



Urbis in Abidjan

Improving Sanitation Services in Abidjan's Slums

Cote d'Ivoire's rapid population growth rate and increasing urbanization intensified the government's efforts to improve basic urban services for its population. The

Urbis program focused on contributing to the state's efforts to improve the quality of life in Abidjan's slums. This was done by providing the *Fédération des Précollecteurs et Prestataires de Services Urbains de Côte d'Ivoire* (Federation of Solid Waste Pre-Collection, or FEPSUCI), a group of 3,600 slum dwellers, with training and technical assistance to amplify the voice of pre-collectors, enhance the quality of their services and increase their incomes and job stability.

At the start of the program, the government was hiring multi-national and Ivorian companies to collect household waste. These firms relied on the services of pre-collectors, such as FEPSUCI, to pick up trash in the city's poorest neighborhoods, but did so without formally contracting them. FEPSUCI members claimed they were underpaid because of this arrangement, earning a seventh of what they could earn if they were contracted directly by sanitation authorities. In August 2008, after close to a year without any pay, FEPSUCI members went on strike. They demonstrated to raise awareness about the abusive relationship between slum-based pre-collectors and large sanitation firms, the absence of laws to regulate the sector and the lack of recognition for their services. But FEPSUCI's informal status prevented its members from accessing formal contracting mechanisms set up by the state.

FEPSUCI's coverage is impressive as it operates in 10 of Abidjan's 13 communes, servicing over half of the city's slum dwellers. Out of Abidjan's 4.2 million inhabitants, an estimated 830,000 live in slums and benefit from the services of pre-collectors, who collect approximately 1,000 metric tons of refuse a day.

Given the government's plans to restructure the national sanitation sector, the Urbis program was well-timed. Urbis built the capacity of FEPSUCI so that its members could compete for public solicitations. This entailed providing key members of each of FEPSUCI's 32 cooperatives with the technical, organizational, legal and financial skills they needed to convert their informal organizations into ten slum-dweller owned

businesses. Furthermore, the Urbis team, which included the well-known para-statal entity *Bureau National d'Etudes Techniques et de Développement* (National Bureau of Technical and Development Studies, or BNETD), FEPSUCI and DIG, worked with city and government officials to help pre-collectors gain formal recognition and incorporate slum trash collection into public sanitation bids.

Results: Through Urbis, pre-collectors became aware of their essential waste collection role, which enhanced their ability to communicate with the government and bring about improvements for their members and clients, most of which are slum-dwellers. The Minister of the City and Sanitation and the President's Advisor on Waste Management Issues reacted positively to their advocacy effort, publicly recognizing that the pre-collectors' waste removal services were indispensable. This formal recognition was a step in paving the way for FEPSUCI to compete for market.

Through training and technical assistance in business administration, financial management, contract drafting, and resource mobilization, Urbis provided the managers of FEPSUCI's cooperatives with the basic skills needed to legally register as businesses and manage those businesses effectively. By the end of the program, the informal trash collectors had successfully registered eight businesses. As of January 2011, three have bid on and been awarded municipal contracts to collect household waste and clean up streets and gutters in their respective communes (Marcory, Bingerville and Plateau). These contracts generated employment for 332 pre-collectors and US\$ 271,840 in combined revenue. As a result, the living conditions of 70,684 slum dwellers serviced by these firms improved. The salaries of the waste collector managers also increased by 150% (from USD 195 to USD 485/month).

Urbis also trained FEPSUCI members in designing and implementing a pre-collection plan to improve their services. By professionalizing the services of FEPSUCI, the Urbis program not only ensured the delivery of more reliable sanitation services to poor households but also secured higher wages for thousands of pre-collectors.

