



Asociación de
Recicladores de Bogotá



Asociación Nacional de
Recicladores



Red Latino Americana



Waste Pickers without Frontiers

First International and Third Latin American Conference of Waste-Pickers

Bogota, Colombia
1-4 March 2008

Report of Conference Proceedings

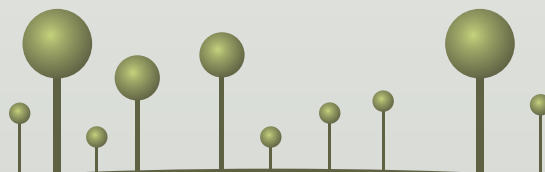




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All photos were taken by Marty Chen, Leslie Tuttle, Lucía Fernández,
ARB (Association of Waste Pickers of Bogota) and Chris Bonner





INTRODUCTION

This Conference was a joint effort of waste picker and support organizations from different countries. It brought together two planned events: the Third Latin American Conference of Waste Pickers, organized by the Latin American Network of Waste Pickers and supported by the AVINA Foundation, and the First World Conference of Waste Pickers, initiated by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).



An International Steering Committee organized the Conference. This was made up of fourteen members from nine countries (See below). The Association of Waste Pickers of Bogota (ARB), and local organizing committee, hosted the Conference, playing a major role in all the many practical arrangements, developing the programme and managing the budget.

Conference Objectives

The objectives of the Conference were to strengthen the organization and connection of informal waste pickers globally, especially women, aiming to:

The daily bread is the origin of our struggle, gives us strength not to stay in our houses made of wood or tin, but to go out and work. Citizens do not understand, but ours is a daily fight, one that is fought on the streets, and on the dumpsites. ”

Exequiel Estay,
Secretary Latin America
Waste pickers network

- make visible their contribution as workers to environmental protection, health and the economy and the formal solid waste management system of the municipality;
- ensure their effective participation and voice in all forums that affect their working lives and social position, *and specifically:*
 1. To share experiences among informal waste pickers from different countries across the world;
 2. To deepen understanding of, and build confidence in, the role and contribution of informal workers in the solid waste management chain;
 3. To develop strategies and approaches to common challenges, such as public policy;
 4. To develop strategies to intensify organization amongst waste pickers in the Latin American region and globally;
 5. To gather potential support from other organizations, governments, international agencies etc;
 6. To build and strengthen partnerships with other committed activists and movements;
 7. To plan a way forward for the development of regional and international networks.

International Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was composed of representatives from different countries from the following organizations, and the Conference Coordinator, Lucia Fernandez:

- Association of Waste Pickers of Bogota (ARB) from Colombia
- National Association of Waste Pickers of Colombia (ANR)
- Latin American Network of Waste Pickers with representatives from Brazil, Chile and Colombia
- Trade Union of Waste-Pickers (KKPKP), India
- Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) from Peru, South Africa and USA
- AVINA Foundation from Brazil and Colombia
- Collaborative Working Group on Solid Waste Management in Low and Middle Income Countries (CWG) from Egypt and Brazil

Financial Contributions

Conference organisers would like to thank all those who made a financial contribution to the Conference, including those who funded individual participant's travel, accommodation or other expenses. In particular we would like to thank Ford Foundation, AVINA Foundation and NATURA for their generous contributions and support. We would also like to thank all those who voluntarily gave their time in planning, organizing and participating in the Conference.

This Report

This report is a record of the Conference proceedings in summary form. For more information, photographs and full presentations from the Conference visit the Conference web site at www.recicladores.net or www.wiego.org.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First World Conference and Third Latin-American Conference of Waste Pickers

The First World Conference of Waste Pickers was held in Bogota, Colombia, from March 1st to 4th, 2008. Thirty-four countries were represented at the event, which brought together participants from Latin America, Asia, Europe, North America and Africa. Participants were

waste-pickers of solid waste, as well as representatives of development agencies, NGOs, private enterprise and government. The Conference combined different session formats such as plenary presentations, smaller-group discussions of specific themes run as parallel sessions, and group-work by type of participant and region. The Conference was conducted primarily in Spanish with simultaneous translation into Portuguese and English.



DAY 1 of the Conference celebrated the National Day of the Waste-picker in Colombia, with the participation of nearly

700 people, including participants from other

countries and a large representation of waste-pickers from all corners of Colombia. This day featured different plenary presentations that shared the Colombian experience but also situated the waste-picking activity in the world panorama. Presentations were made by Colombian authorities, the Environment Minister and a former Judge of the Constitutional Court of Colombia, and representatives of waste-picker organizations from around the world. An interesting presentation by Adriana Ruiz Restrepo shared the experience of Colombian waste-pickers in using the law to defend their role in the public solid waste management system, and their access to the waste.

A general overview of the situation of recycling and of waste pickers in the world - from the very origins of the activity in past centuries, through to the present - was given by Martin Medina, who has recently published a book about waste-pickers worldwide. Other presentations covered the financial dimensions of the informal activity of waste-picking and presented cases of alliances with enterprises, forged under principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS). The day was closed by Bernardo Toro, special Advisor to Avina Foundation, whose intervention followed a structured methodology to prove that the waste-picker profession is one of the most important professions of the 21st century.

DAY 2 gave participants the opportunity to attend one of five parallel thematic sessions to share experiences.

Two keynote presentations preceded these sessions relating very important organizing experiences of the National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil (MNCR) and the Trade Union of Waste-pickers of Pune, India (KKPKP). These

“Waste-pickers contribute to the economy and benefit the environment. However, they are socially disadvantaged, discriminated against and harassed by the public, ignored or treated as a nuisance by government.”

Marty Chen,
WIEGO

presentations explained the organizing strategies of waste-pickers in their countries and the key moments in the evolution of their organizations.

Five parallel sessions followed, during which participants shared experiences on the following themes: organizing experiences of waste-pickers, progress of waste-pickers in the recycling value chain, opportunities and risks posed by technological changes and privatization, Corporate Social Responsibility, and the role of waste-pickers in the public system of solid waste-management. Each session was facilitated by a waste-picker and a supporting technical person acted as note-taker, both appointed by the Conference Steering Committee. A series of guiding questions were provided to each session to orient the discussion after the session presentations. Conclusions reached at the sessions were reported back to plenary. These included issues of: value chains that start with waste separation at origin, giving waste-pickers a key role in selective collection; alliances with Municipalities that recognize the value of waste-pickers work; strengthening of waste-pickers organizations; training in recycling techniques, compost and bio-gas, as well as organizational management; political negotiation with authorities and forging alliances with the community of neighbors and with private enterprise. The day ended with the presentation of the experience of the National Board of Recycling of Colombia.



