



# Health and Safety Guidelines for Waste Pickers in South Sudan

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## ACRONYMS

HHCW	Hazardous Healthcare Waste
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ID	Identification
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISWM	Integrated Solid Waste Management
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MSWM	Municipal Solid Waste Management
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PET	Polyethylene Terephthalate
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SME	Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SSDO	South Sudan Development Organisation
SWM	Solid Waste Management
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Objective**

This document reviews the practices of waste pickers at selected waste disposal sites in South Sudan and makes recommendations to improve their health and safety. The recommendations include steps that UNEP and other international organizations can take to improve the conditions for waste pickers’.

The report draws on information from the two dump sites serving the capital city, Juba—the Lagoon dump site and the Digala dump site—and from the sites serving the municipalities of Wau, in the northwest, and Malakal, in the northeast of the country.

### **1.2 Methodology**

This report is based on a number of activities undertaken throughout 2012 and 2013:

- Field work done on numerous visits to both the Lagoon and Digala dump sites;
- Observations made by Jada Albert, a consultant for UNEP, on dump sites close to Wau and Malakal;<sup>1</sup>
- Review of relevant reports and documentation, including the South Sudan Development Organisation report *Survey of Health and safety of Waste Pickers at Lagoon Dump Site, Juba* (the report is provided in Attachment 3);
- Interviews with key stakeholders, including:
  - Waste pickers at the Lagoon dump site and Digala dump site (the Digala site is no longer functional);
  - Senior representatives of the Juba City Council;
  - Senior officials of the administrative division of Rajaf Payam;
  - Senior representatives of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA);
  - Project staff from UNEP’s South Sudan office and other UN agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert, Jada. 2012. Solid Waste Management Plans for the Municipalities of Malakal and Wau. Juba: UNEP.

### **1.3 Implementation of Proposed Guidelines**

Section two describes the health and safety hazards faced by waste pickers. Section three proposes guidelines to address those hazards. To be effective, these guidelines will require the cooperation of numerous entities, principally:

- The legal entity responsible for the operation of the individual waste disposal site, which in most instances is the county or the payam where the site is located. (A payam is the administrative division below the county level.)
- Relevant government ministries and local authorities, such as the Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Human Resource Management; Rajaf Payam; and Juba County, all of which can provide on-site toilet and wash facilities.
- Waste pickers, whether acting individually or in a cooperative, who are responsible for complying with these guidelines to the extent practicable.
- International humanitarian and development agencies, which can assist with educational and livelihood initiatives to support women and children engaged in waste picking.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In South Sudan, as is the case throughout most of the developing world, a significant and growing number of individuals—known as waste pickers—earn a living by salvaging recyclables from the waste stream for income or personal consumption.<sup>2</sup> Waste pickers are often uneducated rural migrants who sift through trash heaps or dump sites looking for plastics, metal, and glass to sell to middlemen, who then send the materials to be recycled. These informal workers represent a significant proportion of the world’s working poor. In general, they have low and insecure incomes, and lack legal protections and social security.

It is estimated that this informal system results in recycling rates of almost 50% for plastics across the developing world, compared to less than 10% in the United States—which is why waste pickers have been called the “invisible environmentalists.”<sup>3</sup> Both within South Sudan and globally, waste pickers also contribute to the conservation of natural resources and energy by reducing the use of virgin materials and reducing air and water pollution from dump sites. They also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the reuse of materials.

Waste picking provides a cushion for many who lose their jobs during times of war, crisis, and economic downturn in countries that do not have welfare systems. It is also one of the few work opportunities available to people who lack formal education or job experience.<sup>4</sup> Rapid urbanization in South Sudan, coupled with the long-standing conflict with Sudan, has facilitated the expansion of waste picking by creating a large pool of unemployed and underemployed residents with few other means of earning a livelihood.

Further, and equally important in the local context, waste pickers divert significant amounts of waste away from the tipping cells (where trucks dump the waste) at the dump sites and therefore extend the operational life of the dumps—thus saving considerable costs to the authorities by delaying the need for investment in new disposal facilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Many different terms are used to refer to people who salvage recyclables from the waste stream for sale or personal consumption. In 2008, however, participants of the First World Conference of Waste Pickers chose to use the term “waste picker” for English usage to facilitate global communication. The term “scavenger” is also commonly used, but many waste pickers find the implied comparison with animals demeaning. See Samson, Melanie. 2008. *Refusing to be Cast Aside: Waste pickers Organizing Around the World*. Cambridge, MA: WIEGO.

