



Opportunities for **green jobs** in the **waste sector**

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Solid Waste Management: Addressing the Challenge, Tackling Informality Sonia Dias / WIEGO



Key Facts

- **Informality & Poverty:** there is a significant, but not complete, overlap between being informally employed and being poor
 - Most informal workers are poor; most working poor are informally employed
 - Earnings are low and costs-plus-risks are high, on average, in the informal economy
- **Informality & Gender:**
 - A higher percentage of women workers than men workers are informally employed in 3 out of 5 developing regions including South Asia; but *men comprise the majority of the informal workforce in all regions* due to relatively low female labour force participation rates.



Key Facts

■ **Informality & Gender:**

- Women are concentrated in the lowest-earning segments of informal employment in all regions.
- Waste picking Sector: In Brazilian cooperatives - over 50% are women; in Pune, India: over 80% in some cases

■ **Informal Economy & Cities**

- Informal economy represents the broad base of the urban workforce, urban enterprises and urban output;
- As cities modernize, they become increasingly hostile to the informal economy;
- Cities may penalize or criminalize informal workers + undermine or destroy their livelihood activities. Modern SW systems tend to exclude informal recyclers.



Who are Waste Pickers?

- **Waste pickers:** collect, sort and/or process household, commercial/industrial waste on the streets, in coops, in recycling facilities or in open dumps.
- **Waste Pickers:** can be independent (non organized) or organized (coops/associations/micro enterprises); can work individually or as family unit.
- **Organizing:** national movements, unions, federations, regional networks and global alliance.



Green Jobs and Livelihoods

- **Waste:** opportunity to meet the city's strategic priorities of building an inclusive economy that creates potentially green jobs, facilitates social mobility, improves governance, protects the environment, promotes sustainability and social justice.
 - *Waste is an environmental, social, economic and political issue* – changes in the physical components of a given SW system impacts the livelihoods of the working poor.
- **Green jobs without livelihoods protection is not green.**
- **A people centred approach to modernization of SW benefits the entire society.**



Towards Green Jobs: Example #1

Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Main Features:

- Partnership with the Local Government since 1993: 24-year relationship
- Co-governance: Waste & Citizenship Forum
- Formal agreements between the City and coops (MoUs, contracts): includes trucks, recycling warehouses, equipment, capacity building, environmental education, crèche...
- Payment for environmental service: Recycling bonus



Towards Green Jobs: Example #2

Bogota, Colombia

Constitutional Court Order 275: special state protection given to waste pickers

- 8,250 waste pickers receive payment;
- Census + qualitative recognition of waste pickers;
- 250 private collection centers - as weighing points;
- Easy access to banking services;
- Single payment every two months by the total of recovered waste, equivalent to USD 40 per ton;
- Replaces 1,800 animal-drawn vehicles for trucks. Business plans with seed capital;
- Promoting source separation and the role of waste pickers in the collection.



Towards Green Jobs: Example #3

Pune, India

- **Background:** no household collection available in the past;
- KKP KP union with 6,266 members started the service;
- Residents paid them directly;
- SWACHH coop got contract with city to do collection from 300,000 households;
- Conditions of Work (PMC pays for equipment and mgt costs);
- Attention to health issues



Building Green Jobs Systems

- Governments should shape SW systems to: (1) address both environmental and social concerns and (2) implement comprehensive policies, not ad-hoc solutions.
- Governments can be ***catalysers of processes by***: (1) opening dialogue channels, (2) not criminalizing reclaimers, and (3) providing incentives to coops to help them enter new niches.
- Governments can ***implement processes such as***: (1) providing infrastructure for sorting, baling, etc., (2) encouraging educational campaigns and capacity building, (3) implementing source segregation with informal workers; (4) addressing occupational health issues and (5) creating spaces for gender empowerment.



Building Green Jobs Systems

COMPONENTS OF A HEALTHY AND DIGNIFIED LIFE

Pillars of Waste Pickers' Health

- ✓ Physical well-being
- ✓ Emotional well-being
- ✓ Good nutrition
- ✓ Access to Information
- ✓ Socio-economic security
- ✓ Recognition

Components of Healthy Workplace

- ✓ Organized workspace
- ✓ Adequate infrastructure and equipment
- ✓ Adequate and durable protective equipment
- ✓ Ventilation, proper lighting
- ✓ Common spaces

Holistic Understanding of Waste Pickers' Health

Important Allies

- ✓ Municipal, state and federal governments
- ✓ Health professionals
- ✓ Communities
- ✓ Businesses/Generators of waste
- ✓ Research centers on ergonomics, architecture, planning workers' health

Important Attitudes among Cooperative Members

- ✓ Respect for others
- ✓ Solidarity
- ✓ Friendship
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ Recognition for co-worker

Important Attitudes within Cooperatives

- ✓ Better Hygiene
- ✓ Organized workspace
- ✓ Respect for others
- ✓ Spaces for dialogue
- ✓ Breaks to stretch
- ✓ Breaks to drink water and eat
- ✓ Breaks to go to the restroom
- ✓ Understanding

