

Abstract

Solid Waste Management and Urban Poverty in Haiti: The Livelihood Strategies of the Urban Poor in Greater Port-au-Prince and Their Contribution to Environmental Management

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The main objective of this research is to present a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships between the livelihood strategies of the solid waste workers and effective environmental management in the Metropolitan Area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The study provides a theoretical and conceptual framework as well as a model of analysis to examine the poverty/environment intersection through the ability of the urban poor to earn a living from solid waste management while protecting public health and the integrity of the ecosystem.

The research question that guides and structures the study refers to the incapacity of solid waste management to break the persistent cycle of poverty of those whose livelihoods depend upon their involvement in the Greater Port-au-Prince solid waste management system. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were sequentially used to carry out the study. Several explanatory models of inferential statistics were constructed to examine the relationships between dependent and independent variables such as income levels, involvement in other economic activities, gender, age, educational achievements, work experience, work schedules, food expenditures, housing status, prevalence of illnesses and

symptoms, frequency of injuries, attitudes to social stereotypes, and expressed desire to leave the solid waste management sector in the future.

The findings revealed that most of the solid waste workers in Greater Port-au-Prince continued to experience conditions of severe social and economic deprivation. The results showed that, notwithstanding the creativity of the urban poor to turn solid waste into a resource with no immediate or long-term danger to the environment, as well as their participation in the provision of solid waste management services for the urban residents in Greater Port-au-Prince, there has been no significant change in the conditions of their existence. The study demonstrated that, regardless of the multiple contributions the solid waste workers made to the city's productivity and public health, the maintenance of a cleaner urban environment and the protection of the integrity of the ecosystem, they still remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. The study calls for policy changes in Haiti's solid waste management sector, especially in the Metropolitan Area of Port-au-Prince. It advocates the development of new channels of cooperation and partnerships between the stakeholders in order to generate comprehensive and innovative solutions to the current urban solid waste management crisis.

Keywords: Solid waste management; poverty; urbanisation; livelihood strategies; environmental management; income levels; urban areas; urban poor; solid waste workers; Haiti; Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area.