DAY 3 started by providing some successful networking experiences, with the presentation of a local network, Catasampa of Brazil and a global network, the international network of street vendors, StreetNet. Both provided useful ideas about the difficulties and advantages of linking up the efforts into networks. Participants then broke out into groups according to their regions of origin to discuss joint work in networks in the near future. Participants from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe shared the conclusions of their discussion with the plenary afterwards. Waste-pickers from each of these regions appointed one representative

to form a committee that convened and issued a joint final declaration of the conference.

The **Final Declaration of the Conference** promotes the social and financial inclusion of waste-pickers and the priority their role should be given in the solid waste management system; it rejects incineration and burial-based processing technologies, as they go against modes of popular economy; it defends technologies that maximize the utilization of solid waste, such as composting; it commits to maintain contact among waste-pickers from around the world to exchange experiences and technology; and, proposes to review laws and public policies, so that these include waste-pickers' organizations and promote the professionalizing of the activity. (The declaration appears in the next section of this document.)

During the regional discussions, the largest group, Latin America, split into separate sessions, one for waste-pickers and another for technical staff. The latter was also divided into four sub-group sessions of foundations and NGOs, technical staff who work at waste-picker cooperatives, enterprises, and government. The waste-picker's group elected a representative from each country (12) to carry-on discussions about the future of the Latin American Network of Waste-pickers. The Network elected a new secretariat, which is now held by the Brazilian National Movement of Waste-pickers and issued their own **Declaration of the 3rd Regional Conference of Latin American Waste Pickers** (The declaration appears in the next section of this document.)

DAY 4 gave participants the opportunity to visit projects of the Bogota waste-pickers. There were two routes of guided visits that included stops at places such as the Recycling Centre of Alqueria, the office of the Bogota Waste-pickers Association, the National Association of Waste-pickers of Colombia, the relocated community of recyclers at Pedro León Trabuch and the the Collection Centre of El Porvenir. These visits allowed participants to have a better understanding of the organized participation of waste-pickers of Colombia in the public policies of their cities, and the evolution of the organizing movement of waste-pickers.

Many interesting activities took place outside the Conference hall. There was an exhibition of photographs of waste-pickers around the world and in history. Some organizations brought samples of their products made from recyclable materials to be sold. There were many cultural groups that entertained participants through music, song and dance.

Participants shared a feeling of sincere gratitude with the conference organizers, especially the Bogota Waste-pickers Association and the National Association of Waste-pickers of Colombia. Without their leadership, vision and dedication, this encounter would not have been possible.





“In the experience of Bogotá waste-pickers, law was useful to defend their right to work when private interests on waste, the second most profitable industry in the world, were taking away their access to waste.”

Adriana Ruiz Restrepo,
Pro Bono lawyer
for the ARB



DECLARATIONS

I. GLOBAL DECLARATION OF THE 1ST WORLD CONFERENCE OF WASTE PICKERS

At the first World Conference of Waste-pickers grassroots organizations of waste pickers from around the world, gathered in Bogotá, Colombia, from March 1st to 4th, 2008, representing waste-pickers from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, make a declaration to the public, governments, support organizations, society in general, and their own organizations, joined by technical advisor delegates, technical support organizations, government representatives, NGOs, universities, enterprises, micro-enterprises and other civil society groups:

We Declare

1. Our commitment to work for the social and economic inclusion of the waste-picker population, promote and strengthen their organizations, to help them move forward in the value chain, and link with the formal Solid Waste Management systems, which should give priority to waste-pickers and their organizations.
2. Our agreement to reject incineration and burial based processing technologies and to demand and work on schemes of maximum utilization of waste, as activities of re-use, re-cycling and composting represent popular economy alternatives for informal and marginalised sectors of the world population.
3. Our commitment to continue sharing knowledge, experience and technology, as these actions will promote and accelerate contact with the greatest possible number of waste-pickers and their organizations across the world, making visible their living and working conditions and their contributions to sustainable development.
4. Our commitment to advocate for improved laws and public policies so that their formulation effectively involves waste-picker organizations. Waste pickers should become actors in decision-making, searching for improved common conditions, and for capacity building activities and knowledge for the recognition and professionalization of their work.

II. Declaration of the 3rd REGIONAL Conference of Latin American Waste Pickers

In Bogota, between the 1st and 4th of March 2008, the delegates of 15 Latin American countries, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Ecuador, Paraguay, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Haití, and Colombia; declare as members of grassroots organizations of waste-pickers, also known as *pepenadores*, *cartoneros*,

cirujas, clasificadores, buceadores, guajeros, minadores, catadores, Thawis, barequeros and countless other denominations according to where they come from, the following commitments in the framework of the Third Latin American Conference of Waste-pickers, to the public, governments, communities, society in general, cooperation agencies and their own organizations.

We Declare

1. To promote globally recognition of the profession of waste-pickers and their organizations, through creating spaces for discussion, and to develop strategies for having active presence in those spaces.
2. Generate actions and strategies for the recognition of the Latin American Network of Waste-picker organizations and to certify the work and the profession of waste-pickers and their organizations.
3. Commitment to share and socialize knowledge to waste-pickers and their national organizations, their local structures and the members of the different movements.
4. Promote the progress of waste-pickers and their organizations in the value chain, to gain access and share in the benefits generated by the activity.
5. Contribute to a World mobilization from each country in a connected effort that seeks to have a World day of the Waste-picker aimed at recognition of the activity and of the people who work as such.
6. The congress participants demand from governments that they prioritize waste-pickers organizations in the solid waste management system, giving the required conditions for their inclusion, through the development of social, financial and environmental affirmative actions.
7. Review laws and public policies so that they include waste-pickers organizations in their formulation, considering them as actors in decision making
8. The participant organizations commit to generate the capacity building, training and knowledge to professionalize the activity.
9. The global commitment to promote contact with as many waste-pickers and waste-picker organizations as possible.
10. Advance together with the world, regional and local committees with the aim of controlling the value chain and its income, through networks and production centers.
11. To work to implement the commitments of the Declaration of the Second Latin American Congress Waste-pickers.





CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

First World Conference and Third Latin American Conference of Waste-Pickers

Day 1: March 1st, 2008: National Day of the Waste- picker in Colombia

The first day of the Conference celebrated the National Day of the Waste-picker in Colombia, and the first day of the International Conference of Waste-pickers. The presentations reflected these two occasions in their content. Seven hundred participants attended this day, coming from 34 countries, with a large representation of waste-pickers associations from all corners of Colombia.

