

The roadmap to sustainable and inclusive solid waste systems - a tale of two cities



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Dr. Sonia Maria Dias, Waste Specialist, WIEGO



Who are the Waste Pickers?

- Waste pickers are those who collect, sort and/or process household or commercial/industrial waste on the street, coop recycling facilities or in open dumps. According to the ILO Green Jobs report: 20 million worldwide.
- They can be independent (non organized) or organized (coops/associations/MSEs).
- Work individually or as family unit.
- In some countries they have national movements, unions, federations, regional networks (LA Network; India Waste Pickers Alliance).



WAW
A database of
Waste Pickers Around the World



Poverty & Waste

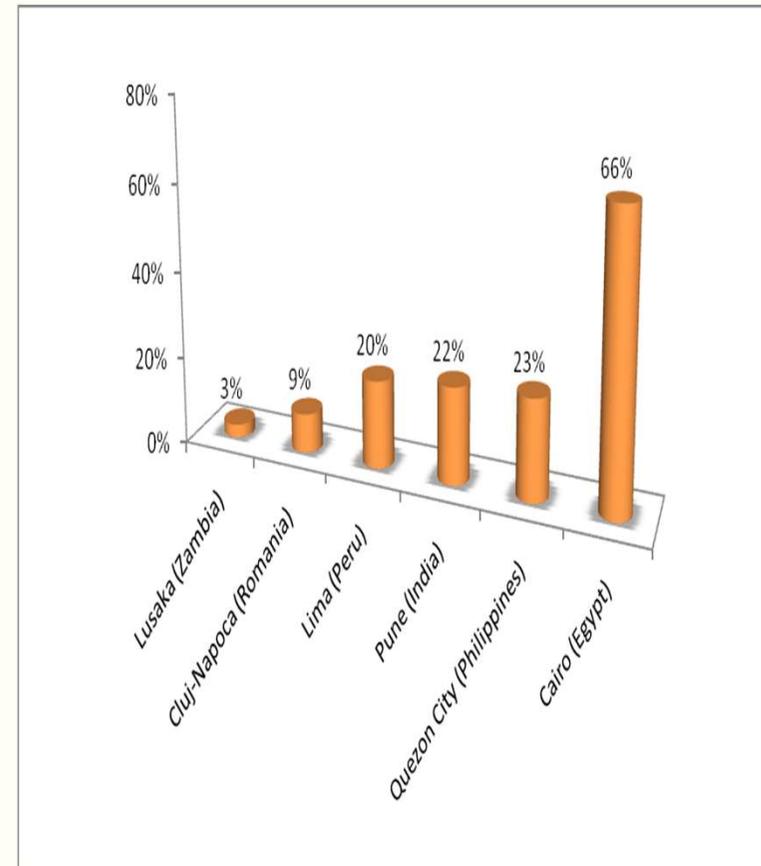
- Poverty eradication goes beyond the design of policies for job and income generation.
- We should think of poverty in terms of citizenship empowerment, in terms of access to public services (health, sanitation, education) and *to the decision making process*.
- 1-2% of the urban working poor earn a living by handling waste.



Waste Pickers Facts & Figures

Contribution

- 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.
- GTZ/CWG 6 cities study: waste pickers recovered approximately 20 per cent of all waste materials in three of the six cities studied; in one city, the rate was even higher due to the collection of organic matter for pig feeding