<sup>3</sup> [http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/out-of-indias-trash-heaps-more-than-a-shred-of-dignity/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/out-of-indias-trash-heaps-more-than-a-shred-of-dignity/?_r=0).

<sup>4</sup> Christine Booner and Dave Spooner (2012). *The Only School We Have. Learning from Organizing Experiences Across the Informal Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organising (WIEGO).

### **3. HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS FOR WASTE PICKERS**

#### **3.1 General**

Health and safety is primarily concerned with the adaptation of work and the workplace to the physical and mental capacities, limits, and needs of workers.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) jointly adopted a definition of health and safety in 1950 and revised it by mutual consent in 1995:

*The promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; the prevention amongst workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions; the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health; the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physiological and psychological capabilities; and, to summarize, the adaptation of work to man and of each man to his job.*

In practice, health and safety involves assessing risk and then modifying systems to mitigate or eliminate it. In determining levels of risk, there are a number of factors to be considered:

- The nature of the work being undertaken;
- The environmental conditions under which that work is conducted;
- The preexisting health of the individual worker; and
- The availability of resources to improve a given working situation.

The development and adoption of appropriate health and safety practices for waste pickers in South Sudan is a challenging undertaking, but is central to their well-being.

#### **3.2 The Risks of Waste Picking**

Waste pickers within South Sudan, and indeed around the globe, face many serious risks to their health and safety.

- They risk being killed or severely injured by moving equipment, such as bulldozers or trucks carrying waste, particularly when the vehicles are reversing. It was reported by the site supervisor, and confirmed by numerous waste pickers, that a small child was recently killed on the Lagoon dump site by a waste vehicle reversing into the tipping cell.
- They are vulnerable to respiratory disorders due to prolonged and frequent exposure to smoke from the fires common at the dump sites.
- Individuals risk being temporarily injured by the sharp and heavy waste materials that they handle.
- They may be damaged permanently by exposure to fecal matter or to chemically hazardous, toxic, or otherwise contaminated waste.
- They risk infection with HIV or hepatitis C, particularly from hazardous healthcare waste (HHCW).
- After decades of armed conflict in South Sudan, waste pickers also face risk from unexploded munitions.

In the dangerous environment within which they work, waste pickers can suffer seemingly temporary injuries that may become permanent. For example, individuals may lose their livelihoods as a result of an accident or injury that in the developed world would be considered relatively minor and readily treatable. Minor cuts, for example, can quickly become infected in these unhygienic and contaminated working conditions. Such an infection might prevent a waste picker from working for a period of time, but it might also lead to the loss of a limb and consequent permanent loss of livelihood, or even to death.

Table 1 below presents risks to the health and safety of waste pickers around the globe in order of prevalence and severity.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1. Risks to Health and Safety of Waste Pickers**

Prevalence	Seriousness
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Joint pain</li> <li>2. Injuries / cuts</li> <li>3. Respiratory issues</li> <li>4. Gastrointestinal disorders</li> <li>5. Fatigue</li> <li>6. Skin infection</li> <li>7. Infectious diseases</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Infectious diseases</li> <li>2. Respiratory issues</li> <li>3. Skin infection</li> <li>4. Gastrointestinal disorders</li> <li>5. Injuries / cuts</li> <li>6. Joint pain</li> <li>7. Fatigue</li> </ol>

The risks to the health and safety of waste pickers within South Sudan are compounded by poverty and a lack of resources to purchase proper food, personal protective equipment (PPE) such as boots and gloves, and medical treatment when required. Further, they do not have access to clean running water or soap or disinfectant for cleaning themselves after finishing work at the end of each day.

All of these factors result in a high prevalence of infectious disease and chronic injuries among the waste pickers of South Sudan.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the risks posed to the health and safety of those waste pickers should be assessed and then either mitigated or eliminated where possible.

<sup>5</sup> South Sudanese Development Organization (SSDO). 2013. Survey Report on Health and Safety of Waste Pickers at Lagoon Dump Site, Juba. Project No. AE/30200902. UNEP/SSFA/DEPI/2012/PCDMB/075. Juba: SSDO and UNEP.

