

# **Impact of Social Norms and Human Behaviour on Policy Implementation: A Case of National Solid Waste Management Policy in Sri Lanka**

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Effective municipal solid waste management is a critical challenge in many developing countries, including Sri Lanka, because it leads towards severe issues in several aspects of human life, such as socio-economic, health and the environment. In order to mitigate these challenges, the National Solid Waste Management Policy has been introduced by the government of Sri Lanka in 2007. Internationally recognized principles, such as waste hierarchy, waste reduction, reuse and recycling are founder fillers of the 2007 National Solid Waste Management Policy. The government of Sri Lanka has been introduced several programmes and projects for effective policy implementation. However, Local Governments in Sri Lanka still collect only 27% of the daily waste generation, and the majority of the collected waste is disposed of in open dumpsites. In Sri Lanka, 62% of waste volume encompasses short-term bio-degradable garbage, mainly food waste. This study examines how social norms, public attitudes, and behaviour of citizens and the private sector affect the 2007 National Solid Waste Management Policy implementation. This qualitative research utilises primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through 30 semi-structured interviews with central, provincial, and local, governmental public officers and elected public representatives, and private sector participants. Data has also been gathered through two focus group discussions conducted from November 2019 to January 2020. This data was analysed using NVIVO software and grounded theory. Research findings reveal social norms, and citizens' behaviour, contribute significantly to increased food waste volumes in Sri Lanka. Whilst Sri Lankan society has previously practised traditional food preservation, and waste minimisation, these traditional approaches are rarely practised in contemporary society due to changes in lifestyle, attitudes, and food consumption habits, over the last few decades. Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that a small number of private sector entrepreneurs have made significant progress in promoting efficient municipal solid waste management through their actions. However, these efforts are uncoordinated, isolated, and limited to individual examples.

Key words: Sri Lanka, National Solid Waste Management Policy implementation, behaviour, Attitudes, Social norms, Food waste generation,