Inauguration of the Event

Beneath each speaker's name, the paragraph that follows either paraphrases the speaker's comments in the third person or is an excerpted quote by the speaker.



Chairperson: Nohra Padilla, Association of Waste-pickers of Bogotá

Nohra welcomed all participants and introduced the people who would inaugurate the event. The National Anthem of Colombia was sung, along with the Bogotá anthem and the Latin American waste-pickers anthem. The band "Ladiguana" played a short piece using recycled materials as instruments. A minute of silence was observed in memory of waste-pickers who have died in the course of their work. Organizers and sponsors were thanked: the National Association of Waste-pickers of Colombia, the Association of Waste-pickers of Bogota, Avina Foundation, Ford Foundation,

WIEGO, Natura, the Collaborative Working Group on Solid Waste Management in Low- and Middle-income Countries (CWG) and Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) from India.

Eduardo Galeano, Writer. Video message, broadcasted

Mr. Galeano pre-recorded this message on video. It was shown at the conference.

"A poor man spent a large portion of his life in prison. One day God asked him to make a general inventory of the world, and when he was doing it, death arrived. The inventory that the man was making in the mental hospital of Rio was made up of cardboard, broken brooms, pieces of glass, tired veins, departure letters, old wood, rain water. The year he died, there was a march in Colombia of the "disposable Colombians". A friend told the true story about Creation to the so called "disposables": God had little pieces left from all he had created. He forgot to create men and women. When he realized the distraction, he got hold of all the left-

Selection at origin, adding value, offering more services, and manufacturing products with recycled materials, are also options to improve the situation of waste-pickers.



Martin Medina

overs He had. So, we were born from waste, we have some portion of us made out of plants, of the sun, the rain, the time, the animals.”

Wendy Arenas, Avina Colombia

Ms. Arenas congratulated the audience because the waste-pickers movement is not only Colombian, but a world movement. *“In the days that follow, we will discuss the economic, environmental, and social impact that waste-pickers have in the world.”* She encouraged this to be an emotional encounter, not only rational, to push us all to dream ahead. She congratulated the ARB and the ANR for bringing together more than 500 waste pickers from around the world, and conveyed that for Avina Colombia, this effort had entailed coordination among different country offices, and with other sides of the world.



Martha Chen, WIEGO

Ms. Chen represents a global action-research policy network that seeks to increase the visibility and voice of those who work in the informal economy. It supports informal workers' organizations, such as street vendors, home-based workers, domestic workers, and promotes global connections between them. *“We recognize waste pickers are hard working and enterprising, part of the larger value chain of solid waste management, and that they contribute to the economy and benefit the environment. However, they are socially disadvantaged, discriminated against and harassed by the public, ignored or*

treated as a nuisance by government. We would like to join hands in your struggle for identity and dignity, for organized strength and representative voice.” Professor Chen thanked the organizers and remembered a past visit she made to Bogotá in 1964, when she was impressed by the waste-pickers in the city, who are today the hosts of this Conference.

Maldemar Oliveira Neto – Maneto, Avina Foundation, Brazil

“Dreams that transform the world are the dreams we dream together. Two years ago I had the opportunity to get to know the dream of Silvio and Nohra to make this happen in Colombia. We then learnt this was a dream that could ally with the dreams of others who were seeking a world event. This is the beginning. Waste-pickers are a project of future for humanity, a new sustainable economy built on the foundation of social justice.”

Exequiel Estay, Secretary, Latin-American Waste-pickers Network

At the second Latin-American Waste-pickers Congress, Exequiel used to say that the sun that rises over the Atlantic is the same sun that rises over the Chilean mountains to shine on the struggle of waste-pickers. But now he can say that it is the sun that shines over waste-pickers from around the world, and gives us strength. He invited participants to join him in repeating the motto *“organized waste-pickers will never be stepped on” (from the Spanish, recicladores organizados jamás serán pisados).*

“The daily bread is the origin of our struggle, gives us strength not to stay in our houses made of wood or tin, but to go out and work. Citizens do not

understand, but ours is a daily fight, one that is fought on the streets, and on the dumpsites.”

Alejandro Martinez Caballero, Former Judge of the honorable Constitutional Court of Colombia, former Councilor of Bogotá

Mr. Martinez encouraged participants to seek to work in decent/dignified conditions, complying with the constitutional norm on real equality. He asked the Environment Minister to respect the need of waste-pickers to work. He encouraged waste-pickers of the world to continue working for decent conditions and for equal rights.



Juan Lozano, Environment Minister

“This is a significant event. It focuses on those whose daily work helps avoid degradation and destruction of the environment. We recognize that over the years our Government has not been up to scratch on this sector. We need to recover lost time. We need efficient public policies and social dialogue. The State is still weak in how it deals with the issue of recycling. We need a strong sector for waste collection. Waste pickers showed the way. We need the productive sector now to show responsibility.”

The Minister explained that the prime time of Sunday evening at 7:30pm was at the disposal of the Conference. He noted that if there had been a march, a protest or the blocking of a road, there would have been press coverage, but because this is a peaceful event, it does not raise the same interest.

Dario Castro, National Association of Waste Pickers of Colombia

“We are commemorating the 1st of March 16 years ago when 11 waste pickers were killed at the university and their organs used as teaching materials. One played dead and went for help. Law 511 now makes March 1 the Day of the Wastepickers

Bogota is 9th in the world for the most environmentally friendly city. The contribution of waste- pickers to this is very important. But, although we are organized, we are struggling to be given our rights as workers. For example, we have been taken out of the landfills. They took away our wheelbarrows and carts. Why can't we be on the landfills? ”

Dario Castro challenged the Minister on his supportive speech but noted that it ignored the treatment of waste pickers such as those on the landfills.

**Adriana Ruiz Restrepo, pro bono lawyer to ARB,
*The Fight Against Poverty through Law: the Experience of the Bogotá Waste-pickers Association as an example of Legal Empowerment***

“In 6 months the new world agenda for the fight against poverty through law will be released. Law is similar to a coffee bean: it has two sides that mutually complement each other, laws and by-laws on the top, and human rights on the bottom. Legal empowerment means that vulnerable

populations can have access to justice, through law. In the experience of Bogotá waste-pickers, law was useful to defend their right to work when private interests on waste, the second most profitable industry in the world, were taking away their access to waste. Waste-pickers showed that they could move 700 tons of solid waste per day, when there was a strike in the city. They were determined to do it on a more permanent basis, participating in the Municipal tender as entrepreneurs. The law forbade them to do it, as only a particular type of enterprise, stock firms, could be public services providers. They took the case to Court and it was determined that waste pickers could also be part of tendering processes for public services.



