



Supportive Environments for Healthy Communities

Issue 50 April 6, 2012 | **Focus on the Informal Sector and Solid Waste Management**

The informal waste sector provides a much needed service in the developing world; the work of this sector reduces waste in communities, increases the reclamation and reuse of materials, and helps to lower greenhouse gas emissions. This issue of the WASHplus Weekly contains recent reviews on the economics of the informal sector and the diseases and injuries that waste pickers endure. Also included are case studies from Bangladesh, Brazil, Pakistan, the Philippines, and recent videos.

Please let WASHplus know at any time if you have resources to share for future issues of WASHplus Weekly or if you have suggestions for future topics. An [archive](#) of past Weekly issues is available on the WASHplus website.

REPORTS/ARTICLES

- **The Economics of the Informal Sector in Solid Waste Management**, 2011. Collaborative Working Group on Solid Waste Management in Low and Middle Income Countries. ([Full-text](#))

This booklet is based on an investigation that was carried out in six cities on four continents to collect facts about informal sector recycling and to determine the economic benefits and drawbacks in an objective way. The investigation also considered the effects of possible changes in policies toward the informal sector, both to restrict its opportunities and to increase cooperation.
- **The Effects of Handling Solid Waste on the Well-Being of Informal and Organized Recyclers: A Review of the Literature**, *Intl Jnl Occup Env Health*, March 2012. E Binion. ([Abstract](#))

Estimated at 15 million people operating globally, informal recyclers perform a vital public service while working individually or within cooperatives. This review assesses, discusses, and compiles the physical and emotional health issues of individuals who are operating in this stigmatized sector. The study highlights the self-assessed and observed health risks: chemical hazards, infection, musculoskeletal damage,

mechanical trauma, emotional vulnerabilities, and environmental contamination. The review showcases the encouraging significance of working as a member of a recycling cooperative as a means of mitigating health hazards. The findings suggest the need for further qualitative research with informal recyclers and solid waste policy enforcement as well as public, commercial, and industrial cooperation.

- **Recovering Resources, Creating Opportunities: Integrating the Informal Sector into Solid Waste Management**, 2011. GIZ. ([Full-text](#))

This report analyzes the effects and integration potential of informal activities into solid waste management. The role of the informal sector in solid waste management is described in chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the activities, working conditions, and significance of this sector. It shows that informal waste workers often represent a significant portion of the urban population in low- and middle-income countries and that they constitute an important element in the value chain of resources by recovering valuable materials from waste.

- **Rethinking Waste: Sustainable Innovation in the Informal Waste Sector**, 2011. Cason Family Foundation; Clinton Global Initiative. ([Full-text](#))

The overall vision of this project is to catalyze and contribute to a strategy that provides recognition for waste pickers as much needed recyclers and businessmen and women in a community. The strategy will include identification of viable, sustainable, and innovative business models. The process of identification of best practices, innovative business models, and recognition of waste pickers will contribute to improved wages, the development of businesses, and increased health and social conditions.

- **Waste Picker Cooperatives in Developing Countries**, n.d. M Medina, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Mexico. ([Full-text](#))

This paper argues that when scavenging is supported—ending exploitation and discrimination—it represents a perfect illustration of sustainable development that can be achieved in the Third World: jobs are created, poverty is reduced, raw material costs for industry are lowered (while improving competitiveness), resources are conserved, pollution is reduced, and the environment is protected. The paper also proposes a typology of public policies toward waste pickers and analyzes recent experience of the formation of waste picker cooperatives.

CASE STUDIES

- **An Economic Analysis of a Public-Private-Community Partnership: The Case of Solid Waste Management in Dhaka, Bangladesh**, *World Review of Science, Technology and Sust. Development*, Vol. 8, Nos. 2/3/4, 2011. K Alam, University of Southern Queensland. ([Full-text](#))

This paper assesses the economic efficiency of a public-private community partnership in urban solid waste management in Dhaka City. Based on a successful pilot program

at the micro level in a Dhaka City suburb, the paper builds a macro model for the city and provides an economic analysis of its social desirability.

- **The Informal Recycling Market in Ormoc City, Philippines: Evaluation of Options to Enhance Resources Recovery and to Reduce GHG Emissions**, 2011. K Hetz, GIZ. ([Full-text](#))

In many developing countries the informal sector significantly contributes to resources recovery, which assists in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, an internationally agreed major target manifested within the Kyoto Protocol. Analyzing detailed waste generation and recycling market studies from Ormoc City, Philippines, and applying a GHG emission calculator, this paper closes knowledge gaps in the Philippines where the importance of informal sector involvement for successful solid waste management (SWM) is neglected. Based on this research, integrating the informal sector into SWM is recommended rather than excluding it as part of the SWM modernization process.

- **Scavengers and Their Role in the Recycling of Waste in Southwestern Lahore**, *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, Jan 2012. M Asim, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. ([Abstract](#))

This study deals with the scavengers and their role in the recycling of waste in southern Lahore. The estimated total amount of recyclable material recovered by all the scavengers working in the area is about 525 tons per month, which generates an income of \$30,875 per month. Despite their low economic and social status, scavengers are making important environmental and economic contributions. Scavengers not only reduce the waste but also supply secondary materials to the recycling industry and save the SWM industry expenditures of sweeping, transporting, and disposing of waste. The overall impact of scavenger activities is positive economically and environmentally.

- **Study of Recycling of Polymeric Waste in the City of Manaus: The Case of Waste Scavengers**, 2011. A Kennedy Vieira, Centro Universitário Nilton Lins-Uninilton Lins, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil. ([Full-text](#))

This paper proposes improvements in recycling in the city of Manaus envisioned as part of the manufacturing process of alternative construction materials using polymer waste. The improvements have the potential to greatly reduce the amount of waste in the environment of Manaus and thus to greatly transform the lives of its residents, especially the impoverished slum dwellers who engage in informal recycling as a means of financial support. Part of the study specifically targeted the waste scavengers and addressed the process of collection, storage, and packaging carried out by these scavengers, focusing on the identification of possible kinds of contamination.

VIDEOS

- **Waste Pickers: The Invisible Environmentalists**, CHF International - ([Video](#)), 4

min

A look at how CHF earned the trust of a wary community to help waste pickers advocate for themselves and overcome stigma about their profession.

- **Ghazipur Landfill and Waste Pickers in New Delhi**, Chintan - ([Video](#)), 2 min
Shows the working conditions of waste pickers in one of New Delhi's major landfills.
- **Waste Pickers'—Life & Livelihood**, SEWA - ([Video](#)), 11 min
The contributions waste pickers—the majority of whom are women—make to recycle and cut down on overall garbage burned or buried is being overlooked in an effort to modernize waste collection, leading to further marginalization of this vulnerable group.

Each WASHplus Weekly highlights topics such as Urban WASH, Indoor Air Pollution, Innovation, Household Water Treatment and Storage, Hand Washing, Integration, and more. If you would like to feature your organization's materials in upcoming issues, please send them to Dan Campbell, WASHplus knowledge resources specialist, at dacampbell@fhi360.org.



About WASHplus - WASHplus, a five-year project funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health, creates supportive environments for healthy households and communities by delivering high-impact interventions in water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and indoor air pollution (IAP). WASHplus uses proven, at-scale interventions to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under five years of age globally. For information, visit www.washplus.org or email: contact@washplus.org.

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