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BUILDING BACK BETTER: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL  
AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN A HUMAN-  
CENTRED AND PLANET-SENSITIVE RECOVERY

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Cooperativa António Sérgio para a Economia Social



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# WASTE PICKERS' COOPS

## Outline:

- About WIEGO
- Who are waste pickers
- Overview: Coops in LA.
- Case study - Coops in Belo Horizonte city
- Coops dynamics and key issues

# Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

- WIEGO is a global action-research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy through:
  - increased organization and representation
  - improved statistics and research
  - more inclusive policy processes
  - more equitable trade, labor, urban planning, and social protection policies

# WASTE PICKERS AROUND THE WORLD

**20 MILLION** Estimates indicate close to 20 million PEOPLE WORLDWIDE EARN THEIR LIVING FROM RECYCLING WASTE.  
Source: ILO (2013)



Waste pickers COLLECT, SORT, RECYCLE, REPURPOSE AND/OR SELL MATERIALS thrown away by others.

WASTE PICKERS CONTRIBUTE to city life through:



## INTEGRATE WASTE PICKERS INTO CITY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Research shows WASTE PICKERS' LIVELIHOODS are negatively affected by:



Cities around the world have demonstrated that INCLUDING WASTE PICKERS IN CITY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

**IS POSSIBLE.**

Source: Chikarmane (2012), Dias (2011), Parra (2015), Schamber (2012)

Waste pickers around the world are organizing for RECOGNITION, PAYMENT FOR THEIR SERVICES & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Source: Bonner & Spooner (2012)





# Belo Horizonte



## Capital of Minas Gerais State

A planned city located in the southeast of the country

**Population:** 2,881,945 people (IBGE 2004)

First coop founded in 1990 and integrated as city partner in 1993

Today: 8 coops integrated



# Informal Workers in Source Segregation Scheme

## Mixed System

◆ **Curbside** collection of recyclables in part of the Central and Southern Regions of the city.

- Recyclables collected by municipal trucks are taken to coops warehouses for sorting and further processes.



◆ **Recycling containers** in public areas.

- **156** Voluntary Delivery Sites (**435** recycling containers)
- Collection by municipal trucks; recyclables taken to coops warehouses



# Informal Workers in Source Segregation Scheme

## Mixed System

◆ **Coops collect recyclables from larger generators** (industries etc) with their own motorised vehicles



◆ Two of the existing 8 coops collect recyclables in offices downtown using **manual pushcarts**

# Moving up the value chain collectively:

- REDESOL – a network of 3 waste pickers cooperatives for bulk selling of recyclables.
- CATAUNIDOS – a network for bulk selling of recyclables and plastic recycling of PET (production of pellets) formed by ASMARE from Belo Horizonte and 8 waste pickers' organizations from cities within the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte involving around 500 waste pickers in total.

# Gender and Waste Project- Brazil

## Aims:

- To provide women with the tools to work towards equality in the workplace and their personal lives in order to strengthen their capacities and voices;
- To increase women's leadership roles in waste picker representative organizations; and within the National Waste Pickers Movement.
- To contribute to the economic, political and symbolic empowerment of women waste pickers.

## How

- Learning gender workshops, popular and academic gender toolkits, coaching program on leadership, mapping of health risks, ergonomic workshops, gender strategic work plans





# Coops & its Dynamics – Key Issues

- *Low business turnover* - one of the main obstacles for sustainability, with direct consequences on income of coop members (1,5 minimum salaries –MS- on average) when compared to non-organized WPs (3-4 MS).
- *However*, coop members enjoy indirect benefits which make up for this 'economic disadvantage', such as: better working conditions, support to schooling to children, housing programs, etc.

# Coops & its Dynamics – Key Issues

- Nature of activity as it is today: labour intensive work not capital intensive – so productivity depends on direct activities done by the worker (the more efficient his work be more value will be added to the product).
- Average 50% are women: work done at coops are generally more favourable to women as many coops provides child care and are keen on equity issues.
- **Social function:** by including women and other vulnerable groups coops have a social function in terms of poverty reduction. And this socially relevant work needs to be valued as a by-product.