The Constitutional Court then issued a writ of human rights protection to protect the income of waste pickers. This was done when tendering processes required firms to have 5 years in the business, operating in cities of more than 500 thousand inhabitants. After this, the Court established that it was against the law to carry out any tendering process related to solid waste management without consulting with waste-pickers in the first place and allowing them to tender. This is the use that can be given to Law. Law was also used to criminalize waste-pickers for accessing waste. The law stated that once waste was brought outside buildings, it became private property

of the waste management contractor assigned to the zone. This law was also changed. In life, there is no one solution, there are forces. Those forces have to be created and the solution follows. No big cameras are needed when one can load images in U-tube, Facebook and Myspace. The UN Commission for the “Legal Empowerment of the Poor” was very impressed with the use given to law by the Bogotá waste-pickers association, which, in an executive, managerial and entrepreneurial way, used the constitutional route to empower themselves in their activity, being poor themselves. This case will be used at universities abroad to illustrate how law can help the fair causes of the poor”. Ms. Ruiz thanked the lawyers who helped with these cases in Colombia, pro bono.

Hamit Temel, Ankara Recycling Association, Turkey

He is President of the first waste-pickers association in Turkey. He would like this event to take place every year. On behalf of all waste-pickers, he offers support to the Conference, which he expects to have good results.

Laxmi Narayan, KKPKP, India, Asia

On behalf of the waste-pickers of India and Asia, Ms. Narayan wishes the best for the conference. The situation of waste-pickers in India is very different from the one in Colombia. She looks forward to the exchange of experiences and the mutual learning that will take place.

Hani Shaker, Egypt

Mr. Shaker brings greetings from 60,000 waste-pickers from Cairo, who are not as advanced as those in Latin America. They have not obtained

“It was decided that it (Catasampa local network, Brazil) would not be an organization incubated by any other entity. It would be an organization that from the beginning would be built by the waste-pickers themselves.”

Roberto Laureano,
Catasampa, Brazil

laws in their favor. Mr. Shaker is sure much learning will take place in the next few days that will benefit all participants.

Ignacia Osorio, México

Ms. Osorio is happy to be at the event, sharing experiences and learning.

Severino Lima, National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil (MNCR)

“We have participated at other Conferences, where a family starts to be formed. We have learnt much at the Latin American level. I hope that what will be discussed here will allow all to leave without any doubts about organization and recycling.”

Nohra Padilla, Bogotá Waste-pickers Association (ARB)

Nohra thanked the communications team at the ARB, the alternative press and others who are willing to broadcast, from different spaces, what is taking place here today.

Carlos Garay, President FEDERINCOL, Colombian Federation of Independent Recyclers

He congratulated the national movement and the Bogotá movement for convening the conference. FEDERINCOL was created at the National Congress of Waste-picking/Recycling of Manizales, Colombia. The organization gathers thousands of independent waste-pickers, while respecting the structures of the ARB and the National Association of Waste-pickers of Colombia. Waste-pickers are the first link in the value chain. Intermediaries and industries are the ones who obtain the majority of the benefits. They are trying to raise this at the National Board of Recycling of Colombia, where the industry is also represented. Only 10 % of the 300 000 people who do waste-picking is organized. Many ARBs should exist. They are fighting for the Law that will create the National Fund for Recycling so that there is support to the work of waste-pickers.

Commemoration of the National Day of Waste-pickers

Silvio Ruiz Grizales, Association of Waste-pickers of Bogotá (ARB)

He welcomed all the types of waste-pickers of the world, who share a common history that has been invisible. *“Today, thanks to all, we celebrate the National Waste-picker Day in Colombia, remembering fellow waste-pickers who passed away, after 40 or 50 years of working as waste-pickers, without health coverage, pension, housing or security. We, waste-pickers, will keep the hands in the garbage bag that provides our livelihood, but the head outside of the bag, to fight for the public policies that we need to improve our situation. Intermediaries wait comfortably in their warehouses, and waste-pickers do the hard work of collecting. Waste should not be of the intermediaries, but of the waste-pickers who do all the work. United, we can fight for what is needed.”*



Awards

The organizers of the ARB and the National Waste-pickers Association of Colombia offered commemorative plaques to the following institutions and people to thank them for their collaboration and commitment:

- ❖ Avina Foundation
- ❖ WIEGO
- ❖ Revista 14-6
- ❖ Natura
- ❖ National Waste-pickers Movement of Brazil
- ❖ Waste-pickers Union of Pune, India, KKP KP
- ❖ Councilor Alejandro Martínez and Mr. Eduardo Díaz
- ❖ Waste-pickers cooperative of Eastern Antioquía, Alborada
- ❖ Waste-pickers cooperative of Cume Cucuarao
- ❖ Bogotá cooperative
- ❖ Chapinharon, chapico Waste-pickers cooperative
- ❖ Santo Espólito Murillo and Myriam Herrera

World Overview: Presentations



Martin Medina, *World Overview of Waste-picker' Activities*

Martin showed a series of illustrations and pictures from past eras to communicate that recycling is not a new activity but one that has existed since ancient times. There are records that prove that metals have been recycled as early as 5 thousand years ago. At the end of the 19th century, there were waste-pickers in Japan, USA, France and England, and even exports of rags and paper from France to England.

At present, it is estimated that 1% of the urban population of Africa, Asia and Latin America is in the waste-picking activity. Martin

shared pictures of the activity in Indonesia, China, Argentina, Philippines, Cambodia and others. Waste-pickers face problems such as the lack of understanding from society and authorities, health and security risks, exploitation by intermediaries, and control by leaders and political parties. These can be addressed with the formation of strong organizations and with changes in the orientation of laws and public policies to be more “pro-poor”. The ARB and the ANR are pioneers in the world in both senses, promoting the professionalizing of waste-pickers.

“Selection at origin, adding value, offering more services, and manufacturing products with recycled materials, are also options to improve the situation of waste-pickers”. The Brazilian National Movement of Waste-pickers has achieved holding annual meetings with President Lula to present their situation and demands. Privatization of public services and globalization pose additional challenges to waste pickers. Waste-pickers work is the perfect example of sustainable development.

Dr Gunther Weherpohl, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit(GTZ) *The Economic Impact of the Informal Sector in Solid Waste Management*

This presentation promotes the importance of measuring the economic impact of the waste-picking activity in order to have information that is useful in negotiations with Municipalities. At the micro level, informal waste-pickers aim for separation at origin or at designated spaces, and require less capital than the formal sector. States claim that the informal sector does not pay taxes. At the macro level, waste-picker's activity creates savings, as less raw materials are needed. The conclusion of this presentation was that the distinction between formal and informal sector is not what is key, but the possibility of giving dignified work to a population that is now marginalized.

