

Solid Waste Management Improvement in Sekondi-Takoradi

GHANA

URBAN DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL FACILITY (UDTF)

#GLOBALGATEWAY

JULY 2026

Project rationale

In 2022, the “EU-Ghana Partnership for Sustainable Cities” initiative was introduced as a multi-phase programme to tackle urban challenges in Ghana, combining efforts to strengthen institutional frameworks at both national and local levels while enhancing the delivery of essential urban services and infrastructure to address the needs of citizens.

As part of this initiative, the EU Delegation requested support from the Urban Development Technical Facility (UDTF) to assist the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) in assessing its solid waste management (SWM) system. The goal was to identify pragmatic and short- to medium-term measures that can improve the system while remaining within existing institutional mandates and resource constraints.

The assignment followed a participatory and pragmatic approach, starting with a detailed diagnostic of the solid waste management system, carried out in the field and with key stakeholders. Based on this shared diagnosis, improvement measures were proposed and assessed against their technical, institutional, and financial feasibility. This process led to the co-creation of a set of realistic short- to medium-term actions aimed at strengthening system performance and preparing the ground for larger future investments.

Background

Within its metropolitan boundary, Sekondi-Takoradi generates an estimated 159 tonnes of municipal solid waste per day. Waste collection is organised through formal service contracts with private sector companies for communal containers and door-to-door collection. The system also includes a significant number of informal tricycle collectors who compete to some degree with formal operators.

The city operates a single public landfill, which plays a central role in the SWM system and hosts an estimated 150 waste pickers, alongside small-scale recycling and pre-processing activities, particularly in the plastics and scrap metals sectors. Treatment and recovery infrastructure remains limited, and recycling activities are largely driven by informal actors.

Between 2022 and 2025, STMA has been implementing the EU-funded Twin Cities Sustainable Partnership Project, which includes skills-development initiatives related to recycling and circular economy activities. In parallel, the Metropolitan Assembly is preparing for larger-scale investments aimed at improving waste segregation, recycling and landfill operations. Among other aspects, these future investments will require stronger revenue mobilization and clearer governance arrangements.

Findings and recommendations

The several challenges identified in Sekondi Takoradi’s waste management system can be framed in the following areas:

- **Operations of informal actors**
- **Waste collection tenders and contracts**
- **Adequacy of training initiatives to operations**

THEMATIC AREAS:

- **Solid Waste Management**



FUNDED BY:
European Union



KEY STAKEHOLDERS:
2025 Sekondi-Takoradi
Metropolitan Assembly
(STMA)



**DURATION OF THE
UDTF ASSIGNMENT:**
February – August 2025



PROJECT REGION:
Sekondi-Takoradi (Ghana)



Above: Map of Ghana

■ Operations of informal actors

Informal actors currently play a significant role in Sekondi-Takoradi's waste management system. Tricycle collectors, waste pickers, aggregators, and recyclers contribute substantially to waste collection and material recovery. However, these stakeholders operate outside the formal system. In waste collection, informal collectors provide an essential service in areas insufficiently covered by formal operators, but their activities can also undermine the financial viability of the formal system, as households and waste producers paying informal collectors may be reluctant to pay official waste collection fees. In recycling, waste pickers, aggregators, and recyclers operate without formal recognition or regulation, which limits their visibility and efficiency, and undermines the value of these activities.

Recommendations:

- Enforce mandatory Business Operating Permits (BOPs) for tricycle collectors, aggregators, recyclers, and organised groups of waste pickers.
- Combine BOPs with basic training, identification, and authorised access to the landfill.
- Link BOPs to clear incentives, including participation in municipal waste collection contracts and improved working conditions.

■ Waste collection tenders and contracts

Current waste collection tenders and contracts do not fully reflect the operational realities of the waste management system in Sekondi-Takoradi. The existing framework primarily targets large operators, whereas a significant share of collection activities is performed by smaller informal actors (such as tricycle collectors). Contracts do not sufficiently consider the physical distinctions between different areas and the need for diverse waste collection means. As a result, waste collection coverage remains uneven. Opportunities to strengthen recycling and collaboration with smaller actors are also largely underexploited.

Recommendations:

- Revise waste collection tenders and contractual frameworks to better reflect the operational structure of the local waste management system.
- Introduce mandatory partnerships between large waste collection operators and BOP-holding tricycle collectors.
- Update collection zoning and equipment requirements to reflect current urban development and operational conditions.
- Introduce recycling and recovery targets within waste collection contracts, via mandatory partnerships with BOP-holding aggregators and recyclers.
- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure service coverage, operational performance, and effective integration of smaller actors.

■ Adequacy of training initiatives to operations

Several training and skills-development initiatives related to waste management and the circular economy have been implemented or are currently ongoing in Sekondi-Takoradi, including initiatives linked to the Twin Cities Sustainable Partnership project. While these initiatives contribute to capacity building, their outcomes are not always sufficiently connected to the operational needs of the municipal waste management system. As a result, trained individuals or groups may not always translate the acquired skills into concrete economic or operational activities within the waste sector.

Recommendations:

- Align training and skills-development initiatives with the operational needs of the municipal waste management system.
- Establish formalised roles and agreements within municipal waste contracts to ensure that trained actors can effectively participate in service delivery.

Lessons learned

The findings from the project show that incremental and well-targeted improvements can significantly enhance solid waste management performance in Sekondi-Takoradi, even in the absence of major new infrastructure investments. Lessons learned include:

Waste collection contracts are central tools available to STMA to improve efficiency, recycling outcomes, and accountability

Well-designed contractual frameworks can be used by metropolitan authorities to influence the integration and coordination between all existing actors, improving service coverage and recycling outcomes.

Integration of informal collectors, recyclers, and waste pickers in the system is essential to create an inclusive waste management system

Tricycle collectors, recyclers, and landfill waste pickers play an indispensable role in system functioning. Their integration into the formal system is only effective when linked to clear incentives, such as economic opportunities and improved working conditions.

Skills development must be connected to operational realities

Training and circular economy initiatives can generate a better impact when aligned with the day-to-day operational needs of the SWM system and when integrated into the system via contractual arrangements.