Reconciling Poverty and the Environment

Creativity and integration of the informal sector

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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.
Elaborated by Sonia Dias
Source: Dias 2009; Fernandez, 2008
How to Build Formal/Informal Bridges? Key Messages

- “Nothing for us without us”: respect informal workers MBOs.
- Integration into SW systems but no subordination.
- Formalization: definition and content to be defined by representative organizations of the informal workers.
- Build SW systems on what you have works: the vision of a modern SW have to include existing informal waste workers.
How to Build Formal/informal Bridges? Key messages

• Technical ambitions/Privatization processes need to be modified to protect livelihoods.

• Comprehensive policies: participatory channels (regular not sporadic); recycling chain needs fair distribution of profits; legal framework; mechanisms for empowered integration; formal recognition of wp as a profession.

• The role of the State: shape SW systems addressing environmental and social concerns; implement comprehensive policies not *ad-hoc* solutions.

• Prepare WP´s social plans as part of SW Master Plans.
Masters Plans and Waste Pickers

Social Plans

Guidelines:

• **Working conditions and income generation**: identification of integration strategies in municipal selective collection and/or alternatives for employment and income generation; implementation of sorting units;

• **Housing, health and living conditions**: Identification of social programs to target waste pickers (school allowance; family allowance etc); application of compensation policies for loss of work in landfills;

• **Eradication of child labor**: identification of actions to stimulate education of children and young people (supplemental programs and school supervision; professional training courses etc).

• **Organization and institutional strengthening**: initiatives to development/strengthen the organizational process; Training programs (business management, cooperativism principles, waste and environment etc).

• **Public Policies and legal framework**: Identification of training actions for technicians and social agents so that they are qualified in their particular work with this social segment and identification of public awareness and mobilization actions aimed at the adoption of socially aware practices, in relation to this social segment; Legal framework: identification of changes necessary in municipal legislation to support the social integration of waste pickers; dissemination and engagement of legal framework supporting existing social inclusion on a federal level; establishment of covenants or service provision contracts.

• **Efficiency, productivity and increased value**: identification of strategies for increasing capacity to compete on the market; project for processing or semi-processing of recyclables; management training.

• **Supervision and monitoring**, identification of supervisory and monitoring mechanisms for implementation process of waste picker social inclusion strategies. Source: Dias, 2011 (forthcoming).
... the millions of informal waste workers around the world demand: respect and Comprehensive policies

For examples visit:

www.wiego.org

www.inclusivecities.org

Thanks!

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