Panel: State, Enterprise and Waste-pickers in Solid Waste Management



Cecilia Rodriguez, former Environment Minister of Colombia, *Considerations for a Socially, Environmentally and Financially Sustainable Policy Model in Solid Waste Management*

“The State must understand the three components inherent in SWM: financial, social and environmental. For a long time, the financial view has dominated, SWM being under the realm of the Ministry of Finance. Waste-pickers are invisible in this view, despite how much we owe them for their work of several years to reduce the amount

of waste in the city. Waste-pickers took part in the working groups that modified legislation regarding the property of the solid waste. The idea is not to fight for solid waste but to have a win-win model that includes waste-pickers and the environment. The State should have incentives for the sustainability tripod, financial, social and environmental. The psychological profile of the waste-pickers is of entrepreneurs, who we should be supporting. Encounters such as this one should take place every year in each country, with the participation of the State, and of all the actors in the value chain.”

Luzia Hilda and Maria Monica da Silva, Clean Life (Vida Lima)

Diadema Model, Sao Paolo, Brazil, Integration of Waste-pickers in the the Public System of SWM

Diadema Municipality has a high density population. It produces 400 tons of solid waste per day, collected by the city and placed at the sanitary landfill for which 5 million Reais are paid every year. They forged an alliance between the population, the state and the waste-pickers. The latter organized themselves in self-managed groups that do selective collection. They also have a network of drop-off points, processing areas, an environmental education program for the neighbors to collaborate, and enforcement mechanisms. *“For us, more than a selective program, it is a solidarity program”.*

Maria Monica da Silva

Waste-pickers themselves are in charge of the selective collection, they establish a relationship with the neighbors. They have 6 drop-off points in the city, with the goal of reaching a total of 13. At the drop-off points, the collected waste is selected and pressed. They presently have recycling industries among their buyers, they have 4 products they sell to the final industry, without the need for intermediaries. They employ young men who need to work, some of them who have been in drugs.

“Four years ago, I was a simple waste-picker of the street, I was introduced to the Clean Life Program and there I discovered that I was a leader. I fight for our rights. I am proud of our class”.

Jorge Pablo Seghezzo, Model Rosario Municipality, Argentina

Rosario is a city of one million inhabitants. The 2001 crisis in Argentina increased the number of waste-picker families from 800 in 1994 to 1,400. They are independent family groups. They are not organized. Solid Waste Management cannot be separated from the activity of waste-pickers. Separation at origin presently covers 10% of neighborhoods, and they aim at reaching 50%. Waste-pickers work with drop-off containers and with collection carts. The Municipality has a close relationship with waste-pickers. The speaker does not recommend the model of taking the waste somewhere to be selected, as this can create disguised black markets.



“In Rosario, there is not the pride to which Monica referred in the previous presentation as “a pride of the class”, we need more social integration. The middle class in our city does not want to see the waste-picker on the street.”

Pedro Villares, Natura, Challenges of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Promotion of Social Inclusion

Natura is a Brazilian cosmetics firm that has been operating for 40 years. It works through “consultants” who do direct sales (person to person). They have 700 thousand sales consultants in Brazil and 100 thousand in total in other countries of Latin America, with operations in Chile, Bolivia, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and France. They will start in the US next year. As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, the company has the challenge of achieving financial, social and environmental results, for which it promotes recycling of their packages and the purchasing of raw materials, such as Brazil Nuts and other fruits, to producer groups that work in a sustainable way guaranteeing a fair pay. One month ago, they started a recycling project in Colombia, where 2 thousand sales consultants are involved in Bogota with the organized waste-pickers. They have had impressive results in just one month.

Conclusion of the Day

Bernardo Toro, Advisor, Avina Foundation

The Waste-picker: a professional job in the XX1 Century

The waste-picker is a professional of the 21st century. A profession is relevant when it solves an important problem in society and does it within a system. Educators guarantee that children learn, and do it through the education system. If the problem disappears, the profession begins to disappear. For example, when there were carts pulled by horses, there were blacksmiths. Today we have more auto-body workshops, and their systems are now more and more computerized. The value that the public assigns to a profession is very important: soccer players make much money because the world values goals. Initially, recycling was an option to overcome the exclusion of unemployment, but since the care professions are the professions of the future, the waste picker has a unique value in society as he cares for the environment with a social value.

It is very difficult to violate the human rights of organized populations. All donor agencies recognize that successful projects are those carried out by strong organizations. However, nobody provides funding to form organizations. In Colombia, the ARB and the ANR had much support of Fundación Social.





Day 2: March 2nd 2008, Sharing Experiences

Welcome by the International Steering Committee

Presentation of the Conference Program, Silvio Ruiz Grizales (ARB) and Chris Bonner (WIEGO)

The Steering Committee representatives outlined the Conference Objectives and Programme. They noted that the Conference Steering Committee, which planned this event as a joint effort of organizations from around the world, comprised 14 people from 9 countries. They faced a variety of challenges that included different time-zones, languages and different ways of speaking the same language, as with English from South Africa, India and North America.



Organizing Experiences: Keynote presentations

Severino Lima, National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil (MNCR)

"It is difficult for waste-pickers to have occasions where they get together, they must travel long distances to do so. Being part of the planning of this initiative has been a big effort. We are here seeking to coordinate a political connection worldwide. We also aim at strengthening the Latin American network, and at inspiring the delegates from other continents to dream of having encounters like this in their continents."

Eduardo Ferreira de Paula, National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil

"We aim at achieving changes in public policy, and we want to demand our rights. For more than 50 years we have been providing services in Brazil. Today, we are better organized, but there are still fellows who work with carts, just like in the logo. There is vast discrimination against waste-pickers who are working on the streets. They are harassed, evicted, and their carts are taken away. Many times they are imprisoned for performing their work."

The first Congress of waste-pickers in Brazil in 2001 was started with several hundred waste-pickers. Now they have many achievements thanks to their fight, the marches and the direct actions. They count amongst these achievements an inter-ministerial committee for the social inclusion of waste-pickers. The Labor Ministry recognizes their activity, and they have a National Day of the Waste-picker, which is June 7th. There is a federal law from 2003 that states that all federal (state) entities, should donate their selective collection to waste pickers cooperatives. This law was developed with direct involvement of the waste-pickers. In 2007, another law was passed to exempt waste pickers from the tendering-process to carry out the selective collection activities."

