

Towards Incorporating the Informal Sector Operators in the Organizational Structure of Solid Waste Management Agencies in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The disregard for the informal sector operators (scavengers or waste pickers) in solid waste management system in Nigeria has led to their non inclusion in policies and in the organizational structure of waste management agencies. Informal sector contributions in solid waste management system has been huge in view of their activities in sorting re-usable and recyclable materials from heaps of refuse in dumpsites and converting these wastes to wealth at a high risk of their health. This contradicts the official perception of urban waste pickers as mentally derailed persons. This paper looks into the response of a sample of these operators towards participating in urban solid waste management system in Nigeria and emphasized on positive actions to government and its agencies towards the increasing operations of the sector with respect to sustainable solid waste management options so as to determine ways of incorporating them into the organizational structure of the government agencies. A review of existing environmental management laws in the state and indeed the entire country was recommended so as to foster proper public sector reform that would effectively incorporate the informal sector in order to ensure job creation and sustainable environmental management mechanism.

Key words: Informal sector; Organizational structure; Solid waste management

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of a properly formulated policy document poised for innovative and unambiguous environmental management functions among the tiers of government and their partnership with other stakeholders towards achieving a sustainable waste management for effective service delivery often eludes the government of most developing nations. This thus paves the way for bureaucratic bottle necks, role duplication and conflict in the organizational structure of environmental management agencies and even within the various departments therein. Poor and fragmented division of labor, poor involvement and partnership of other stakeholders such as the private formal and informal sectors, NGOs and CBOs are prevalent; hence over emphasis on government agencies resulting to inadequacy and inefficiency in environmental management service delivery to the people (Anierobi, 2010).

Refuse management system varies from community to community according to the understanding and socio-economic development of the people. Umeakuka and Mba (1999) and Oyediran (1997) viewed waste management as the collection, transportation, storage, treatment and disposal of wastes including the after care of the disposal sites. According to them, it also comprises of all administrative, financial, legal, planning and the physical aspect of solid waste handling. According to (Madu, 2001), Solid waste disposal is just one aspect of waste management. Refuse generation is the starting point of the solid waste management system. Other points include the storage, collection, conveyances and finally the disposal which all depend on the community in question. Howard et al (2002) concluded that the community members should decide how important solid waste management is and determine the best ways to achieve waste management goals. Onibokun (1985) was of the opinion that the planning of an adequate garbage (refuse) removal system is an absolute necessity.

2. Participation of Informal Sector in the Environmental Management Experiences of Developed and Developing Nations

One thing most obviously common in the environmental management experience of Brazil and Egypt with those of India is the partnership of the government agencies or public agencies with the private formal agencies and the informal sector agents who are otherwise known as scavengers or waste pickers. This process ensures a reinforced arrangement and proves that modern, efficient, economically, socially environmental management systems are frequently beyond the reach of the lone actions of the government of developing countries. The involvement of the public with the private formal, informal sector and community has sometimes been initiated through evolution or deliberate design by policy makers (Anold, 1995). This has led to the forestallment of some environmental problems especially pollution and waste generation through the reduction effect. The reduction, recovery and re-use techniques in waste management have also proved very efficient in Jakarta, Indonesia

(Oepen, 1993). The cases in Malaysia, San Paulo in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro have proved that partnership with the private formal and informal sectors are more cost effective and efficient in environmental management than the singular operations of the public or governmental agencies to the tune of 13% higher efficiency, 71% cost effectiveness in the form of labour reduction hence an increased use of machineries as well as 75% increase in area coverage. (Bartone et al, 1991).

Though in vogue, this partnership between public agency and the private formal, informal sector and the community as is evident in Canada, Brazil, Malaysia, Rio de Janeiro and India is yet to be adopted in most developing countries particularly, Nigeria where government agencies operations solely dominate, hence poor level of waste reduction, re-use and recycling techniques that have proved sustainable and environmental management friendly in the developed countries as was the case of Indonesia, Brazil, Malaysia and Rio de Janeiro, (UN Habitat, DFID, 2001). This therefore gives insight on the increasing trend of environmental problems in these developing countries and hence the inadequacy of their environmental management policies and delivery systems since a greater proportion of the service delivery still resides with the government or public agencies (Valeria et al, 2008).

Evidence from South-America and South-East Asia also suggests that the organization of the informal sector is indeed a key factor for success and integration in environmental management that is backed-up by government support. In Columbia, about 50,000 families (i.e. 1% of total population) earn their living from urban waste management. (Anold et al, 1995). Developing countries should therefore wake-up to the partnership of government with private formal and informal sector in her environmental management delivery efforts for her citizenry as this would save her economy so much and provide so much earning opportunities for her people.

