

# THE INFORMAL RECYCLING SECTOR IN BRAZIL

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# BRAZIL

- **Latin America's Giant:**

  - 5<sup>th</sup> Largest Country in the World

  - Most Populous in LA: 190 million

  - LA's Largest Economy and 10<sup>th</sup> in the World

- **Sharp Income Inequality**

  - Richest 5% get  $> 1/3$  of national income

# BRAZIL

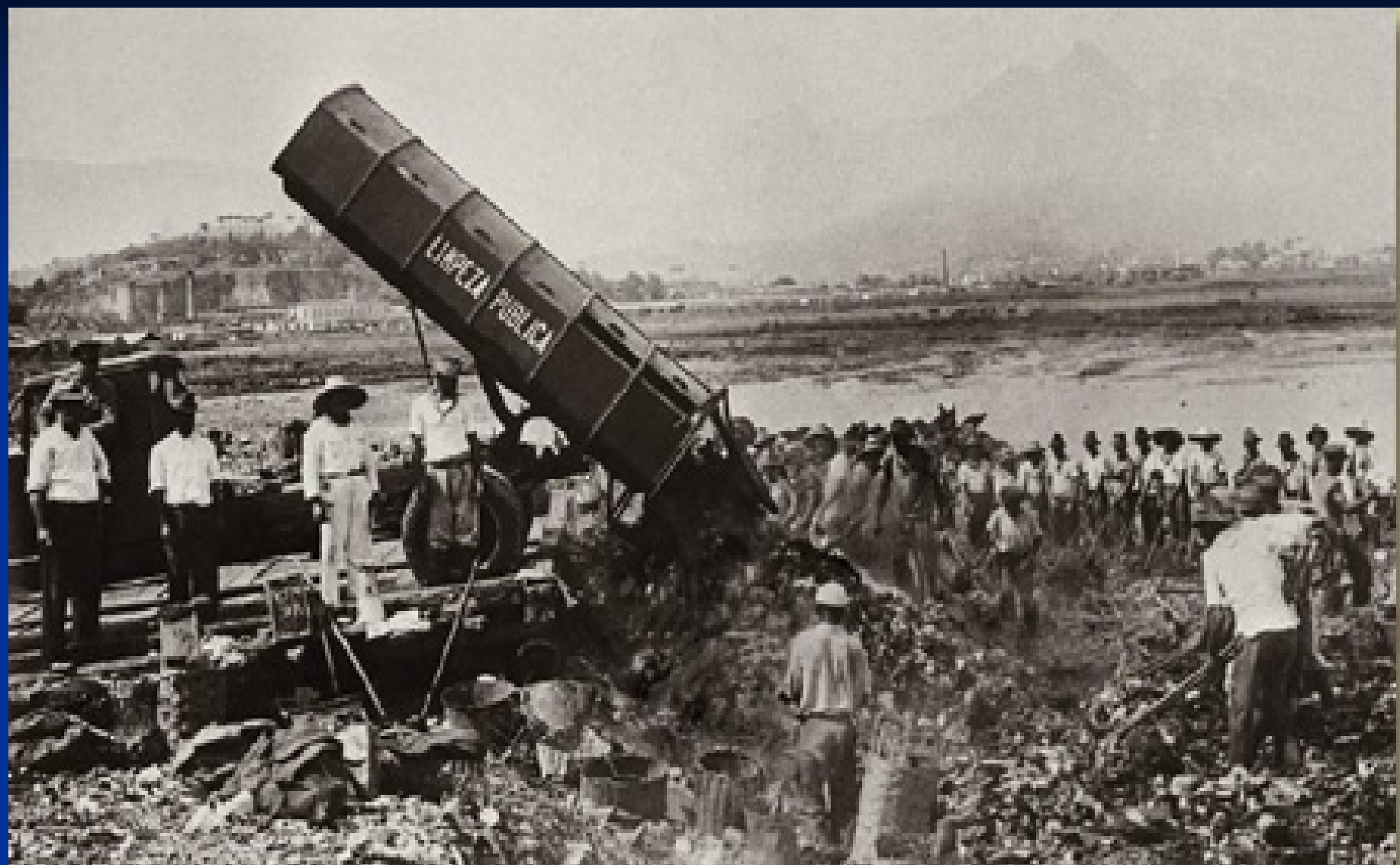
- **Poverty: more than 40 million live below the poverty line**
- **Unemployment exceeds 9%**
- **The Informal Sector employs 60% of the labor force: 36 million**

# BRAZILIAN WASTE PICKERS

- Popularly known as
  - “Catadores”
  - “Catadores de Lixo”
  - “Catadores de Papel”
- 500,000 Catadores Nationwide

# BRAZILIAN WASTE PICKERS

- Traditionally poor, neglected, ignored or repressed by the authorities
- Rejected by society, perceived as criminals
- UNICEF: 45,000 waste picker children in 1998, 30 % of them had no schooling