Once a year MNCR representatives meet with President Lula to discuss their demands and celebrate Christmas. The organization is there not for one waste-picker, but for the 800 thousand waste-pickers in Brazil-

*"We will overcome fear,
time for weeping is
gone, we will assert our-
selves, enjoy ourselves,
we will be part of creat-
ing a new world."*

Indian song

organized or unorganized. There are still intermediaries who add value to the products by selling them at a higher price than that paid to waste pickers. However, we also provide materials directly to the recycling industry, and even have our own recycling industry, such as the plastics plant in Belo Horizonte. Waste-pickers are the source of 90% of the materials supplied to recycling industries. Corporate Social Responsibility at enterprises is connected to interests other than those of waste-pickers. We are talking more to enterprises, to be better informed about their activities and goals.”

Laxmi Narayan

General Secretary of the KKP KP Trade Union, India

Laxmi shared the words of the song that the Indian representatives were performing for the plenary: *“We will overcome fear, time for weeping is gone, we will assert ourselves, enjoy ourselves, we will be part of creating a new world.”*



Laxmi showed pictures to explain the different types of waste pickers that exist in India, and their personal profile: *dumpsite collectors, bin collectors, street collectors, itinerant buyers who go around in carts buying from different populations, and doorstep collectors (citizens pay a fee and the collector uses a cart from the municipality). “Most of the dumpsite, bin and street collectors are women. Ninety percent of waste collectors are women, 90% of them are illiterate, and 5% of waste collectors are children, mostly girls. Most have migrated from rural areas to cities due to drought and other reasons, and are also subject to oppression in their castes. They live in small slums, and*

secure a daily income of average US\$2. They are victims of harassment. When asked about how they see themselves in the future, they have no view of themselves. Sorting of materials collected usually happens outside the scrap-traders shops, which are very small in size.

The municipal system focuses on collection and transportation, not on recovery. Waste-pickers have proved to the system that waste collector’s transportation is more flexible, cheaper and allows for more recovery. The formal system now involves waste-pickers.

There are very few experiences of processing plants.”

“KKPKP started as a program for children at a university, so that they would attend school after working at the dumpsites. Women offered to send their children to school if the work conditions for adults were improved. Issuing identity cards for waste-collectors was an important step that proved very useful in their struggle. In the past, if stopped by the police, they would not have any identity.

KKPKP is registered as a union. It demonstrates that the work of waste collectors is important socially, economically and environmentally. It demands better working conditions and security of livelihoods, and rejects child labor. KKPKP rejects incineration-based technologies as it takes

away the work of waste-pickers. Recognition, respect, dignity and social security are what members demand.

KKPKP is a mass organization, which allows negotiating with politicians, who are interested in votes. It is a trade union and a cooperative, to formalize the work with traders and with citizens.



The organization cannot reject privatization but can defend a role in it. Waste Matters is a program by which waste collectors do doorstep collection house to house, promoting home segregation of waste. This is decentralized, much cheaper than the public system of collection, recovers more materials and even has a program for organic waste. It protects the livelihoods of waste-pickers, reduces traffic and pollution, and increases the life of the landfill. Citizens' attitudes are changing, there is a willingness to pay for the service. This is a viable mechanism to sustain livelihoods which is financially sound, and environmentally and labor friendly."

Important issues for Waste-pickers: Parallel Sessions

Five sessions on different themes took place simultaneously. At each session, there was a waste-picker acting as the facilitator, and a supporting technical person who was taking notes. All sessions had several presentations of experiences, followed by a time at the end to collectively respond to some guiding questions, and to have a dialogue. The conclusions of the discussion at each session were afterwards shared with the plenary.

Organizing Experiences of Informal Waste-pickers: Group 1

Report Back to Plenary

Group 1 discussed the following questions:

- Why are organizations important?
- What makes an organization strong?
- What obstacles are there to form organizations?
- How to overcome those obstacles?

Conclusions

Why are organizations important and what makes an organization strong?

- Organized waste-pickers have a better situation in general, and are less persecuted
- The organizations' objectives must be clear. There should be common goals
- Unity between the organization's leaders and members is important
- It helps to obtain resources and to be listened to
- Training and building knowledge
- Waste-pickers are in a better position to negotiate with governments

What obstacles are there to forming them?

- Envy, negative attitudes of some people
- Lack of technical support
- Lack of attention/listening by Municipalities
- We don't know how many we are. Doing a census at the country level in all countries is necessary
- We are not considered for tendering processes
- How to compete with multinational and large enterprises

How to overcome these obstacles?

- Obtain technical assistance, professional help
- Build strong organizations
- Promote participation, learn to participate



Participants Shared Experiences

The following experiences were shared at this session. All presentations can be found at the following link: www.recicladores.net

Egypt and South Africa (SDI) waste picker groups, Laila Iskander

In Cairo there is no formal organization of waste pickers but there are neighbourhood associations. They have been collecting and recycling for over 50 years. Their strength is in their participation in the value chain and technical competence and not in formal organization. Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) focuses on land and housing

through savings groups. Recently it has started to focus on livelihoods and recycling with some groups putting their savings into recycling projects. They participated in a 3 city/ country exchange to look at recycling activities- Cairo-Egypt, Cape Town-South Africa and Nairobi-Kenya

Cambodia, Community Sanitation and Recycling Organization (CSARO), Heng Yon Kora

This organization provides training to waste pickers in aspects of group management, paper and plastics recycling, composting and others.

Turkey, Ankara Recycling Association, Hamit Temel

This organization was formed in 2005. It defends the right to work and demands recognition and a stop to the violence against waste-pickers. They are marginalized and their work conditions are very difficult.

India, Harit Recyclers Association, Shashi Bushan

This organization advocates for the right to access waste and to promote awareness of recycling with several State agencies. In 2007, it created a trade union which presently has 12,000 dues-paying members. They promote social security alternatives for waste-pickers, among other demands.

Argentina, Recycling Dreams, Work and Transformation Cooperative, La Matanza, Province of Buenos Aires

This cooperative finds its strength in being organized, which has allowed them to work under the Municipal resolution of separation at origin (home segregation). They have “environment promoters”, collectors, and a team of classifiers in a venue given by the Municipality. They commercialize what is recyclable. All the actors must have a role in the process.



Chile, Waste-pickers Association of Peñalolen

They have a centre called the Labor Centre for Action and Social Development, which works closely with the Municipality. They have loans from the State to buy their push-carts. They do selective collection from homes, after campaigns with the neighbors. They work in alliances with large recycling enterprises. They train waste pickers in environmental matters, relations with the community, recycling techniques and elaboration of handicrafts with recycling materials. They want to incorporate more waste-pickers to their organization, and aim at replicating their experience at other Chilean cities.