It is easily observed that the developed countries create the impact of wealth creation, sense of belonging and satisfaction of services to a greater extent in their environmental management delivery to her people than the developing nations, (UN Habitat, DFID, 2001). This is chiefly due to their approach of partnership between the public, private formal, informal sectors and community as well as donor agencies in the management of the environment thereby saving cost on government treasury ;(Oepe, 1993, Anold et al, 1995) but the developing countries have the reverse as the case. The government seems to shoulder the whole burden and even where there is any partnership, it is usually in the form of contracts to the private formal sectors hence heavy cost to the government and less satisfaction to the people, (Valeria et al, 2008). They therefore need to have a rethink of their environmental management approach so as to ensure a people oriented, cost effective and efficient service delivery for the citizens.

2.1 Structural Formation of Environmental Management Agencies:

The structural formation of environmental management agencies varies from country to country. In Nigeria, typical organizational structure of environmental management agencies shows the ministry of Environment at the topmost for supervision/policy making, followed by the board of directors for policy making, the managing director for policy implementation through the heads of departments and unit heads. Its operations cover solid waste management, ecological/erosion control, pollution control and environmental health. Hence, the health department, environmental pollution and control departments, ecological/erosion control department as well as horticulture and landscaping department that carries out these functions which are manned by departmental heads as stipulated by law (FEPA, 1998). Also, Valeria et al, (2008) observed that the efficiency in service delivery is equally tied with this structural formation with the basis on the prevailing institutional framework of that country. Whereas the public agency usually has its tiers from the federal to the state and local governments, the departments and sections therein are composed of different headships and functions, which are mostly controlled by bureaucratic forces and have the ministers, commissioners, directors and so on in charge of their service delivery. Funding is usually from the government budgetary allocations and sometimes from internally generated revenues in the form of levies by the agencies and other service charges. (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006; Anierobi, 2010).

The recent arrangement of partnership between the government and the private formal sector had been as a result of inefficiency and inadequacy in the environmental management service delivery of the public agencies as observed by Anold et al (1995).

The most recent break through, in environmental management has made waste reduction through re-use, recycling and restoration a modern technique that is poised as a great anchorage to all environmental management efforts. It also reduces the incidence of deforestation and exploitation of the natural ecosystem, thereby preventing erosion, flooding and other menace. It prevents pollution and emission of green house gases that causes global warming hence reducing flooding, acid rains, deterioration of the built environment among others (Oepen, 1993 and Valeria et al, 2008). In the light of these, the partnership with the private formal sector

has gained a new dimension by involving the informal sectors (Scavengers), donor agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) thereby providing means of livelihood to many families (UNDP, 2001).

One can thus generalize that the structural frame work pursued by the present day environmental management agencies is thus the Federal, State, Local government, private formal sector, informal sector, donor agencies and community based organizations (CBOs); (Oopen, 1993, UNDP, 2001, Valeria et al, 2008 and Anierobi, 2010). Though this is mostly obtained in developed and some developing countries, it is a new trend in majority of the developing countries like Nigeria where less attention is paid to the private informal sector (scavengers), NGOs and the CBOs hence a need for more collaborated effort so as to ensure a satisfactory service delivery.

3. Response of the informal sector operators to participation in the solid waste management system of Nigerian cities:

The informal sector operators showed a high willingness to participate in the solid waste management system of their environment in Nigerian cities. A survey on a randomly selected operators showed that 4% and 5% of informal operators in the cities of Awka and Onitsha respectively expressed willingness to voluntary participation. Direct employment gained highest acceptance at 72% in Awka and 68% in Onitsha while partnership had 20% in Awka and 22% in Onitsha as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response of the informal sector operators to participation in the solid waste management system of Nigerian cities:

S/n	Area of participation	Awka	%	Onitsha	%
1	Voluntary service	16	4	20	5
2	Direct employment	286	72	270	68
3	Partnership	80	20	88	22
4	Others	0	0	0	0
5	None	16	4	20	5
6	Total	398	100	398	100

SOURCE: RESEARCH SURVEY, 2013.

The survey revealed that despite the willingness of informal solid waste management operators to participate in the solid waste management system of Nigerian cities, the organizational structure of these agencies in addition to being gagged by bureaucratic bottle neck and role conflicts did not provide for their accommodation. Also, the waste pickers are treated with contempt as they go about converting waste to wealth in order to fend for themselves and despite their efforts which provides the needed avenue towards achieving sustainable solid waste management through waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

4. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The fact remains that sustainable development is all about an improvement in the human living condition and should be pursued by government of Nations for its citizenry. Going by the conceptual model of sustainable development illustrated by Goodland and Dally (1996) in Nnodu et al (2009); community development which represents the social element with attributes or characteristics of local self-reliance, basic human needs, equity, participation, social accountability and appropriate technology in a point of interlocking circle with economic and environmental development should be adopted. This would help create maximum positive impact on the life of people. Sustainable Environmental management efforts by nations should therefore embrace the informal sectors operators (scavengers or waste pickers) and incorporate them into the organizational structure of solid waste management system of cities particularly in Nigeria where they are hitherto neglected. This will ensure cost effectiveness and efficiency and enhance reuse, recycle and reduction techniques for a sustainable waste management. Achieving this will require deliberate government decisions and actions in policy formulation and implementation strong enough to fundamentally change the misperception of waste pickers in the country and their value beyond a survivalist venture.

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