

#13 CASE STUDY¹ : SWM IN THE FOURTH COMMUNE OF YAOUNDE DISTRICT, CAMEROON

by Salome Onana and Fouda Etama

1. Introduction

The urban community of Yaoundé (the capital city of the republic of Cameroon) has six districts divided into six municipalities. This study presents the situation in the 4th commune of Yaoundé district. This municipality spreads over an area of 60 km² and comprises one-third of the city and has more than 600,000 inhabitants.

This paper is based on information from the head of the Sanitation Department of the local authority, Mr Fouda Etama.

2. Current situation

2.1 Solid waste management

The municipality has undertaken the following measures with respect to solid waste management, but they have not been very effective:

- Absolute prohibition on dumping waste in the streets. Much of the waste is dumped in rivers and drains, causing floods in the rainy season.
- Introduction of community work. A contest to recognise the cleanest district of the city has been initiated. Women weed the roadside verges
- Recruitment of students during the holidays.
- The government granted a subsidy to a waste collection company, which is able to serve only 3/5 of the city. Elsewhere residents dispose of their waste themselves, some burning it and others burying it. The collection company is overloaded and cannot provide a quality service. The authorities provide no support to the private operator in spite of repeated requests in this direction.
- For the time being, waste reuse/ recycling are considered only at very small scale, in particular because there is no waste processing centre in Cameroon.

The decision-makers and professionals are aware of the challenges and risks posed by hazardous and special wastes, but there is little that they can do.

¹ Translated from the original paper in French "Etude de cas de la Commune de l'Arrondissement de Yaoundé IV

2.2 Staff management

2.2.1 Recruitment

As in most developing countries, community members are recruited to work in solid waste management (SWM). They are recruited on simple production of a school diploma without consideration of any more appropriate qualification for this type of work, and their wages are low.

Most job vacancies arise because of retirement and resignations. The selection of replacements is done mainly on the basis of diplomas or other qualifications; truck drivers must provide a driving licence.

The new personnel are hired to cover a variety of fields and are assigned to stations according to need just to have an employee, without consideration of their qualifications. The Head of Department himself is a former employee of the Ministry of Public Works.

Even if the scope of work of the employees is well described in a specific document, when new officials are elected they often disregard these documents.

2.2.2 Motivation

Some employees think that waste management is interesting and that with a little motivation and incentive this sector can contribute to improve the neighbourhood and clean up the environment and so they work with enthusiasm. In contrast, others think that, it is just about earning a salary for want of anything better, and they leave the work as soon as a more attractive opportunity arises. However, the personnel are not encouraged by the administration and there is not yet a true career profile in solid waste management.

Most of the employees who were interviewed considered that sweeping the streets, waste collection and emptying the toilets are regarded as the most unpopular activities because of the low wages and the bad image, and the fact that the work can be done by people that do not have any qualification. They are looked down on by the general public because they have to pick up what others discard. According to municipal SWM workers, the disrespectful attitude of the communities causes them the most annoyance (of a psychological nature).

2.2.3 Involvement

Currently, the technical staff is not involved in the discussion of accounting issues. The Mayor is responsible for planning which should be based on a proposal from the engineering department, but sometimes he does not even take account of it.

Beginners have the opportunity to express their opinions at meetings but their ideas are not generally given much consideration, though the leaders say that all suggestions are considered. In general, the meetings provide opportunities for discussions and exchange of ideas.

2.2.4 Management style

If an employee makes a mistake (s)he may be reprimanded verbally or in writing. Punishment is reserved for repeat offences.

2.3 Training

The person in charge of sanitation, supported by some local NGOs, is responsible for building the capacity of his staff. However, the lack of financial resources restricts the possibilities for carrying out the necessary training. As a result, the staff do not have sufficient opportunities to expand and diversify their knowledge.

The head of the sanitation department benefited from some courses abroad. In particular he participated in training courses in Burkina Faso, but he is frustrated by the lack of interest of his authority for the knowledge that he has acquired and that he never had the opportunity of holding a seminar to pass on to others what he had learned. According to him, these visits enabled him to advance his approach and were sources of stimulation in his work and would ensure more sustainable impacts if they are continued. The Director considers that the choice of participants is appropriate but the other staff think that the opportunities for training should be spread more widely.

International visits often allow the adoption of new ways of working and to apply them in one's field and generally, the technologies that are seen on such visits are not suitable for the local situation. (For example, the ECOSAN approach is being tried cautiously in Cameroon although it is a simple technology, which is easily implemented and very useful in agriculture.) However, the administration raises problems about the payment of mission allowances and other travel expenses.

There are no books or newspapers within the Municipality and certainly no library. Reports and other technical documents are kept by the Head of the Sanitation Department in his office.

Most of the training is on-the-job. The Director asks the managers to pass on instructions and information.

2.4 Links with the public

There is an officer in the municipality who is responsible for raising public awareness on all issues, not just on the environment. The Urban Commune mounts many awareness campaigns in the local language using local media. A cartoon strip was designed in collaboration with the company that collects the waste.

2.5 Links with other stakeholders

The contract with *Hysacam* has been running for more than thirty years, but it is not able to serve more than 60% of the city, even though it focuses only on waste collection and raising public awareness in this connection. The company has asked the Ministry of Elementary Education several times to add subjects related to healthy living into the curriculum of primary schools.