<sup>6</sup> Problems with the health of waste pickers is not simply an issue for South Sudan. For example, a World Bank study in Mexico City found that the average lifespan of a waste picker was 15 years less than the national average. In Port Said, Egypt, a 1981 study showed that within the waste-picking community one out of three babies dies before reaching the age of one. See Etribi, T.L. 1981. *The People of the Gabbal: Life and work among the Zabbaleen of Manshiyet Nasser*. Cairo: Environmental Quality International.

### 3.3 Stigma, Harassment, and Violence

Most waste picking activity is illegal or unpermitted, so waste pickers around the globe commonly face harassment by police and other authorities.<sup>7</sup> There is also a widespread public scorn toward waste pickers due to their apparent poverty, lack of education, and perceived lack of hygiene.

Although not at the level seen in some other countries, waste pickers throughout South Sudan do report that they face daily discrimination and are often referred to in very uncomplimentary terms by those in positions of authority.



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<sup>7</sup> One of the most extreme manifestations of such stigma occurs in Colombia, South America, where since the 1980s “social cleansing” vigilante groups, sometimes working with police complicity, have killed at least 2,000 waste pickers and beggars, whom they refer to as “disposables.”

## 4. HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR WASTE PICKERS

### 4.1 Controls at the Dump Site Entrance

With the exception of the Lagoon dump site, where JICA has provided significant funding, access to dump sites throughout South Sudan is presently unrestricted. People of all ages, in all conditions of health, and in all forms of clothing, enter and leave the sites with no record of their entrance or departure.

This unrestricted access to the waste disposal sites across South Sudan should be controlled in order to implement appropriate health and safety procedures for both waste pickers and staff operating within the respective sites.



The dump sites should have defined boundaries and limited entrance points. A record of entrance and departure should be made and kept at those entrance points. Eventually, waste pickers should be registered and issued identification passes.<sup>8</sup>

### 4.2 Protection Against Injuries

The use of PPE by waste pickers should be mandatory. Waste pickers working on dump sites should be required to protect their feet and lower legs with shoes or boots of appropriate size, shape, material, and condition.

However, presently the waste pickers in South Sudan lack access to funding to purchase the required PPE. Therefore, development agencies need to start considering interventions that can provide the waste pickers with appropriate microfinancing initiatives.

Alternatively, local municipalities could decide to suitably equip waste pickers with PPE, in recognition of the service that they provide to the broader community.



One of the greatest risks to waste pickers in South Sudan has been observed to be the considerable volume of toxic waste from hospitals mixed with municipal waste. Items such as needles and soiled bandages expose the waste pickers to the risk of a range of infections including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis.

Protective footwear should not, however, be so inflexible that it hinders the movement of the worker wearing it.

Similarly, safety shoes would not be appropriate for long periods of work in this hot climate. Rather, shoes with metal plates in the sole and the toe are the preferred option.

The hand, wrist, and lower arm are also vulnerable to injury. Most waste pickers sort waste with their bare hands. The use of appropriate gloves should be required. Those gloves should be flexible—preferably made of thick cloth as opposed to plastic, which can easily rupture—and should protect the hand and lower arm, or at minimum the hand and wrist. It is also important that gloves help rather than hinder the waste pickers in their collection activities, thus using gloves of the correct size and shape should be encouraged.

### 4.3 Protection of Body and Clothes

Waste pickers' bodies and clothes are routinely exposed to contamination from bacteria and potentially toxic chemicals. While the effect of contamination to the body is obvious, to clothes it is perhaps less so. The contamination of clothes is significant because most waste pickers wear the same clothes at work and at home. Any contamination of clothing that takes place at work, therefore, continues to threaten not only those collecting waste but also those the waste pickers come into contact with in their community and at home.

Waste pickers should protect themselves from this risk by wearing suitable garments at work. Some form of overall—preferably highly visible to reduce the risk of on-site vehicle accidents—should be worn by all waste pickers at all times once inside the perimeter of any dump site. Those garments should be removed on departure and cleaned. Again, it is important to note that correct sizes and materials should be used in order to have optimal impact and improve health and safety conditions.



### 4.4 Respiratory Tract Protection

Bacteria in and around dump sites is very mobile, particularly when attached to fine particulate matter blown by the wind. The presence of such bacteria poses the risk of infection to both the waste pickers and site staff.