Building Green Jobs Systems

- **Comprehensive policies:** participatory channels (regular not sporadic); *recycling chain needs fair distribution of profits*; legal framework; mechanisms for empowered integration; formal recognition of the occupation.
- **Payment for collection services** through proper contracts.
- **Payment of waste pickers for environmental services** (they redirect materials that would otherwise be dumped): the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil has pioneered a scheme called “recycling bonus” whereby coops are compensated by recyclables reclaimed.
- In fact, like fishermen, **informal recyclers should be granted special occupational status given their contribution to the environment.**

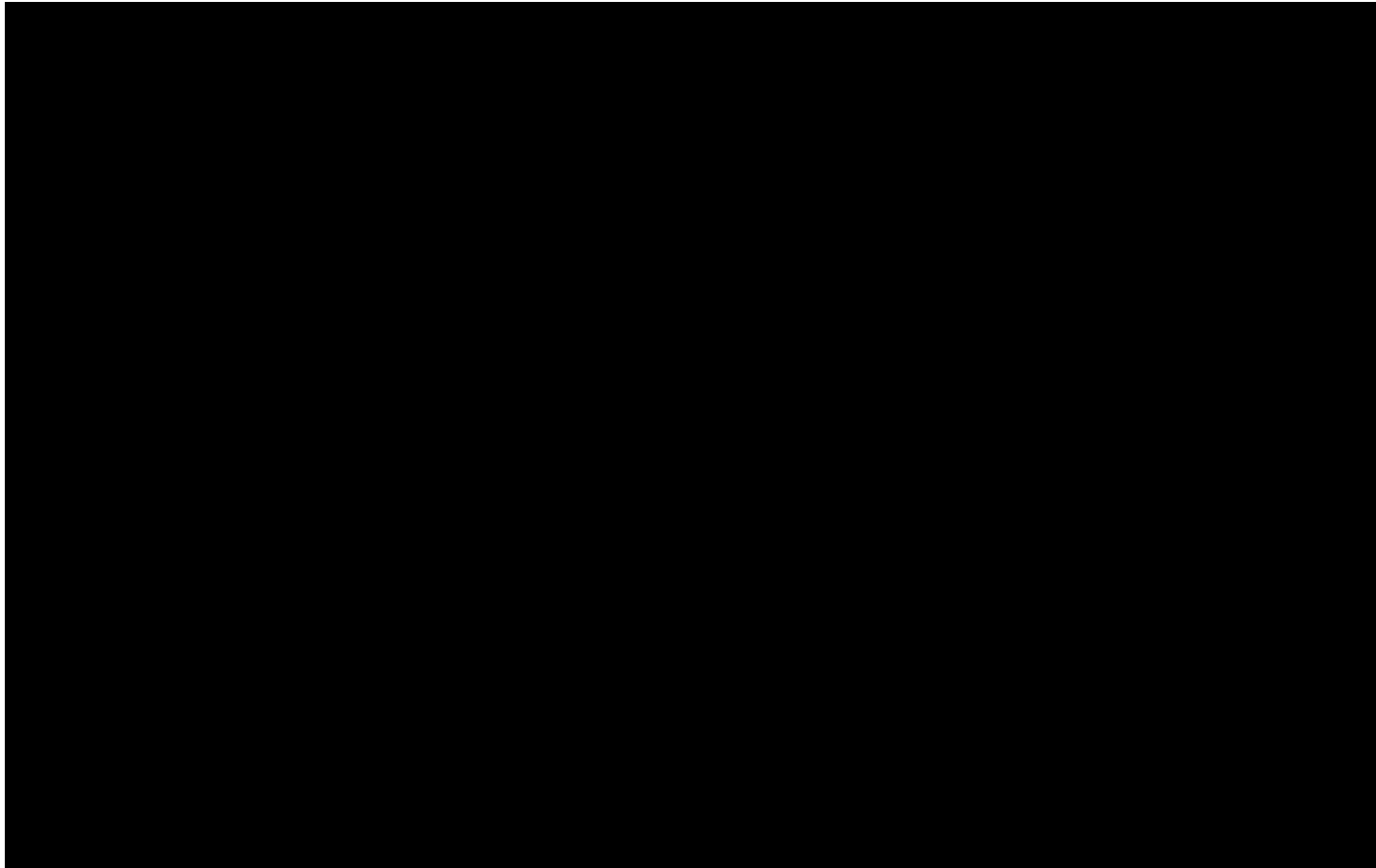


Going Greener

- Grounded networks with good political leverage in policy-making in some cities have led to some experiences in inclusive SW systems (Bogota, BH, Pune).
- While early struggles of waste pickers were around rights to access waste, their focus is becoming increasingly more holistic as they start to embrace zero waste concepts and the decent work agenda.
- India, Brazil, Colombia: ZW networks



Voices From the Ground



Waste picker leader Nora Padilla from ANR (National Association of Recyclers, Colombia) sends her message about the contribution of WPs to Green Jobs



Final Considerations

- **Recycling:** one of the cheapest, quickest and easiest ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **2010 UN Habitat publication:** waste pickers perform between 50-100 per cent of all ongoing waste collection in most cities in developing countries – at no cost to the city budget.
- It is time we start a global effort to ensure decent work for the workers in the waste picking sector, which represent 1-2% of workers in the world, by recognizing their contribution to the environment, to green jobs, and to public health. **One path to do so is by acknowledging a special occupational status for waste pickers.**



Thanks

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