# Coops & its Dynamics – Key Issues

Coops as environmental agents: many coops promote and/or take part in joint environmental campaigns.



*Waste picker playing in environmental event*



ASMARE's Recycling fashion show

# Challenges

- Demands for efficiency in service provision represents, in some cases, a strain on some individual members.
- Some members have difficulty in complying with demands for discipline and work schedule
- As work becomes more complex (administrative skills required) this may be a strain to people with low educational level, which comprises the majority of the coops.

*How to balance efficiency and its social functions is key to sustainability*

# Cooperative Movement – Main Achievements

- Social solidarity economy principles: workers' identity; links of solidarity organized & non-organized workers; visibility and recognition
- Inclusion of pickers of recyclables: Brazil's national classification of occupation
- Approval of 2010 National Solid Waste Policy with recognition of workers
- Inclusive Extended Producers' Responsibility
- Gender & waste action plan




# Conclusions

- By giving incentives to organizations of waste pickers such as associations, cooperatives and unions their social and economical condition can be enhanced.
- These organizations can voice demands of WPs, represent their interests, fight for visibility and validity
- Data from Brazil shows that organized WPs enjoy better work and living conditions (Dias PhD thesis, 2010)

# Thank You!

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**Learn More - WIEGO's action research:**  
[www.inclusivecities.org](http://www.inclusivecities.org)  
[www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)

 **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing**

WIEGO Policy Brief (Urban Policies) N° 4 May 2011

Sonia Dias<sup>1</sup>


### Integrating Informal Workers into Selective Waste Collection: The Case of Belo Horizonte, Brazil

This Briefing Note expands on the genesis and key elements of the public policy focused on the integration of one category of informal waste workers: the citizens (collectors of recyclables) of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, sketched in the previous Briefing Note – No. 5.

#### Introduction

Informal workers in the solid waste sector represent a large and growing stakeholder group in most developing countries. In some cities their work is responsible for between 50 and 100 per cent of all waste activities. This means they make an important economic contribution to reducing the burden of waste management for which a city is responsible. Experience shows that informal workers often achieve higher recycling rates than formal recycling systems in many cities of the developing world (UN-Habitat 2010; Visser and Theron 2009). Higher recycling rates are associated with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. However, most of these workers experience poor working conditions, their contribution is not acknowledged, and they are often harassed by members of the public and by the authorities.

Some countries are now recognizing the contribution that these workers make to solid waste systems. In Brazil many cities have developed recycling systems that formally integrate waste pickers. This



ASMARE leader Dona Geralda and her husband were the pioneers in getting waste pickers organized in the city. Source: Leslie Tuttle

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 **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing**

WIEGO Policy Brief (Urban Policies) N° 2 April 2011

Shalini Sinha<sup>1</sup> and Sally Roever<sup>2</sup>

### India's National Policy on Urban Street Vendors

India is one of very few countries that has developed a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors. The policy was adopted in 2004 with the objective of providing and promoting a supportive environment for street vendors to earn livelihoods, while at the same time reducing congestion and maintaining sanitary conditions in public spaces and streets. This Briefing Note describes the process by which India's National Policy on Urban Street Vendors was developed, the content of the policy, and the ongoing story of its implementation.




India's National Policy on Urban Street Vendors explicitly recognizes the contributions of street vendors to urban life. Photo: S. Kumar, SEWA Bharat

In India, a national policy is essentially a statement of intent by the government and does not have the legal "teeth" that a law has.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is often an important first step toward the establishment of laws. Though its implementation since 2004 has been weak and uneven, India's Supreme Court has upheld the fundamental rights of street vendors in court cases over time, and in October 2010 called on the government to enact a law on street vending no later than June 2011. This Supreme Court judgment reinforced the need for state and local governments to implement binding laws based on the National Policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Sector Specialist for Street Vendors, WIEGO.  
<sup>3</sup> India is a federal union of 28 states and seven union territories, with over 5,000 cities. In order for a national policy to go into effect, it must be ratified at the level of states and union territories.

WIEGO Policy Brief N° 2

 **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing**

WIEGO Working Paper N° 7 November 2011

### Urban Employment in India: Recent Trends and Patterns

Martha Alter Chen and G. Raveendran