Furthermore, the prevalence of fires at dumps exposes waste pickers to respiratory problems associated with smoke inhalation: coughs, breathing problems, headaches, and fatigue. Consideration should be given to the use of protective masks to minimize these risks. There are broadly two types of appropriate masks available: softer disposable and harder reusable masks. The latter are preferable if they are washed and



maintained, as they can last for more than a year.

However, there may be considerable reluctance on the part of some waste pickers to use protective masks because they can be uncomfortable and hot under the prevailing climate in South Sudan. A well-planned educational initiative could encourage their use.

It should be noted that within the Lagoon dump site fires have all but been eradicated as part of the JICA-funded improvements at the facility.

#### **4.5 Use of Waste-Sorting Tools**

Most waste pickers use their hands to work through the waste and are consequently at risk of injury. A small number of waste pickers use some type of crude tool, such as a stick or fork made from wood or metal.

Waste pickers should be encouraged to use appropriate, functional tools, such as small hand forks, in order to reduce the risk of injury. The use of such tools increases the efficiency of collecting recyclable materials.



There are, however, two major risks associated with the use of such tools. First, waste pickers might be tempted to sell them (especially if they are made of iron); second, they might use them as weapons in the event of a dispute within the dump site.

#### **4.6 Immunization**

Waste pickers should be immunized against life-threatening diseases—such as tetanus, meningitis, and hepatitis—that can be contracted while working within the dump sites. In conjunction with immunization, periodic health checks should be undertaken on at least an annual basis.

## 5.0 WASTE PICKER ORGANIZATIONS

### 5.1 General

Waste pickers in South Sudan have little power at this time to improve their working conditions. Until they are organized in some form that enables them to bring pressure on authorities and negotiate for better conditions, little will change. However, waste pickers in South Sudan face a number of barriers that may discourage or challenge collective action or organization:

- Low level of education and numeracy;
- Lack of legal protection;
- Widely dispersed and transitory workforce;
- Suspicion of official organizations;
- Lack of institutional experience;
- Lack of money and time to build organizations.

In addition to the above, within the dump sites in South Sudan there is a high level of alcohol abuse among the waste pickers, either through the consumption of locally brewed alcohol or through drinking residues from beer cans and spirit bottles found in the waste.

Despite these challenges, in recent decades waste pickers around the world—particularly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa—have started to collectively organize with the aim of improving their well-being and establishing a place within formal recycling systems.<sup>9</sup> Replicating those successes should be a goal in South Sudan. (A description of the global growth of waste picker associations is provided in Attachment 2.)

### 5.2 A Waste Picker Association for South Sudan

The bargaining position of waste pickers in South Sudan could be strengthened through the formation of a waste picker organization with the legal capacity to negotiate with the relevant authorities for improved conditions. Officials are more likely to recognize informal workers, engage in negotiations, and address current conditions if workers are well organized with clear objectives.<sup>10</sup>

By organizing, the waste pickers of South Sudan can pool their own considerable knowledge and skills and can build contacts with other organizations to gain new information sources and support. Such collaboration could enable them to bridge the knowledge and resource gap between themselves and those in authority. And it will, in turn, help them build confidence to develop strategies and speak out.

Further, by acting collectively the waste pickers could increase their power to demand higher prices for the recyclable material they sell. They might, for example, bypass middlemen and gain direct access to the regional markets in Uganda and Kenya. An absence of funds—for example, to rent a vehicle—would in the first instance be a major impediment.

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<sup>9</sup> UN Habitat. 2010. *Solid Waste Management in the World's Cities. Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities 2010*. London: Earthscan.

<sup>10</sup> Sinha, Shalini, and SEWA Academy Team. 2010. *Membership-based Organisations of the Poor (MBOP). Exploring the SEWA Model: Resource Book for MBOP Training*. Ahmedabad, India: SEWA Academy.

Box 1 lists a few key objectives that waste pickers in South Sudan could achieve by working collectively.