The general public and their community leaders truly appreciate the work of the waste collection company, but it must be said that the company is overwhelmed by the increases in waste quantities caused by the rapid growth on population. There is no doubt that it is time for national and local government to get more involved in this issue

There is a unit that is responsible for monitoring the private sector operations, but our investigations indicated that the staff in that unit were not interested in the work of the

collection company. Sometimes they draw the attention of the company to particular areas where large amounts of waste have accumulated, so that these areas can be given more attention by the company. It seems that they do not monitor the work of the company in a comprehensive or regular way.

2.6 Public education

It is forbidden to discard waste in public places but bad habits persist. There are associations in the districts which ready to educate the public, and the Department has already collaborated with one association in this way.

At urban Community level, the authorities carry out various public awareness campaigns through the community media, which broadcast in local languages:

- In collaboration with the waste collection company, a comic strip was developed. It is known as MFUBAN² (in Ewondo language: "cleanliness").
- On local television, a sketch of the urban community asks the public who is responsible for the waste –the one who dumps his waste in the street or the one who has to collect it?

2.7 Equipment

The service has only one two-room facility: one for the head of department and the other one for the other 20 staff of all categories. Moreover, there are no computers and so no access to the Internet. If there is a need for a typed document it is necessary to find a typist outside in the street and pay for this work from one's own pocket. Each employee has one chair and they were four tables in the room. The room has no toilet; so the staff are obliged to use toilets in the neighbouring compounds as the only toilet in the municipality is reserved for the mayor (but this state of affairs is not unusual).

No means of transport is provided for the employees of the Sanitation Department. Nevertheless, a truck drops the employees off every morning at the various sweeping locations, but everyone has to make his own way back without any travel allowance.

Vehicle maintenance is done really only when there is serious breakdown. In addition, generally the drivers are also the mechanics. Currently, one of the two trucks of the commune is out of service because the gearbox does not work and there is no money to repair it.

The private sector service provider has the use of a weighbridge, but the details are provided to the City Council, and not to the municipalities.

2.8 Health and safety

There is no protective clothing apart from gloves and a scarf or mask; some have boots.

A record of diseases and accidents is kept by the municipal authority but there were no entries for the preceding five years. This can be explained by the lack of financial means available to the Municipality to assist those who report a disease or an accident. For the time

²You will receive this comic strip during the workshop

being, the patients and the victims must cover their own expenses which result from illness or work-related injury. This is in spite of the fact that work in SWM presents many risks of injuries and diseases, particularly because of the lack of protection on the machinery.

The managers are satisfied that they take the necessary precautions, but sometimes important protective measures cannot be taken so all that can be done is to advise employees to take care. There are community health centres and the person in charge considers that having the services of a nurse is a good start.

2.9 Needs

2.9.1 Felt needs

The needs that the staff are aware of are both technological and intellectual in nature and have a significant impact their effectiveness at work:

- ♦ shortage of staff
- ♦ lack of qualifications
- ♦ lack of equipment
- ♦ poor working conditions
- ♦ lack of finance.

In continuing awareness of these deficiencies undermines motivation and results in unsatisfactory work.

2.9.2 Observed needs

The following needs were observed:

- ♦ improvements in working conditions
- ♦ more qualified personnel
- ♦ computer equipment
- ♦ training for community facilitators for raising awareness.

2.10 Obstacles to improvements

Managers who are not interested to make changes.

3. Proposals for improvement

3.1 Improving waste collection

The following institutional mechanisms could increase motivation and improve performance:

- ♦ training executives in SWM
- ♦ offering attractive remunerations
- ♦ educating the public regarding the importance of SWM
- ♦ considering deterrent measures together with fines for people who are disrespectful to SWM workers.

The waste collection operations of the private company *Hysacam* are already in place, but the service would be more effective if the general public were more involved, and advocacy for SWM would generate more support from political leaders.

For the private sector to be more effective, community facilitators will need to be trained in waste management (especially in sorting, processing and recycling).

We are convinced that awareness-raising towards empowerment of the communities is an essential step in making improvements. In particular awareness-raising efforts need to focus on

- ♦ placing waste in authorised locations and containers, and co-operating with the collection service;
- ♦ segregating waste at source (when there are means of separate collection of the two or more streams);
- ♦ composting on household and community scale.

3.2 Staff management

The recruitment procedures should be revised in order to give more consideration to the qualifications of the applicants as well as paying of higher salaries to make the work more attractive.

To make a SWM career more attractive, a major public education campaign is needed as well as an improvement of the working conditions and especially a real political commitment to improving waste management.

3.3 Training and motivation

Incentives and capacity building have an effective impact on output. Performance related promotion is certainly a motivating element, but other types of incentive would still be needed, such as incentive allowances to motivate the staff or the possibility of using study trips, experience sharing with other similar structures, training packages and conferences. However, an adequate dissemination mechanism of lessons learned from these opportunities (experience sharing seminars, reports, etc) will need to be set up. It is particularly necessary to train supervisors and a core of trainers to the new sanitation methods such as the community led total sanitation approach. This is especially important because no specific qualifications or experience are required when staff are recruited, and staff have few opportunities of increasing their knowledge.

In addition a good follow-up should be set up and measures taken by managers should be implemented.

Budget planning could be improved by allocating adequate resources to the training and capacity building of the persons in charge.

3.4 Equipment and working conditions

- ❖ Working conditions also remain to be improved for all the staff, starting from the head of department who does not even have a secretary.
- ❖ The provision of an office library would have an additional impact
- ❖ Access to computers would play a significant role in the improvement of performance.