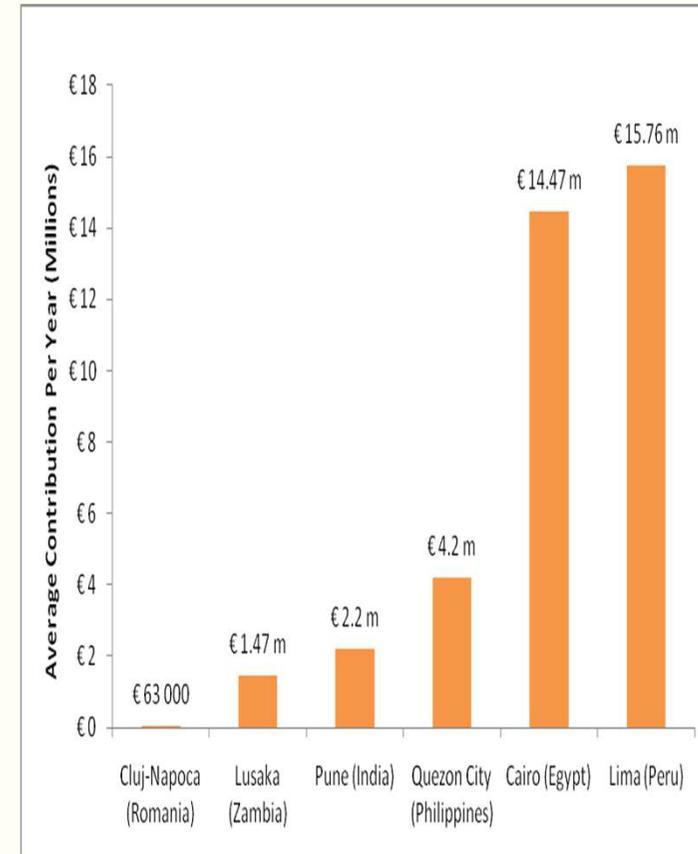


Source: original data from GTZ/CWG study. This version from wiego.

Waste Pickers Facts & Figures

Contribution

- Growing consensus that informal recycling supplements formal solid waste management in varied ways.
- The high rates of recovery of informal recyclers are a “positive externality which the municipality enjoys without having to pay for it because the **environmental gain is a by-product of the economic interests of informal recyclers**” (WATSAN 2010: 131).
- **Nevertheless**, they are treated as nuisances by authorities and with disdain by the public; *face exploitation and intimidation by middlemen*; have the lowest pay in the recycling chain; ***lose their livelihoods in privatization processes.***

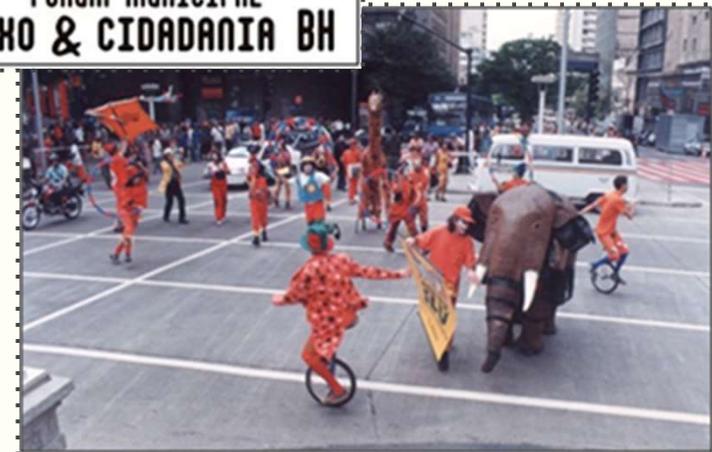


Source: original data from GTZ/CWG study. This version from wiego.

Grassroots lead cross collaborative recycling programs - Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Main Features:

- Partnership since 1993: 24 years;
- **Co-governance:** Waste & Citizenship Forum;
- Formal agreements btw the City and coops (MoUs, contracts): trucks, recycling warehouses, equipment, capacity building, environmental education;
- **Payment for environmental service:** Recycling bonus.



Grassroots lead cross collaborative recycling programs - Belo Horizonte, Brazil

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.
- Designated areas where **cooperatives are the door to door collectors by contracts.**



Grassroots lead cross collaborative recycling programs - Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Recycling containers in public areas.

- Collection by municipal trucks; **recyclables taken to coops** warehouses.



Belo Horizonte (Continued)

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

Coops collect recyclables in offices downtown using **manual push carts**.