“It was eye opening for the street vendors to see how the waste collectors are organizing. And to see common problems they face, like when the livelihoods of catadores are given to private businesses.”

Pat Horn,
StreetNet International

Mexico, Chen kolelo ob (only women) Cooperative, Celestún, Yucatán

This cooperative recycles plastics. They obtained a venue from the Municipality with some basic infrastructure to operate. The members themselves were involved in the construction of the venue. They are holding conversations with the PET recycling company to obtain better conditions for their work and sponsorships.

Productive /Value Chain in the Informal Sector: Recycling pyramid: Group 2

Report Back to Plenary

Group 2 discussed the following questions:

- Explain/situate the value chain/market in your case
- What obstacles has the participation of waste-pickers faced in the value chain?
- How can waste-pickers insert themselves in the solid-waste value chain, and at which level to maximize their benefits?
- Which are important alliances to insert waste-pickers in the value chain?

Conclusions

- The work with waste pickers suffers prejudice, the population prefers privatization
- In India the problem of caste, levels of society, makes everything more difficult
- One of the difficulties is the scientific and technical expertise that waste-pickers require, but lack.

Participants' Shared Experiences

The following experiences were shared at this session. All presentations can be found at the following link: www.recicladores.net/

Costa Rica, The issue of Gender in Solid Waste Management, GTZ, Martina Kolb

This describes a micro-enterprise approach for recycling initiatives in Costa Rica. The presentation analyzes the situation of credit, formalization, invisibility and unpaid work of women.



Indonesia Solid Waste Association, Ferry Guanto

The presentation explains the situation of waste-pickers in general, including the health risks to which children and women are exposed. It explores 5 issues that will be pivotal to the future of waste-pickers: legal, institutional, social, financial and technological. It makes demands to governments to start the legal and institutional recognition of waste-pickers activity, which will bring improvements in the social aspects of their lives, mainly in health and education.

Puerto Rico, Community Group for Recycling Inc. PT

The presentation describes the context of the recycling activity in Puerto Rico. The enterprise results from the cooperation between community enterprises and government. They provide employment in the community, and training to professionalize the activity. The materials they recycle are destined to export markets.

Hong Kong Cleaning Workers Union, Wong Pui Yan

The presentation provides an overview of the situation of inequality in Hong Kong, with specific data about the feminization of poverty. It describes the waste-collection process and the tension generated by the government regulations between cleaning-workers and waste-pickers who compete for the recycling materials to sell them. It describes the experience of the *Cleaning Workers Union* and of the *Community Network for Recycling*, a project set up for community engagement in a women-led plastics recycling experience.

Nepal, Independent Garbage Worker's Union of Nepal (IGWUN), Mohan Nepali

IGWUN is a union of 9,000 members, mostly men. They do training and credit saving activities, and advocacy to eradicate child labor.

Trends in Technological Innovation and Privatization, and Implications for Waste-pickers: Group 3

Report Back to Plenary

Group 3 discussed the following questions:

- Opportunities and risks for waste-pickers in the context of processes of technological innovation and privatization

Conclusions

- Technology should not, “exclude the excluded”, it should be available to all waste-pickers and to all of society. Technology should not be elitist. This is the great challenge. We should look at experiences with “social technology”, developed in Brazil (Diadema, Londrina, Salvador, and other Brazilian cities).
- Popular knowledge should be considered in the different forms of social technology developed to serve society and mainly waste-pickers. It is possible to improve the quality of life of people. We should pay attention to technologies developed for selective door-to-door collection, with environmental education performed by waste-pickers.
- Waste-pickers should receive training in digital inclusion. Experiences from other countries in digital inclusion should be considered, such as that from the *Center for the Democratization of Informatics (CDI)*, in Latin America.
- Technologies to increase the recycling of new materials should be stimulated so that these do not become waste, increasing commercialization opportunities for waste-pickers.
- Adopt technologies that are adequate to the reality of each place (community, municipality, city, state and country), that prioritize innovation and low cost for implementation, such as manual push-carts, bicycles with carts, etc.
- The privatization of the systems of public waste collection is a reality of the current world. It is involved with corruption in several countries. Privatization should not happen with the exclusion of waste-pickers, creating more unemployment. It is a public service that should be universalized and given to the population with efficiency, low cost, and with social control and regulation by the population.
- Efforts should be developed along with the formal institutional powers (such as the Supreme Court of India) so that waste-pickers be recognized and be able to use adequate technologies for the services of selective collection in cities.



- Technologies for generating clean energy with resources of the Mechanism for Clean Development (Quito Protocol) should integrate waste-pickers, as well as all the ways of re-utilization of solid waste. This will expand the opportunities to a greater part of society instead of benefiting a few enterprises.
- Waste-pickers should explore the possibility of raising funds along with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for Public Private Partnerships in solid waste management. They should also analyze the possibilities of creating stock-holding cooperatives and enterprises to intervene in the public cleaning system.
- Brazilian experiences with networks of cooperatives and associations, in political organization as well as organization to improve the income and work of waste pickers, should be considered.
- Information should be a strategic tool for waste pickers.

- Technologies should consider a low capital-to-labor ratio.
- Sensitize the population about privatization not being a definite or only option.
- Waste-pickers should consider that the projects of the organizations that support them should be implemented rigorously in partnership with them, and should not become a livelihood for those organizations. Specific timetables and concrete results should be defined in the planning stage of the projects. Organizations should consider a fair distribution of the funds raised.

Participants Shared Experiences

The following experiences were shared at this session. All presentations can be found at the following link: www.recicladores.net/

Brazil, Economic and Social Inclusion of Waste-pickers. A Bunchaff

The Brazilian context for the waste-pickers activity is difficult from the point of view of organization, lack of recognition by Municipal governments, as a rudimentary activity, dealing with intermediaries, few opportunities to reach scale in the commercialization, etc. The presentation conveys the results of a study done to estimate the cost of generating new waste-pickers jobs, compared to the cost of creating those jobs in other industries.



India, Stree Mukti Sanghatana, Jyoti Mhapsekar

This presentation communicates the achievements of the *Stree Mukti Sanghatana* organization and its *Organization for Women Freedom*, created in 1975 in Mumbai, India. They have centers for child care and counseling. Most of those collecting waste are women who run high health risks. They make an important contribution to society for environment conservation, materials recuperation, provision of materials to industry, savings in transportation costs and costs of dump-sites, etc. It explains the process to obtain bio-gas that has several benefits. They

have training programs for waste-pickers in these technologies.

