

The same heap, four governors later

A five-year review of Lagos waste-management spending and service delivery, and why more money has not meant less refuse.



THE TIMELINE

1999-2007

TINUBU

Inherits a collapsed sanitation system; PSP franchise model established.

2015 - 2019

AMBODE

Cleaner Lagos Initiative hands -90% of operations to Visionscape; collapses in -3 years.

2007- 2015

FASHOLA

PSP expansion and LAWMA build-out; disposal capacity still lags the city.

2019 - 2026

SANWO-OLU

PSPs recalled; environment allocation rises -2.5x nominal; June 2026 emergency evacuation ordered.

Four administrations, four restructurings, one unresolved heap. Waste-management model and recurring emergency response, 1999–2026.



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What matters most (Key Findings)

The real problem isn't budget size — it's system design, disposal reliability, and broken economics between households, operators, and the State.



- 1 Money is rising**
Environment budget grew ~2.5x (2024→2026), total budget grew ~1.9x. Crisis persisted anyway.



- 2 Output is flat —**
Lagos generates 13,000–15,000 tonnes/day, collects only 4,000–5,000. A ~2/3 gap that's held across administrations.



- 3 The lesson is already paid for**
Cleaner Lagos Initiative/Visionscape (2017–2018) cost ₦28.47bn bond at 17.5%, ₦713.7m/month — for 49 trucks against a need of 1,000+. Collapsed in 3 years.



- 4 Untapped upside**
LAWMA values 90% of waste as recoverable, worth ~\$2.5B/year. Almost none captured.



- 5 It's a trust problem**
Non-payment → fleet decay → missed pickups → more non-payment. Cheaper to fix the cycle than the symptom.

The accountability question:

When budgets rise 2.5x but the collection gap stays at 2/3 — this isn't about affordability anymore. It's about who's answerable for where the money goes.



The output story: what the money bought



INDICATOR	POSITION IN 2026	WHAT IT IMPLIES
Waste generated daily	13,000–15,000 tonnes	Demand is large and growing with the city
Waste actually lifted daily	≈ 4,000–5,000 tonnes	A ~two-thirds collection gap, year after year
Active PSP operators	≈ 450 franchisees	Fragmented, under-capitalised, uneven coverage
LAWMA trucks in daily use	≈ 102 trucks	Against a stated need ≈ 2,000 of compactors
Recycling rate (est.)	≈13% of waste (high-end estimate)	~90% of value left on the table
Bill-payment compliance	60–70% in high-performing areas; 30–40% elsewhere	The hidden driver of the whole collapse

The verdict on five years of spending versus output: inputs up materially, funding increase without added — it is mis-wired.



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The Visionscape lesson: What "spending more" can buy

The most instructive fiscal episode of the last decade is also the clearest proof that money alone does not work.



N28.47bn

Five-year bond at 17.5%, due September 2022, with Lagos as sponsor/co-obligor.



N713.7m

Monthly first-line charge from State revenue into a sinking fund — N8.56bn a year, N42.82bn over the five-year tenor.



49 trucks

Route trucks reportedly run, plus ~14 tractor-heads, against a need exceeding 1,000 — a shortfall of 951 trucks.

The initiative collapsed within roughly three years; the PSP operators were recalled; and Lagos continued servicing the bond after the contractor had effectively exited. The CLI is the cleanest available proof that in Lagos waste management, a large cheque written into a flawed operating model produces debt, not cleanliness.

The trap that ties it together

These factors are not a list; they are a loop. ... The self-reinforcing trap: every capital injection that does not break the loop is spent inside it.

STAGE 01

Cost shock

Diesel, FX and spares rise;
haulage distances lengthen.



STAGE 02

Tariff shock

Bills raised ~167% —
₦750 to ₦2,000 — so
operators can survive the
cost base.



STAGE 03

Non-payment

Compliance falls to
30–40% in the weaker
areas



STAGE 04

Fleet decay

Operators cannot maintain
trucks or pay crews.



STAGE 05

Missed pickups

Roadside dumping and visible
heaps spread across the city.



STAGE 06

Emergency evacuation

Public funds buy a cleanup and
the cycle restarts at stage 01



The loop closes: Stage 06 returns to Stage 01 — the
cleanup restores appearances, not capacity.

Bottom line

Lagos has been clearing the same heap since at least 1999. The lesson of the last five years is not that the State spends too little — it is that the State keeps buying emergency cleanups instead of a working system.

The fix is not heroic: a reliable disposal chain, an honest billing system, a transparent tariff, professionalised operators, policy continuity, and a published budget. Each is affordable. Together they break the loop that turns money into recurring crisis.



The next governor should inherit a system to improve — not a heap to clear.

