

Informal Waste Recycler Inclusion in New Developing Country Systems

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Historical phases

- 1970's and 80's: support to informal waste recycling communities to improve their collection and sorting systems; policy changes to seek inclusion of informal waste recyclers.
- 1990's: support to waste recycling communities to organize, have registration and ID's; improved appearance and training; allocation of routes and door-to-door household collection; networking support to obtain direct market access to manufacturers; beginning of small scale private contracts in parallel with informal sector.
- 2000's: increased private sector contracting led to competition between the formal and informal private systems and increased exclusion of the informal waste recyclers; carbon finance encouraged an increase in waste treatment and disposal investments.
- 2010's: manipulation of the integrated waste management concept to give the "full value chain" to the formal private sector and exclude the informal waste recyclers; discontinuation of carbon finance incentives; transition from small and short-term private sector contracts to long-term PPP monopolies .

Some examples of inclusion from the past

- Indonesia - presidential directive to local governments to be inclusive of informal recyclers - lead to storage, processing and training facilities in some cities and reduced exclusion.
- Philippines - national support to network informal recyclers with manufacturing - included some storage and transport support.
- Egypt - Cairo governorate support to change transport and processing facilities and enable informal recyclers to collect wastes as well as recyclables, including support for service fee collection
- Ecuador - Quito mayoral support to provide waste cleaning and processing equipment at landfill.
- India and Pakistan - multiple NGO supports to organize informal sector recyclers into primary collection franchises able to be paid user charges.
- Brazil - presidential support to recognize and support the activities of informal sector recyclers and provide access to wastes.

Obstacles that Informal Waste Recyclers Face

- Discrimination over class, race, tribe, gender and religion.
- Corrupt control over access to waste recyclables in order to obtain kickbacks.
- Corrupt control over the buyers of recyclables in order to keep prices low.
- Harassment and bribery demands.
- Danger of accidents from waste collection vehicles and landfill equipment; riots and fights over recyclables; fires, emissions, dog bites, infections, puncture wounds, rape and other hazards.
- Lack of shelter, water and sanitation facilities during work.
- Lack of access to education.

Baseline work for inclusion of informal recyclers

- Examine each component of existing informal waste recycler systems (e.g., door to door collection systems, communal container and street-side collection systems, buying and storing systems, dumpsite sorting systems). (See Uttar Pradesh, India effort designed by Janis Bernstein TTL and executed by Chintan as an example)
- Determine which informal systems could be left alone to work in parallel with new systems.
- Determine which informal systems could be adjusted to fit within the new systems.
- Develop a range of options for discussion purposes
 - Allow continued parallel access in a more structured way.
 - Direct hire as collectors, sorters and other workers.
 - Contract various routes of collection service.
 - Contract sorting activities at facilities.
- Interact with the informal waste recyclers to obtain their views and develop plans.

Lessons learned

- Informal waste recycling systems can be competitive, entrepreneurial and cost-effective.
- Global social networking provides empowerment and fosters sharing of ideas.
- Informal waste recycling systems can work in parallel with formal waste management systems. For many informal waste recyclers, proximity to their home community is essential, as well as flexible working hours.
- For women recyclers, child care and child education greatly enhance their ability to increase their income. Relocation may not be desirable.
- For men recyclers, working hours that allow a them to supplement a primary job may be a factor. Relocation or commuting is more viable.
- The formal waste sector is not likely to include the informal sector unless required to do so within their contracts.

What is needed

- Improve the status of informal sector waste pickers through public awareness of their human dignity and policies acknowledging their societal contribution.
- Project requirements that assure arrangements for livelihood security when systems are changed.
- Actions to provide land tenure for sorting and storing waste recyclables.
- Economic instruments that encourage industries to use local recyclables as feedstock.
- Government procurement changes that give preferential procurement to materials and products containing local recyclables as feedstock.
- Payment to informal recyclers for wastes proven to have been handled to avoid landfill.
- Requirements in RFPs, Bid Proposals and Contracts for Formal Waste Service Providers to show inclusion of informal waste recyclers.

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