Despejo de lixo no aterro do Retiro Saudoso no Caju - Rio de Janeiro, 1930 - COMLURB/RJ

















# Catadores Get Organized

## ■ **ASMARE Waste Picker Cooperative**

(Associação dos Catadores de Papel, Papelão e Material Reaproveitável)

- **Funded in Belo Horizonte in 1988**
- **380 members, all former street waste pickers**
- **55% women**
- **Recycles 500 tons of materials / month, mostly paper, cardboard, plastics, and metals**

# Catadores Get Organized

- **ASMARE Waste Picker Cooperative**
  - Collect source-separated materials at schools, businesses, residences, office buildings
  - Members earn up to 6 times the minimum wage  
4 times their income before ASMARE existed
  - Members receive training and various benefits
  - ASMARE is now a model for other cooperatives





# Catadores Get Organized

- **COOPAMARE Waste Picker Cooperative**  
(Cooperativa de Catadores Autônomos de Papel, Aparas e Materiais Reaproveitáveis)
  - **Funded in São Paulo in 1989**
  - **80 members and buys materials from 200**
  - **Collect 100 tons of recyclables / month, at a lower cost than the city recycling program**
  - **Members earn US \$ 300 / month, twice the minimum wage (half of labor force < US \$150)**

Coopamare  
Nacional de  
Desarmamento

PALACIO ANCHIETA  
CAMARA MUNICIPAL DE SAO PAULO  
FLORESCER OUTORA AS MARCENS DO ANDEMI SOB A EGIDE DE SAO  
PAULO APOSTOLADO A VILA DE ANCHIETA E NOROCCIA TRASCILLI EXPANDE SE  
MENTE DOS AVENTUROSO BANDEIRANTES A BUSCA DO ORO POISS E TAMAN  
NEMTA DADA AS FRONTEIRAS DA PATRIA QUATRO SECTORES OS SAOS REEMERSE  
DO PASSADO E A ESPERANCA DE UM NOVO PRESENT

NOS CANTIDADO  
CANCELAMENTO DA LEI N 171  
POR LEI CONQUISTADOS E AP  
42290 DE 15/08

"Ele cancelado  
VO  
VO"

POSTO D  
QUINTE

ASSOCIACION  
RA - PR

"D  
OS-PR  
d

**A COOPAMARE é parte da história de Pinheiros a 15 anos.  
QUEREMOS CONTINUAR PRESTANDO NOSSO  
SERVIÇO DE COLETA SELETIVA A CIDADE.**

BRASILATAS

are  
FACE

# MOVIMENTO NACIONAL DOS CATADORES DE MATERIAIS RECICLÁVEIS (MNCR)

- Created in 1999, it is now the world's largest waste picker movement: 500 co-ops with 60,000 members
- National Congress of Catadores in 2001 → 1,700 waste pickers participated
- Latin American Congress of waste pickers in 2003
- MCNR leader in organizing a Latin American network of waste pickers

<http://www.movimentodoscataadores.org.br/>







7 1:00 PM







**“ABAIXO À REPRESSÃO”**  
**PELO DIREITO À CIDADE E AO TRABALHO !**  
MNCR - Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis





ABAIXO A RE...  
**CATADOR É PROFISSÃO**

Comissão do Estado de São Paulo

TADORES DE MATERIAS

PAULO

MUNICIPAL

**ETA SELETIVA**

CARITAS  
UNESP  
P.M. ASSIS

res



**NÃO ME  
TRATE  
COMO LIXO.**

**SOU  
TRABALHADOR.  
FAÇO COLETA  
SELETIVA.**

# The Authorities React

- National Program **WASTE AND CITIZENSHIP** (*Lixo e Cidadania*) was created in 1998
- Participation of wastepickers in integrated waste management programs at the local level, PPPs
- Closure of open dumps
- “No More Children in Dumps” National Campaign (*Bolsa Escola* Program)
- National Training Program to strengthen waste picker organizations

# Waste and Citizenship Program

- Ministry of the Environment Fund to support wastepickers: US \$2.6 million in 2003
- More than 100 local Waste and Citizenship local forums have been created
- In 2001, São Paulo created the *Programa Coleta Seletiva Solidária*, a PPP that involves 14 local waste picker cooperatives

# Lessons Learned

- External support needed to start waste picker cooperatives (NGOs, Industry, Foundations)
- Government support is crucial for their sustainability: legalization, PPPs, contracts, concessions
- UNICEF's involvement in creating the Waste and Citizenship Program was crucial

# Lessons Learned

- **Marches, demonstrations, and educational campaigns bring attention to their cause**
- **Cooperatives can reduce poverty, empower their members, and improve their working and living conditions**
- **Highest priority to separation of materials at the source**

# Challenges Ahead

- Globalization → Prices of materials (China and Economic Crises in South America)
- Legal gaps and lack of government support
- Lack of business skills among catadores
- Difficult to organize catadores, slow process
- Lack of solidarity, conflicts among catadores
- Scarcity of funds for projects
- Vulnerable to political changes?