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Building Public Private Partnerships: Integrating Informal Recyclers in Solid Waste Management in Haiti

Abstract

Trends of increasing urbanization, population growth and high unemployment in developing nations poses challenges for municipalities with limited budgets and low capacity to manage waste quantities. To address these issues, development practitioners promote modernizing the solid waste system to integrate informal waste pickers into formal waste management institutions. The literature suggests that three conditions are conducive to inclusive partnerships building at the central government, municipal, and the informal sector level: political will and continuity; resource availability and commitment; and transparency and accountability.

To examine this argument, I conducted a comparative case study analysis of two case communes, Petit-Goâve and Léogâne, Haiti to explore the integration potential of the metal waste pickers. Results indicate that there is a high potential of observing political will for waste picker integration at the municipal level. However, strong policy legacies of volatile political swings, corruption, and clientalism, hamper the outlook of transparency and accountability. Consequently, waste pickers must gain access (1) to resources from NGOs engaged in micro- enterprise support and growth, and (2) effectively organize into autonomous membership-bodies with strong political voices. The key is timing because waste pickers must professionalize before the government is ready to engage them in the solid waste modernization process.

Purpose

Rapid population growth in urban areas is permanently increasing waste quantities in low- and middle-income countries. A lack of municipal capacity to manage the waste leads to rampant open dumping and trash burning. As a consequence, environmental and public health crises emerge and are sustained by poor governance. However, many practitioners strongly promote the claim that the activities of informal recyclers may reduce these problems by augmenting municipal waste recycling (Scheinberg & Anschütz, 2006; Wilson et al. 2006; Coad, 2006; Nzeadibe, 2009; Samson, 2008). Informal recyclers are self-employed persons or micro-enterprises that recover secondary materials after their disposal.

Using the communes of Petit-Goâve and Léogâne Haiti as a case, this thesis examines how informal recyclers can enhance municipal recycling goals.¹ The purpose of this study is to analyze what is the feasibility of improving the livelihoods of informal recyclers, while strengthening municipal recycling performance of the formal sector in Haiti. This research primarily focuses on the integration potential of the metal waste pickers in the two largest cities in Haiti's Palms region². This thesis argues that combining municipal and informal recycler management efforts may accomplish both objectives at once.

Objective

The informal recyclers and the local government are the two main stakeholders in municipal recycling in Haiti's provinces. The thesis argues that if the two actors work together then it is possible to

¹ Based on field observations, informal metal recyclers are the strongest informal sector group in the region. Consequently, this research focuses on the informal recyclers in the two largest cities in the region, who have existing observable informal metal recyclers.

² This research model assumes that the metal informal recyclers are willing to integrate into MSWM.

observe livelihood improvement of informal recyclers and increased municipal recycling rates. The impetus is two-fold. First, increasing municipal recycling performance may alleviate the environmental and public health menaces. Second, implementing improved livelihood strategies secures income-generating sources for the urban poor.

This thesis claims that informal recycler livelihood creation and augmenting municipal recycling rates is achievable through public-private partnerships. This partnership structure presents a possible solution that draws on the well-established claim that these arrangements may increase recycling efficiency in a developing context. The types of legal and institutionally viable partnership arrangements are analyzed as possible strategies for livelihood creation and for increasing metal valorization in Haiti.

This research fills the gap of recycling and informal waste sector studies in Haiti. Many of the studies already published mainly focus on the capital, Port-au-Prince.³ As a result there is little information on recycling and solid waste systems in Haiti's provinces. This study contributes to the literature not only in terms of building cross-sector partnerships in the Haitian context, but also by providing insight into existing functions and aspects of the SWM in Haiti's provinces.

Primary Literature

There is a strong consensus among development practitioners that including informal recyclers, as entrepreneurs into the solid waste system is a “win-win” solution. The argument is that neither the informal sector nor the municipality alone can provide sufficient recycling services. To ameliorate public health and environmental

³ Noel, C. has done a significant amount work on the sector specifically comparing it the formal SWM sector in Port-au-Prince (Noel, 2011). Other studies have a more general SWM focus, and mostly concentrate on the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area (Samper et al, 2006; Organisation Mondiale de la Santé, 2002).

conditions, the actors should collaborate (Plummer, 2002; Scheinberg et al, 2010b; Fobil et al, 2008, Anschutz et al, 2004, Scheinberg et al, 2011, Scheinberg & Mol, 2010). In addition, the idea is that establishing cross-sector partnerships will decrease the state's burden of recovering waste and contribute to poverty alleviation (Gerold & Frankfurt, 2009; Tukahirwa et al, 2010; Scheinberg, 2008).

Two prominent debates surround these claims: (a) Is integration a worthwhile attempt for the municipality? (b) Under what conditions can a partnership facilitate waste picker integration? The first debate explores to what extent partnerships can provide the benefits of improving livelihoods of informal recyclers and increasing the municipality's recycling performance. The second analyzes what socio-political conditions are necessary for successful collaborations. The debate also considers what roles and responsibilities each actor within the partnership must fulfill.