<b>BOX 1. POSSIBLE GOALS FOR A WASTE PICKER ASSOCIATION IN SOUTH SUDAN</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identity cards for waste pickers, supported by the implementation of rules of behavior to be followed at the dump site.</li><li>2. Authorized access to waste materials prior to compaction and covering.</li><li>3. Personal protective equipment, medical check-ups, and inoculations.</li><li>4. On-site facilities such as shaded working areas, toilets, wash facilities, and storage areas for waste materials.</li><li>5. Social protection and educational schemes targeting the many young children working at the dump sites.</li><li>6. Financial support, such as microfinancing schemes, to assist waste pickers to purchase new equipment and tools.</li><li>7. Educational campaigns to help change public attitudes toward waste pickers and to promote segregation of recyclables.</li><li>8. Legal frameworks that enable the hiring of waste pickers as service providers—for example, to enable them to bid for the provision of municipal waste collection and transportation contracts.</li><li>9. Transparent tendering processes for waste collection so that waste pickers can bid.</li><li>10. Equitable distribution of profits in the recycling chain.</li><li>11. Capacity-building courses and workshops.</li><li>12. Measures to encourage children working on the sites to obtain a basic education.</li></ol>

### **5.3 A Code of Conduct for Waste Pickers**

Whether acting individually or collectively, waste pickers should agree to comply with a standard of conduct at each site where they work. Any waste picker who fails to comply with these requirements should be banned from the site for a specified period of time; repeat offenders should be permanently barred from the site. Box 2 lists possible components of a standard of conduct.

## **BOX 2. A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WASTE PICKERS**

1. Report and register at the site office upon entering and leaving the waste disposal site.
2. Where issued, wear ID badges at all times.
3. Unless absolutely unavoidable, do not bring small children onto the site. Where provided, use portable educational facilities provided for your child's education.
4. Wear all personal protective equipment provided. This should, ideally, include overalls, a high visibility/reflective vest, safety boots, gloves (preferably thick leather, not thin plastic), and disposable face masks.
5. Where provided—or if not, where affordable—ensure that regular health checks are completed at least every six months, and keep inoculations up to date.
6. Do not work close to moving equipment, such as bulldozers and vehicles, particularly when they are in reverse. Rather, work within designated areas away from moving plant vehicles and equipment.
7. Maintain high levels of hygiene:
  - a. Wash hands thoroughly before eating. If soap and water are not available on site, carry water and disinfectant in a bottle.
  - b. Shower at the end of the working day, utilizing site facilities where provided.
  - c. Regularly wash work clothes to minimize the risk of transferring contaminants and bacteria from the work site to home.
8. Do not smoke on the site due to the risk of fires and explosions.
9. Do not drink alcohol on the site.
10. Do not burn waste products such as plastic coating of electrical cables within the site.
11. Comply with the instructions of site staff and operational plans within the site.
12. Do not fight, curse, or use threatening behavior on the site.

The code of conduct for waste pickers should be implemented by the legal entity responsible for the site. In most cases in South Sudan this will be the county or the payam where the site is located. However, it would make little sense to try to enforce the entire code unless the responsible authorities, possibly with assistance from the international humanitarian and development community, upgrade the sites' infrastructure, including but not limited to provision of the following:

- A site office, entrance gate, and perimeter fence;
- Wash facilities with running water;
- Toilet facilities such as a pit latrine;
- Designated safe working areas, which may change on a daily basis depending upon the size and location of the tipping cell.

In addition to providing these facilities at the sites, government agencies should review the feasibility of funding the provision of PPE and medical exams, as clearly such items are not affordable to the waste pickers with their meager incomes.

In the meantime, UNEP should explore, perhaps in conjunction with other humanitarian and development agencies, opportunities to assist with the task of enhancing the well-being of waste pickers, many of whom are women and young children.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

1. All of the relevant government sectors in South Sudan (state, country, municipality, payam) acknowledge that waste pickers provide a valuable, albeit informal, service by recycling considerable quantities of waste. In doing so, they extend the operational life of waste disposal sites, thus deferring the need for further capital investment.
2. Due to the deplorable working conditions at dump sites, the waste pickers provide their services at considerable danger to their health, safety, and livelihoods. The workers lack protective equipment and have low levels of awareness about the inherent risks involved.
3. The health and safety of waste pickers throughout South Sudan is seriously at risk from hazardous healthcare waste from hospitals and clinics that is mixed in with routine household waste. The management of HHCW needs an urgent review and enforcement, and prosecution of those who violate good practices.
4. The absence of a waste pickers organization prevents them from negotiating greater selling power for their recycled materials and for improved conditions and training.
5. Simply introducing policies stating that waste pickers should have personal protective equipment does not address the root causes of the problem. Waste pickers do not earn enough money to afford such items; all of their efforts go to feeding and supporting their large families, as they are often the only income earners within their extended families.
6. Sustainable improvements in the conditions and livelihoods of the waste pickers can only be implemented by a collaborative approach that incorporates progressive policies by the relevant authorities with support from the international humanitarian and development community.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Much needs to be done to improve conditions and opportunities of the waste pickers in South Sudan, but UNEP is limited in what it can do. However, UNEP can act as a catalyst to galvanize action by the international humanitarian and development communities, as well as within the government and NGO structures of South Sudan. The following are key activities:

