk show was 30 minutes long. Some of the radio talk shows were paid for whilst for others airtime was donated free of charge by the radio stations⁶. The project staff were responsible for organizing them. In the talk shows speakers were always representatives from the local council and PROBICOU. This gave community members the chance to ask questions and discuss matters affecting them with the leader, while also having further explanations from the project staff.

The themes of the talk show programmes were always submitted to the presenter, host or moderator in advance, and some short announcements were broadcast in advance to inform potential viewers or listeners about the time and topic of the show. This helped to attract many viewers and listeners. During the talk shows the moderator or presenter would ask questions aimed at generating more information. Viewers would be allowed to call in and ask questions, comment or contribute. Most of the callers ⁷ blamed the government for not doing enough for solid waste management. The callers accused the government of not working with civil society organizations to solve the problem of solid waste. The radio talk shows enlightened the authorities and this made them realize that the problem of solid waste required collective effort, and should not be left to civil society organizations alone. The talk shows highlighted the role that leaders should take up and advocated for their increased involvement in solving the problem of solid waste. The government authorities were encouraged to foster a non-threatening environment, and to motivate different sections of the community to work as a group.

In Kampala City there are local forums called “*Bimeeza*” where radio stations host debates, especially at weekends. Members of the public air their views during such debates. These radio programmes are mainly sponsored by businesses in return for advertising. The project team and the solid waste management task force requested one local radio station to include

5 Kawempe news is a news bulletin produced quarterly to inform and communicate to communities in Kawempe Division (one of the divisions of Kampala city).

6 Some radio stations have special times for educational programmes, in this case the radio stations were contacted in time and time was requested.

7 People who were telephoning during the radio and TV talk shows.

solid waste management as a “theme” every other month. The only input required from PROBICOU, the Local Council 1, and the waste management task force was to lobby the producers to include waste management as a theme for discussion.

2.1.3 Videos

Videos on waste management practices, strategies and dangers were shown to the public. A schedule was prepared so that each video was shown in rotation in each sub-zone. Other video presentations were shown before the public debates in the local *Bimeeza* forums and at churches. Video presentations were provided by local partners which were mostly non-governmental organizations with similar objectives in waste management. This was a demonstrated benefit of networking.

2.2 Training

The project realized the need to empower the key community players, including political leaders, opinion leaders, cultural leaders, non-governmental organizations and religious groups, the media, elders and individuals. This element was very crucial because it helped to create innovation so that the community would be able to respond appropriately to new problems when they arise.

2.2.1 Training of trainers

The project trained four volunteer members from the implementing organization – PROBICOU. They were trained in better solid waste management practices, such as waste segregation, composting, the basics of recycling and the technical skills required for compressing waste into charcoal briquettes. They were also trained in community sensitization, communication and advocacy skills. For example, they were taught how to improve their communication skills, such as the use of *multiple channels*⁸, and choosing the most appropriate communication channel, how to tailor a message to suit a particular audience, and about the benefits of repeating messages.

The trainers were people of proven background in municipal solid waste management who had worked in related projects in conjunction with communities, government departments, and the Kampala City Council Waste Management and Sanitation Department. They were assisted by project staff and resource persons.

The training involved assignments, field work, lectures and discussion. Each day the facilitator would give an introductory talk. Lectures began with a statement of the topic and the learning objectives. The presenter would then outline the content and explain the methods and materials to be used. A detailed presentation of the topic would follow and the session would conclude questions and discussion. The facilitator would ask trainees to suggest answers to questions put by fellow trainees before offering additional clarification. This would be followed by a general discussion during which the trainees would be invited to share their views. The facilitator would encourage equal participation of both males and females and make sure that the discussion was not monopolised by only a few individuals.

⁸ Not relying on just one means of transmitting information, but using several different media, such as radio, TV and the press.

Sometimes a training session would begin with a walk through the zone, visiting the *hotspots* where the solid waste was causing the greatest nuisance, such as open drains and areas around waste skips. The participants would then go back to the training venue to discuss what they had seen, including questions such as:

- ♦ What problem did you see?
- ♦ How dangerous is it?
- ♦ How did you feel about it?
- ♦ What do you think caused it?
- ♦ Who can be held responsible for it?
- ♦ How can it be solved?
- ♦ Who can solve it?
- ♦ What input is required to have it solved?
- ♦ When can it be solved?

Such questions would help generate debate and participants would share views about the problem. Answers to such questions would lead to proposals for action.

Trainees were then made responsible for training the local council officials. It was not difficult to motivate the local council officials to come for training because the prior sensitization by TV, radio and other media had had the desired effect. They were already informed about solid waste management issues and were aware that they had a role to play, and so they were interested in acquiring further training. The trainers were also supposed to train the waste management task force members. (The task force consisted of representatives from the community who were selected from the sub-zones⁹ as well as volunteers from PROBICOU, and the Local Council.)

2.2.2 Informing local council officials

A meeting to train and sensitise the local council officials was organized. In Uganda, a zone is the lowest tier administrative unit and is headed by a local council 1, and this council comprises nine members, one of whom is responsible for health and sanitation. A proposal was made with the participation of the secretary for health of the council who requested the chairman to make waste management the main item on the agenda of one of local council monthly meetings. Members of PROBICOU attended the meeting and were given the opportunity to highlight a few issues concerning waste management. The magnitude of the problem was presented and the meeting concluded that solid waste was a challenge that concerned everybody and that its management required concerted efforts. PROBICOU introduced to the council its plans to initiate a solid waste management project in the zone, highlighting the role of both Kampala City Council and the Local Council 1, and explaining the need for the Local Council's support. The meeting agreed to support this proposal and chose two of the local council officials to actively participate in the project.

