

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE COLOMBO MUNICIPALITY AREA

A.N.N Nuzrath* and Fareena Ruzaik**

Abstract: *The general public has a perception that solid waste management is the sole responsibility of the respective local authorities. Hence, this research project attempts to understand the current practices of domestic solid waste disposal, management and related issues and importantly, to investigate the dwellers' perceptions of these issues, in the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) area. Public opinion and perceptions of solid waste management systems are characterized by irregularities and inefficiencies in the waste collection system. Private sector participation in waste management has the highest patronage level with a 64.6% severity index, while the informal sectors have only a 48.7% severity index. The results indicated that 67% of the public is satisfied with the current waste management system of the CMC. An average of 63% of total households prefer to participate in ensuring better waste management. 97.8% households favored daily collection and 82.5% of the households prefer waste segregation into different bins, if the bins are provided free of charge. Approximately, 71% of the total population prefers to use recyclable products to serve their daily waste needs. This study found that 37% of the dwellers do not have any interest in waste management and 78% of the respondents are not willing to pay for value added services. Education and awareness could generate a greater level of community engagement, in order to reduce waste at source.*

Keywords: Solid Waste Management, Waste Disposal, Perception and Effectiveness

Introduction

Colombo is the capital city of Sri Lanka and the most urbanized area of the island. The city of Colombo has a population of over one million, with 650,000 resident and 450,000 floating, within an area of 37 Km². About 50% of the population living in the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) area are low income earners, who reside in shanties and underserved settlements, mostly located in low-lying areas.

The task of daily waste collection and disposal within the Colombo municipal limit is a most difficult challenge faced by the CMC. An ever increasing population, urbanization, scarcity of land for waste disposal, the lack of stakeholders' participation, unplanned waste management systems etc. have become major reasons for this situation. Due to the linear relationship between human activities and solid waste generation and thoughtless consumerism this issue cannot be stopped, but it can be managed (Sebastian, 2010). Today however, the whole world's attention has been drawn to issues related to Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal and management, because of their severity, allied with matters of public and environmental health. The CMC struggles to find alternative means to manage the solid waste related issues in

* A.N.N. Nuzrath, Sri Lanka Administrative Service (Grade III), Ministry of Public Administration and Management.

** Fareena Ruzaik, Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Email: fareena@geo.cmb.ac.lk