1. Work with the existing waste pickers at the Lagoon dump site to establish a waste pickers association to provide PPE, medical check-ups, access to microfinancing, and educational opportunities for children on the site.
2. Establish the waste pickers association first at a pilot level, with a small number of members. Thereafter it could be scaled up within the site, and in other sites throughout South Sudan, after an initial year of operation.
3. Encourage the pilot association to establish links with other associations in Africa and globally, particularly in nearby countries such as Uganda.
4. Introduce identity cards for waste pickers, first at the Lagoon site. In conjunction with the issuance of ID cards, a code of conduct should be developed. Individuals who regularly fail to comply with these rules should have their permission to enter the site revoked for a period of time or, for repeat offenders, permanently.
5. Develop progressive government policies, such as those in Brazil and India, to improve the well-being of waste pickers in South Sudan. Initiatives include giving waste pickers access to government pensions, health services, training, and microfinancing.
6. Ensure that all small children of waste pickers are returned to full-time education. Many women working as waste pickers have no option but to bring their young children with them to the disposal site. Indeed, many small children are themselves engaged in waste picking. An initial step could be the provision of staffed porta-cabins to act as a crèche and school—even if, initially, only for a few hours each day.
7. Encourage members of the international community (such as the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, UN Development Programme, UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs) to leverage funding, assistance, and training to provide health and safety equipment and to assist the numerous women and children operating on the site.
8. Review the management of hazardous healthcare waste because HHCW represents the greatest threat to the health and safety of waste pickers and site staff. At a minimum, HHCW should be stored in separate containers, transported in separate vehicles, and disposed of in a separate trench within the disposal site until such time as suitable alternatives become available, such as incineration or steam sterilization.

## ATTACHMENT 1

### THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE LAWS AND POLICIES

Development agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academics understand the positive contributions that waste pickers make, and there is growing awareness that repressive policies toward waste pickers should end and that inclusive policies to improve their well-being should be adopted.

Brazil and India are two countries that serve as examples of positive laws and policies relating to the work and well-being of waste pickers.

#### **Brazil**

In Brazil the National Solid Waste Policy, enacted in 2010, recognizes waste picker cooperatives as service providers and, as a result, institutes a number of mechanisms to support cooperatives and municipalities that integrate informal workers into solid-waste systems.

Waste pickers in Brazil have access to the National Health System, although only a minority earns enough to pay for the national pension scheme. However, a social welfare project law being discussed at the National Congress will, if approved, allow waste pickers to contribute 2.3% of their income to the national pension scheme.

In the city of Diadema, the waste pickers organizations included in the municipal source segregation scheme are paid the same amount as a private company per ton of recyclables collected. This was made possible by Law 2336/04, which entitles organizations to be paid by service rendered.

Further, the Brazilian Bank for Economic and Social Development has opened a social fund that enables cooperatives to access funds for infrastructure and equipment.

Some corporations in Brazil have been supportive of waste pickers. For example, Wal-Mart has partnered with the waste picker association in the state of Bahia. In addition to installing recycling containers at collection points for its customers, the company has also invested in the development of the waste pickers association by giving technical support and improving the cooperative recycling warehouses.

#### **India**

National policies in India clearly recognize the informal recycling sector. The National Environment Policy of 2006 states: "Give legal recognition to and strengthen the informal sector systems of collection and recycling of various materials. In particular enhance their access to institutional finance and relevant technologies." The National Action Plan for Climate Change, enacted in 2009, and other policy documents also refer to waste pickers.

Progressive regional legislation has been passed in many states. In Pune, the municipal government has authorized waste pickers to provide doorstep waste collection. It has also endorsed identity cards for waste pickers, helping them to create an identity as workers and thus increasing their self-esteem.

Opportunities for waste pickers to help corporations deal with post-consumer waste offer a niche for informal workers in Mumbai and other cities in India. Waste pickers are involved with companies such as Tetra Pak in the recovery of paper and plastic-aluminum into separate commodities, and with Coca Cola for shredding and recycling plastic bottles.