⁹ The zone is divided into four sub-zones, each of which provided a volunteer who was trained. These representatives, 2 local council officials, 1 representative of an NGO, and representatives from PROBICOU formed the community waste management task force.

2.3 Community meetings

Since the Local Council leaders had become part of the project, it was now very easy to convince the citizens to participate, since involvement of the officials demonstrated government support to the project. With the backing of these officials, the next step was to organise community sensitization meetings. The residents acknowledged that waste was a problem. During the meetings the community members learned about better practices of solid waste management and the dangers of mismanaging waste. They said that the biggest obstacle was poverty. This gave PROBICOU a chance to market the project by explaining that it would enable them to reduce their expenditure on fuel and avoid the need to pay waste collection fees. That understood, the project was seen as a blessing.

2.4 Formation and training of a task force for advocacy and communication

To facilitate further sensitisation the zone was divided into 4 sub-zones, each sub-zone having a population of about 370 people. Residents selected a representative from each sub-zone as members of a solid waste management task force for the whole zone. Each sub-zone was required to nominate one male and one female candidate, and the representative for the task force was selected by a show of hands. The representatives were given further training and were responsible for passing information on to the people in their sub-zones.

The training of the task force was organized in the form of seminars that were facilitated by PROBICOU staff. The training sessions were conducted in the evenings and ran for one week, and consisted of lectures followed by questions and discussion. At these meetings urgent solid waste management issues in particular sub zones would also be discussed and solutions proposed. In addition, a video illustrating a waste management problem was shown and discussed. The level of interaction and discussion was used to ascertain whether the participants had understood or not. The importance of teamwork was emphasized. Sometimes the facilitators would ask questions and direct the participants to form groups of three people to discuss and develop answers to questions: the answers of the groups would be assessed by all and each member would obtain credit and recognition from PROBICOU for good contributions.

The task force members encouraged residents to segregate their waste when they were distributing bags. Waste that was properly segregated would attract a refund in form of briquettes, but mixed waste would be collected for no charge, without any briquettes being provided. Since other energy sources, such as charcoal and electricity, were expensive, the residents were happy to segregate their waste properly in order to get free fuel in the form of briquettes.

2.5 Home visits

Home visits were routinely made by the task force members, other sub-zone representatives and project staff to assess waste management conditions. Visits would also be made when sub-zone representatives were distributing new waste bags. Residents would work hard to clean their premises in preparation for these visits because the best performing residents would receive recognition for their efforts.

3 Evaluation of the project

3.1 Financial viability

The project provided some local employment and covered 40% of its running costs, the remaining expenditures being covered by stakeholders such as Kampala City Council. After seven months of successful operation, the project was handed over to the community and the community has continued to run it now for 18 months, with assistance from PROBICOU and the Kampala City Council.

3.2 Involvement of the more affluent residents

The project was successful in the slums among low-income residents. Most of the more prosperous households, however, did not participate in community sensitization meetings and denied the task force members access to their homes. They did not consider solid waste to pose any problems since they would instruct their servants to get rid of their waste, with no concern as to where it was dumped or what harm it caused. However, the rich were reached by television talk shows. The local council leaders challenged them to feel responsibility for their waste and support community groups that were working to solve the problem.

3.3 The wider context

It is difficult to implement this kind of project because of an inadequate policy and legal framework, weak institutional capacity and poor implementation of laws. All households and business premises in Kampala City are required to pay for waste collection and disposal, but most do not pay. Penalties are inadequate and are not taken seriously. Corruption has continued to be a problem, undermining the capacity of institutions working on solid waste.

Capacity development in waste management in Uganda has not been placed high on the development agenda, though it continues to pose a serious challenge. There has been limited sensitization about solid waste management by government, and capacity development in the area of solid waste management has been left to the civil society organizations, most of which do not have sufficient resources to develop the capacity of both private and public sectors.

Capacity development and awareness-raising are not short-term activities but should continue during and after any project. If these inputs are not continued, levels of interest and participation will reduce.

3.4 Lessons learned

The most important lesson from this project is that advocacy, capacity development, communication and social mobilization strategies are most effective when their design is formed by and appropriate to local processes and experiences.

Capacity development, advocacy and community mobilisation are most effective when they have broad involvement and participation, including government institutions, non-governmental organizations, communities and households, as well as other sectors of society such as private enterprises and the media. Isolated efforts cannot have the same impact as collective ones.

Political will is fundamental to the achieving of a positive impact on solid waste management. Appropriate funding for advocacy, communication and social mobilization depends on the strength of political commitment at both national and local levels.

4 Conclusion

Strategies for enhancing better solid waste management exist and include advocacy, capacity development and community mobilisation. Such strategies have, however, not been prioritized by waste management stakeholders at local, national and international levels either in terms of strategic emphasis or in developing the capacity required to implement them. Whilst many effective and proven communication and social mobilization strategies exist, they are neither a magic wand nor a simple template that can be applied universally. Although these strategies are recommended, they must be developed from within communities or countries according to the specific realities of each country.

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