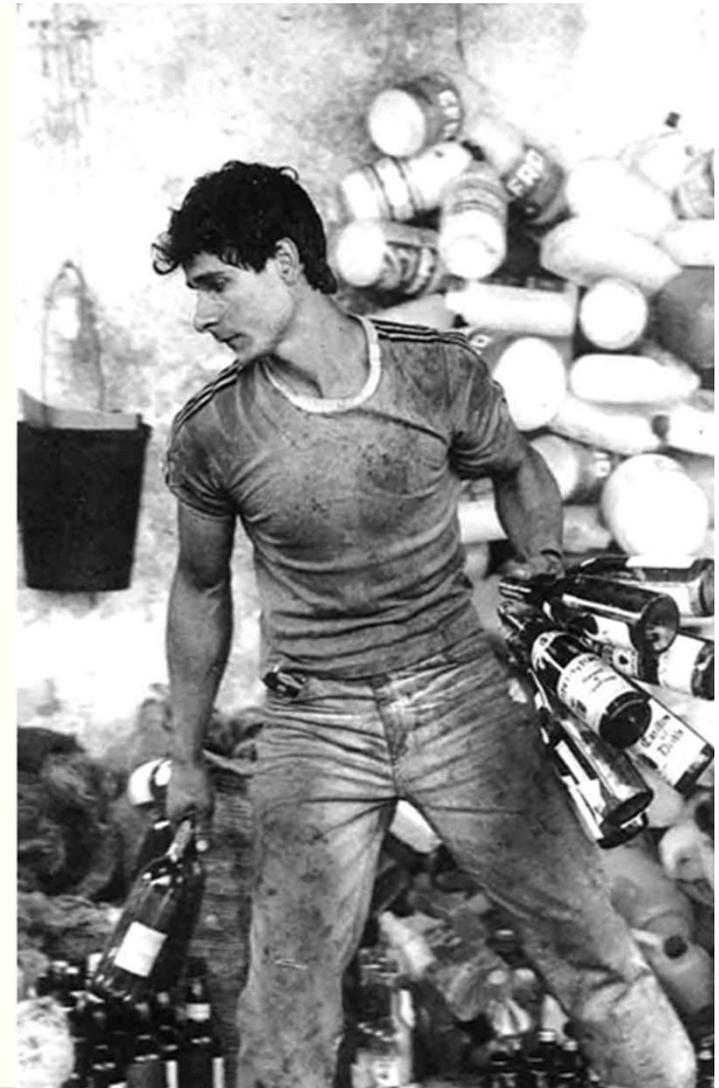
Recyclables from all sources are sorted, weighed, shredded, baled and commercialized by coops. Revenues split amongst members according to internal rules established by each coop.



Grassroots lead cross collaborative recycling programs - Bogota, Colombia

In 2011 the tender service collection and transportation of garbage, worth over 1.7 billion dollars, was canceled for not including properly waste pickers.

1800 waste pickers who drive a cart-horses, receive in replacement, little and middle trucks to continue doing his work.



Current administration of Bogota actions, trying to construct a recycling model

- **8250 waste pickers received a payment.**
 - Census + qualitative recognition of wp's.
 - Enabling 250 private collection centers, as weighing points.
 - Daily Record of recovered recyclables are transported to recyclers.
 - Easy access to banking services.
 - Single payment every two months by the total of recovered waste, equivalent to USD 40 per tonne.
 - Replacing 1800 (Universe 2600) animal-drawn vehicles, for trucks and business plans with seed capital).
 - Promoting source separation, and the role of waste pickers in the collection.
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Bogota... Special Feature - The constitutional court orders 275

Recognizes the wp's as a subject of special state protection given their poverty and vulnerability.

Recognizes its participation in public service of collection and transport recyclable waste as a means to overcome their vulnerability, and recognizes the need of payment.

Recognizes and encourages the entrepreneurial potential of wp's, their environmental and economic contribution, and their right to grow up in the value chain.

Responsibility to local authorities as responsible for these affirmative action.

Two cases - Lessons

Grassroots organizations have a role in **creating decent jobs and in shaping alternatives routes for formalization** through their political struggles to be acknowledged as service providers in municipal recycling schemes.

These two cases are examples of systems co-production. While cooperatives and co-production models can be often associated with the neo-liberalization agenda there are also examples of transformative experiences in the waste sector.

In many developing cities, in the absence of municipal recycling systems, waste pickers' organizations have been formed and have been fighting for integration into waste management schemes and by doing so have contributed to **challenge conventional modes of SW governance.**

Conclusions

- Cooperatives can contribute to decent work by: tackling social and economic exclusion of marginalized groups; creating ways to extend social protection for informal workers; playing a role in enhancing channels of social dialogue and political negotiations; contributing to rights at work by helping in the mitigation of economically vulnerable and physically risky work conditions, and by being a source for building women's empowerment.
- **Grassroots led coproduction** - Inclusive recycling can offer **alternative paths for formalization** and improve working conditions that eventually meet the decent work agenda.

Conclusions

- Formalization requires:
 - Legal framework that recognizes access to waste as a livelihood resource;
 - Provision of proper contracts (covenants, memoranda of understanding, and others);
 - Payment for collection and environmental services (“diversion rate”);
 - Provision of infrastructure for sorting and capacity-building;
 - Social protection schemes;
 - Programmes to address gender equality and specific risks (child labour, childcare);
 - Platform that ensures fair representation and real influence for workers.

The identification of and support for grassroots strategies for waste pickers as service providers within solid waste systems may hold the key to the future of their important work.

Thank You!

Contact:

sonia.dias@wiego.org

Visit:

www.wiego.org