The impact of these examples is important. In some countries, the laws have created special financial mechanisms for capacity building and for access to funds for infrastructure. Also, waste pickers in several countries have been able to secure customary rights to wastes at the municipal level by using the law, thus putting their waste recycling activities on a firmer legal and financial footing.

## ATTACHMENT 2

### WASTE PICKERS ORGANIZATIONS

In recent decades waste pickers around the world—particularly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa—have begun collectively organizing to improve their well-being and earn a place within formal recycling systems.<sup>11</sup>

Waste pickers have used many formats—cooperatives, associations, companies, unions, and micro-enterprises—to organize. Despite the differences in format, most of these organizations share three primary purposes:

- By securing uniforms, safety equipment, and work permits (where necessary), they can increase health and safety as well as respect and dignity for their members.
- By pooling capital, such as in a micro-enterprise, and forming partnerships with business and government, waste pickers can increase their selling power of recycled materials.
- By demanding recognition and compensation for their environmental and economic contributions, cooperatives increase members' political standing.

Internationally, waste pickers have joined forces to fight for their livelihoods against privatization of waste management and “waste-to-energy” schemes that favor corporate incinerators and reduce their potential earnings.

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<sup>11</sup> UN Habitat. 2010. *Solid Waste Management in the World's Cities. Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities 2010*. London: Earthscan.



*The Global Alliance of Waste Pickers has attended climate change conferences to engage on issues of “waste-to-energy” projects and a Green Climate Fund*

A significant milestone in the development of waste picker associations occurred in March 2008, when delegates from 30 countries gathered in Bogotá, Colombia, for the first World Conference of Waste Pickers.<sup>12</sup> Since 2009, waste pickers around the world have been working with the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) as the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers and Allies to raise their voices on the world stage and struggle for recognition of their significant environmental contribution.

### **Waste Pickers Organizations in Africa**

Many countries in Africa have fledgling waste picker associations, and it is believed that within the next few years an African waste picker’s network will be established across much of the continent. Below are details of some Africa waste pickers’ initiatives:

- Egypt has one of the world’s most established and robust informal recycling systems. The labour is done for the most part by waste pickers who commenced operations back in the 1940s.
- The South African Waste Picker Association in July 2009 held its first meeting, which included 100 waste pickers from 26 landfills across the country.

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<sup>12</sup> Rodríguez-Garavito, Cesar. 2006. “Solidarity Economy and the Struggle for Social Citizenship in Ties of Globalization: A Study of Cooperatives of Informal Garbage Pickers in Colombia.” In Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., *Another Production is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, 43–69. New York: Verso.

- In Uganda, a close neighbor to South Sudan, the Waste Pickers Alliance Uganda<sup>13</sup> (WPAU) works to promote waste pickers' livelihoods by supporting the upgrading of work settings, training in trade, promoting savings, and enhancing waste pickers' capacity to minimize HIV/AIDS and waste-associated health risks.
- In Senegal the waste pickers association, referred to as Book Diom, is based around the Mbeubeuss landfill in Dakar. The association was set up in 1995 and has a membership of approximately 800 individuals. In the approximately 15 years since its establishment, Book Diom has made many gains in improving the situation of its members and their families. For example, the landfill now has a health center, a literacy center, a credit and savings co-op, and training on important issues such as handling e-waste.<sup>14</sup>



*The aim for developing waste picker organisations throughout Africa is to improve health and safety and livelihood issues.*

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.wpau.org/category/uncategorized/>

<sup>14</sup> Chantreau, Fanny. 2011. "Learning from India." *Waste Picking in Africa* newsletter, volume 1.1, (September). [http://www.inclusivecities.org/pdfs/African\\_WP\\_newsletter\\_1.pdf](http://www.inclusivecities.org/pdfs/African_WP_newsletter_1.pdf).

## ATTACHMENT 3

### SOUTH SUDANESE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

#### SURVEY REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY OF WASTE PICKERS AT LAGOON DUMP SITE, JUBA

PROJECT NO. AE/30200902  
UNEP/SSFA/DEPI/2012/PCDMB/075

The South Sudanese Development Organization (SSDO) conducted a five-day survey (November 5–9, 2012) on the practices of waste pickers at the Lagoon dumping site in Juba. The Lagoon dump site is 9 km from the centre of Juba and is currently under the management of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Juba County.

