

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION POLICY AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY¹

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Solid Waste management is one of the least recognized public policy issues in Ghana. Quite apart from the obvious physical unattractiveness of the business, waste management often competes with more pressing economic and social issues such as fiscal and trade matters, unemployment and poverty, education and health. Even within the domain of environmental sustainability, the management of waste has had to play second fiddle to more apparently manifest challenges such as land and coastal degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Waste management, however, remains a major challenge for any society, since all natural processes generate waste. The particular economic, social and environmental circumstances of the Sunyani municipality make this issue especially critical for medium to long-term sustainable development.

Environmental Sanitation Policy and good hygiene are fundamental to health, survival, growth and development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have set us on a common course to push back poverty, inequality, hunger and illness. Having a healthy urban environment sets a city on track for development. Sunyani is currently experiencing poor environmental sanitation and Solid waste disposal, in particular, has become a daunting task for the municipal authorities who seem to lack the capacity to tackle the mounting waste situation in the municipality. Open spaces and many other private and public places are littered with garbage, which in most cases clogs drains thereby creating conditions for disease vectors and posing health risks to inhabitants. The main objective of the study is to examine the causes of the environmental sanitation policy conditions and solid waste management in the Sunyani municipal Area and its effect on the health of the people. This study investigates the nature of the solid waste problem in Sunyani Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. It describes the waste situation in the study areas and identifies the causes of the problem from the perspective of key stakeholders in the waste sector. The key issues identified by the study include: that Ghanaian cities are experiencing worsening solid waste situations and environmental sanitation policy but the municipal governments lack the capacities in terms of financial, logistical and human resources to cope with the situation; that while several causes of the urban waste crisis can be identified, the lack of political commitment to urban environmental management is the root cause of the worsening solid waste situation in Ghana as well as Sunyani. Poor

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environmental sanitation and solid waste cost Ghana 420 million cedis each year, equivalent to US\$290 million and representing 1.6% of the national Gross Domestic Product. (GDP).

The study adopted the case study method to understand the situation in residential, other suburbs and the Central Business District (CBD) in, Sunyani. Administration of questionnaires to households in this municipality enabled the researcher to understand the people's assessment of the environmental sanitation conditions and solid waste management in these suburbs in particular and Sunyani in general. In addition, the availability of environmental sanitation facilities and services and the awareness of individuals about environmental sanitation regulations in the municipality were analysed. Policies are made as guidelines for various actors in the waste management sector to implement, but implementation also comes with resource availability and the capacity of the actors to ensure their roles in the policy are achieved. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in selected institutions and one private waste management company involved in environmental sanitation in Sunyani. These include the Waste Management Department, the Municipal Environmental Health Department and the Town and Country Planning Department. From the interviews, the challenges faced by these institutions and company in managing environmental sanitation and solid waste in Sunyani were revealed and explores the capacity of the stakeholders in the study area in relation to their roles in the Environmental Sanitation Policy of Ghana, looking at their current practices in solid waste management. The study revealed differences in environmental sanitation and solid waste behaviour among residents from the various suburbs. However, the general environmental sanitation and solid waste condition in Sunyani is not up to expectations. Individuals, households and businesses (commercial entities) do not tend to prioritize environmental sanitation. As such, people have poor attitude towards sanitation. Coupled with this are inefficiencies in service provision by the private waste management company who are contracted to ensure good sanitation in the city. The Departments within the Municipal Assembly responsible for managing the environment are also ill-resourced. The poor environmental conditions challenge the Assembly's efforts at meeting the health and environment components of the Millennium Development Goals. The study revealed that, environmentally related diseases contribute to 80 per cent of hospital admissions in Sunyani. Poor environmental sanitation cripples national development. People, households and communities lose time and money to illness, workers produce less, save and invest less and live shorter lives. It also imperils environmental sustainability, particularly, water quality and aquatic biodiversity. Some recommendations pointed to the need for intensive public education to promote a positive attitude for environmental sanitation in Sunyani and its environ. In addition, enforcement of the environmental sanitation bye-laws is also recommended to make every individual responsible for good environmental sanitation in the municipality which in the long run will lead to healthier life of the

citizenry of Ghana, more especially those in Sunyani municipality, and the study also identifies some challenges of these actors and gives recommendation of some issues which would require further research.

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