The main strategy proposed by the development community to achieve informal recycler integration is creating 5-Ps arrangements among the public, private, and civil society sector. The impetus is distributing the risks associated with partnership building among the involved stakeholders. Despite the benefits, the literature warns that a lack of municipal and private sector capacity may cause challenges for establishing 5-Ps for recycler integration in a developing context. Consequently, practitioners propose that strategic donor support is first fosters autonomous local decision-making, and then enhance the municipality's capacity to regulate contract arrangements. Simultaneously, waste pickers must also gain access to NGO support to increase their power within the partnership by professionalizing their sector. Given the findings, an analytical framework used to analyze the practicability of implementing the 5-Ps model in a developing setting is applied to Haiti in the research methodology.

Methodology: Case Study Analyses

The methodology consists of two compartments: the collection of original data and analyzing the Pro-Poor Public-Private Partnerships potential in the case communes with the objective of integrating informal recyclers. In terms of data collection field observations and semi-structure interviews were conducted with main stakeholders involved in recycling operations. (1) Informal recyclers: to understand their personal history, their perception towards the formal sector, their operations, their internal relations, as well as their knowledge base and experience; (2) value chain businesses to understand their relationship with the informal recyclers and how they perceive informal recycler activities; (3) decision-makers to understand their perception towards informal recycler and their proposed solutions for integration, if any.⁴

In terms of measuring 5-Ps potential in Haiti to achieve integration, an analytical framework assesses the three main conditions, which facilitate informal recycler integration via partnerships. The enabling conditions stem from the literature's collective recommendations of what circumstances are necessary for partnership success: (1) political will and continuity, (2) resource availability and commitment, (3) and transparency and accountability (Scheinberg 2008; Gerold & Frankfurt, 2009; Gutberlet, 2008; Khans, 2004; Dauskardt et al, 2010 ; Gerdes, & Gunsilius, 2010). Each enabling condition is characterized by a set of indicators that establish the parameters to analyze to what extent a condition is present or can be created in Haiti. Results from the analysis are based on semi-structured interviews, a desk study of legal and political documents, field interviews, private communications, personal field observations, and personal knowledge.

The metric used in Annex 1 gauges the potential for observing or creating the characteristics of each facilitating condition in the

⁴ In the study decision-makers consist of local authorities and NGOs with relevant interventions.

context of implementing 5-Ps in Haiti. *High Potential* indicates that the characteristic is present or the necessary ingredients to create the condition are present. *Potential* denotes that it is possible to facilitate the creation of this condition with essential support structures and a firm commitment from vital stakeholders. *Low Potential* signifies that it is unlikely that the condition can be created due to inherent and/or historical precedence.

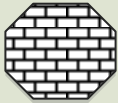

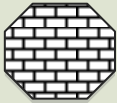


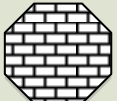


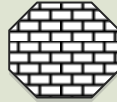



Results

The results indicate that there is high potential for informal sector integration at the municipal level. The mayors of the case communes recognized the contribution of the waste pickers and have plans to include them within the solid waste management framework. The presence of international NGO and national advocacy groups may lead to support for waste pickers to professionalize and organize the sector. Also waste pickers in the case commune demonstrated organization potential. They consistently work regular schedules, collaborate in small groups to share profits/increase productivity. Despite the collaboration efforts, waste pickers have little trust for recyclers outside of their personal circles.

The main concerns for 5-P implementation in Haiti are lack of transparency, political instability and weak enforcement mechanism. This means that waste pickers are vulnerable to inconsistent political recognition. It also means that establishing relatively equal power dynamics and clear communication among the stakeholders may be challenging. The key is that waste pickers must establish legitimacy before the solid waste modernization process is complete. Therefore, there is an urgent need for waste pickers to begin organize themselves to increase their economic and collective negotiating power.

Annex 1- Results of 5-Ps Enabling Conditions in Haitian Context

This table presents the potential of observing or creating the Enabling conditions for 5-Ps Implementation in Haiti

Political Will and Continuity	Decentralization of Governance structures and Central Government recognition of the informal sector	Municipalities are committed to integrating into waste pickers into municipal recycling	Waste Pickers organize into autonomous membership-based bodies that are socially accepted
			
Resource Availability and Commitment	NGOs, the government, and/or advocacy groups provide support for informal recyclers	NGOs and/or advocacy groups demonstrate commitment to engaging informal recyclers into the solid waste system	NGOs or formal recycling enterprises can foster trust among informal recyclers
			
Transparency and Accountability	Continuous multiple stakeholder dialogue	Clear and equitable contract designs and implementation	Membership-based bodies provide political voice and bargaining power for waste pickers
			
<div> High Potential  Potential  Low Potential  </div>			