Before SSDO started collecting information from the pickers, buyers, and transporters, the project was first introduced to the Rajaf Payam and Digala boma authorities, who host the dumping site, to inform them of the project.

During the course of the project, SSDO interviewed 60 waste pickers, 7 waste dumpers, and 9 waste buyers. See Table 1.

**Table 1. People Interviewed During the Survey**

Category	Male	Female	Total
Waste pickers	18	42	60
Waste buyers	8	1	9
Waste dumpers	7	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>76</b>

Two companies (SKYCO and SANDROCK) buy the waste materials at the dump site and deliver them to operational hubs in both Uganda and Kenya, where there is a better market than they would find in South Sudan. There are also some individuals who buy the waste material and transport it to Kenya and Uganda.

## Findings of the Survey

The preliminary findings of the survey indicate that the great majority of waste pickers are interested in access to food through increased income. Opportunities for leadership, respect, or recognition are valued by a significantly smaller number of the waste pickers.

The primary data of the survey yielded the following conclusions:

- The waste pickers are mostly returnees from northern Sudan.
- The majority are women aged 30–50 years old. Children 14–20 years constitute the second-largest group. Men 25–40 years constitute the smaller number.
- Most women and men are married, and their spouses are not employed. There are also women who are widows. Most children are orphans, and others live with single parents or relatives.
- The majority of waste pickers live in close proximity to the Lagoon dump site, in areas such as Loquilili, Buaba, Jebel Yesua, and Mereloto.
- Most of them live in temporary shelters made of thatched grass, plastic sheets, and used iron sheets.
- The waste materials collected include food, water, juice, aluminum cans, iron, hard plastics, PET bottles, mixed plastic containers, and electric wires.
- The working hours for the waste pickers are between 8 AM and 6 PM. Most of them work throughout the week.
- The waste materials are sold at the dump site every day. Waste buyers come to the dump site from 8 AM to 5 PM.
- The average daily income for the waste pickers is 5 South Sudanese pounds.
- Most of the waste pickers have worked for at least one year at the Lagoon dump site.
- While at work, the waste pickers eat food items from the waste. When they collect food, water, or anything edible, they eat it right away.
- The waste pickers wear only ordinary clothing and open sandals while at work. They do not wear gloves, masks, shoes, or other protective gear.
- During their work, they come into contact with blood, feces, sharp metal, and hazardous objects.
- Most waste pickers have been injured at work.
- A small number of waste pickers have received abuse from neighbors, peers, and relatives due to the nature of their work.
- The waste pickers work in all weather.
- The majority of the waste pickers do not feel safe at work.
- Most waste pickers have not visited a doctor in the last six months. They buy medicines from drug shops, and others use local herbs in case of sickness.

**Table 2. Impacts on Waste Pickers' Health, Safety, Livelihoods, and Human Rights**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Causes</b>
<b>Health</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High prevalence of infectious diseases</li> <li>2. Malnutrition</li> <li>3. Lethal diseases</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to hazardous materials</li> <li>• Using used healthcare materials</li> <li>• Eating expired foods</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Injury</li> <li>2. Being run over by trucks</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to broken glass, syringes, needles, and sharp objects</li> <li>• Trucks that dump the waste</li> </ul>
<b>Livelihoods</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Waste buyers withdrawing from buying waste material</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecurity of waste buyers</li> <li>• Lack of a market within South Sudan</li> </ul>
<b>Human rights</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marginalization</li> <li>2. Loss of social respect</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of work, mostly considered dirty</li> <li>• Lack of sympathy with the needs of the waste pickers</li> </ul>

### **Challenges and Constraints to the Study**

During the course of the survey, certain constraints were experienced:

- Local authority in Rajaf Payam does not recognize the mayor as responsible for hygiene and sanitation related to solid waste management, resulting in some organizational overlap and confusion.
- Waste pickers shied away from photo sessions due to the nature of their work.
- During the first day of the survey, waste pickers withheld information, as they were uncertain as to the nature of the exercise.
- There was little organization of the waste pickers, making penetration of the group initially difficult.
- The drivers of some dumpers resisted interview.
- Some buyers of recyclable materials resisted interview.
- Heavy rains occurred during the nights, causing poor turnout of the pickers during daytime.



More technical information available at:  
<http://www.unep.org/SouthSudan/>  
or: [postconflict@unep.org](mailto:postconflict@unep.org)

