



**“We realized that movement is therapy.”**

WIEGO Photo News Report – Ergonomics Workshop with Waste Pickers from Redesol, Cataunidos and Catavaes

Belo Horizonte, July 29, 2019  
Photo Credit: Lucas Dias



Photo: L. Dias

On July 29, 2019, thirty-nine waste pickers, representing seventeen cooperatives, belonging to three second-level networks – Redesol, Cataunidos and Catavales–, participated in an ergonomics workshop. This workshop was led by certified physical therapist, Pedro Fonseca, and is part of the action-component to the Cuidar Project, an exploratory health risk mapping conducted in waste picker cooperatives in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The Cuidar Project is a joint initiative of WIEGO's Social Protection and Urban Policies Programmes. The ergonomics workshop was funded through a grant obtained from the Maquilladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN) and support from WIEGO's Social Protection and Urban Policies Programmes along with the Workers' Health Without Borders (WHWB) group.

Through a train-the-trainer approach, waste pickers participated in an exercise routine based on the McKenzie Method – Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (MDT). Exercises included:

- **lumbar spine extension;**
- **thoracic spine stretch;**
- **cervical spine retraction with overpressure;**
- **cervical spine lateral flexion with overpressure;**
- **shoulder extension exercise;**
- **quadriceps stretch.**

This exercise routine sought to address musculo-skeletal pain, which was one of the main health concerns identified by waste pickers during the Cuidar Project. Chronic and acute pain results from repetitive motions and working long hours in awkward postures, often gender-specific. One of the main reasons for addressing this health concern is that pain greatly affects waste pickers' current and lifetime productivity and personal well-being.



Photo: A. Ogando



Photo: L. Dias

WIEGO's experience in supporting informal workers has shown that occupational health and safety is an effective entry point for stimulating collective action for decent working conditions and for organizing and building solidarity, which is especially important in the case of informal workers who have no access to other social protection measures. Hence, the workshop was conceived as a mobilizing tool for three second-level networks of cooperatives to collectively reflect on their health concerns in a practical manner.

### Getting Ready - Breakfast



Photos: L. Dias

### Part 1 of Workshop - Warm-up Activity and Expectations



Photos: L. Dias

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# WORKSHOP

One of the main objectives of the workshop was to respectfully address waste pickers' concerns about pain with a specific focus on gender, age and socio-economic vulnerability. A second objective was to encourage waste pickers to train colleagues at their cooperatives on the exercise routine as a way to promote wellness and a healthier work environment.



Photo: L. Dias



*"This was a short workshop, but we were able to make the most of it. I have something to take back to the cooperative." (waste picker)*

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**Participants were also given a fact sheet on waste pickers' health based on Cuidar Project findings and a poster with the exercise routine and health tips.**



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## Part 2 of Workshop: Recap of Cuidar Project Findings and Learning about the Exercise Routine



*"I think today we learned about something that is easy to do. Because we often think that pausing our work for even a minute is complicated, that we can't do it and it's going to disrupt us. But I think that these few minutes [of exercise] are going to actually improve the way we work."*

*"We need to convince our colleagues at the cooperatives. The base needs to take out 10, 20 minutes to care for their health."*

*"We're going to get rid of our small pharmacy at the cooperative and just start doing the exercises."*

*"I'm thankful for this learning opportunity. We are often told we don't like to stop work and think about our health. This was a good workshop."*



Photo: L. Dias

## Key Highlights from the Workshop:

1. Active engagement from waste pickers throughout workshop;
2. Commitment to train other cooperative members on exercises;
3. Commitment to follow-up with WIEGO and physical therapist on implementing exercise routine;
4. Positive feedback on the Cuidar Project and overall lessons learned at the workshop.
5. A few days after the workshop, several cooperatives sent pictures and news that they have started the exercise routine with their colleagues.

## Next Steps:

1. Field visits to cooperatives to evaluate the train the trainer approach;
2. Provide additional information to waste pickers via email and social media.



Photo: L. Dias