India, Privatization of Waste in North India, Chintan, Bharati Chaturvedi

Municipalities are privatizing collection and recycling of waste. Privatisation should include waste pickers for example in door-to- door collection. Policy should include the entire chain and prioritise livelihoods and social aspects - not just technical aspects. Chintan Environment Research and Action Group functions as a partnership between waste pickers and the core Chintan support team.

Brazil, Sustainability and New Actors in Urban Space: The Organization Process of Waste-pickers. Bertrand Sampaio

This presentation covers the history of the origin of the National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil and its challenges ahead, to operate with activities that are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable.



Risks and Opportunities for Waste-pickers from SWM privatization, WASTE, Liliana Abarca
 Modernization of SWM is part of the reform processes that are taking place at Municipalities. New actors go in the system seeking investment opportunities. The presentation analyzes the characteristics and roles of Municipalities and waste-pickers' organizations in the formation of Public-Private Partnerships. Users should see alliances with the private sector as beneficial. Key success factors in those alliances are the credibility of actors and the transparency in the processes.

“This day is a day of awareness, it is not a celebration, because we still do not have that much to celebrate.”

We, waste-pickers, will keep the hands in the garbage bag that provides our livelihood, but the head outside of the bag, to fight for the public policies that we need to improve our situation.”

Silvio Ruiz Grizales, Association of Waste-pickers of Bogotá (ARB)

Venezuela - Cooperativa La Rosa

The presentation explains the problems faced by the community of Merida with the misuse of State funds originally allocated to a transformation and recycling factory, which ended up invested in a separation site with a cost much higher than planned. The management of the site was assigned to a firm that did not offer good working conditions or labor benefits to its workers. The Cooperative *La Rosa Mística de San Benito* was created as a fake mechanism to employ workers under different conditions and to have access to special incentives from the State. After much struggle, workers at the separation site took over the management of it, but were shortly after persecuted and forced to leave the site by police intervention. A reformed cooperative of workers is negotiating with the mayors of the area to regain access to the site, and to be able to run operations again, since the separation site is presently closed.

Colombia, Green Tales, Cali, Collection Center, Neighborhood 13

They promote separation at origin (home-segregation) and have 6 collection centers. They gather material from neighbors in bicycle-carts and bring them to the collection centers. They commercialize the materials.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Strategic Alliances: Group 4

Report Bank to Plenary

Group 4 discussed the following questions:

- Alliance-building to empower/strengthen waste-pickers
- Reasons for engaging in activities with enterprises: philanthropy versus strategic alliances; and, inclusive businesses versus a “bottom of the pyramid” approach

Conclusions

- Is CSR a voluntary initiative of the company, or is it an obligation? Should it be the voluntary initiative of enterprises, or should it be covered under legislation? Specifically regarding solid waste, most countries do not force their enterprises to look after their solid waste. The Natura project is so important because they are not obliged to do it, but are doing it. At some point, legislation will be required.
- A model without waste-pickers should not be allowed. It is important to have alliances with enterprises that know how to work with waste-pickers

- Many companies' CSR are philanthropy projects. They have to think about CSR in relation to their productive value chain. The recycling value chain is complex, there are dozens of chains according to the specific material, ie: cardboard, steel, PET (Polyethylene terephthalate products such as plastic coke bottles) etc. It is a big challenge. Therefore it is important that waste-pickers have a good understanding of the whole value chain.
- An important issue ahead is certification, schemes that could guarantee that those who buy from waste-pickers are not exploiting them.
- It is a challenge for enterprises to recognize the autonomy of waste-pickers. Many companies do not feel capable of having a direct relationship with waste-pickers.
- *"It is necessary to move to higher levels in the value chain, not to be stuck in the separation stage. This does not mean to stop being waste-pickers, but that our organizational processes should take us there."*



Participants Shared Experiences

The following experiences were shared at this session

Venezuela, Polar Beer, 3R's Program

The presentation explains the classification program of the company, which is organized with consumers and at public beaches

Brazil, Natura Cosmetics, Pedro Vilares
Natura's main proposal is to learn to work together with waste-pickers associations, delivering the solid waste to them and investing funds to improve their processing plants. The

right mechanism for such alliance has to be developed for each country.

Chile, Gerdau Aza, Alex Ramos

Gerdau is a Brazilian steel manufacturer. The affiliate company in Chile is named Gerdau Aza. The company supports waste-pickers in Chile, working through an NGO named *Casa de la Paz*. They have networks built around collection sites. They have been able to recuperate 60% of the domestic waste in the cities. The national network comprises 15 groups. The program provides the opportunity to generate new employment. The raw material that Gerdau Aza utilizes is 100% scrap metal. Waste-pickers have not formed efficient networks. The current program seeks to increase their income by 30 to 40% and to strengthen their organizations.

Colombia, CECODES

Colombian Enterprise Council for Sustainable Development, part of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, is composed of 31 enterprises that promote sustainable development, including Natura. The companies' presidents comprise the Council. They consider their work not to be philanthropy nor paternalism.

México, Sustainable World

This is a project from a firm that will recycle PET. They have requested funds from the World Bank, Social Responsibility Project. Their goal is to reduce child labor in the waste-picking activity through access to education.



Italy, Occhio del Riciclone, Federico Mastrongiovanni

This is a network of Associations in Colombia and Italy. It arose from the emergency with solid waste in Italy. It performs scientific research and cultural communication. It promotes the advantages of re-use and also has a link with the popular economy. There is a relationship between the gypsies who do the waste-picking work and the Italians in the city of Rome. In Colombia, they work in the Pacific region with *Fundarte*. They promote re-use, before and after recycling.

Brazil, National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy, Jorge Nascimento

They seek public policies that will professionalize the work of waste-pickers. It is a political project of the government. It promotes separation at origin, at the homes, seeking a role for all actors in society. In 2003, an inter-ministerial Committee for the Financial and Social Inclusion of Waste-pickers was created. There is a national movement called "Be a friend of the waste-picker". They support the National Movement of Waste-pickers in the formation of leadership, cost analysis, and with various by-laws and decrees

Public System (service) of Waste Collection, and Waste-pickers - Group 5

Report Back to Plenary

Group 5 discussed the following questions:

- Aspects of access to the material (legislation, conflict, etc)
- How the public system facilitates or blocks the inclusion/access of waste-pickers to the material

Conclusions

Change needed to overcome obstacles:

- Government: political will, new ways of handling solid waste, complicity is needed from governments with regards to the interests of the waste-picking population
- We have to generate added value. If more than 60% of the solid waste is organic, it is important for governments to pay attention to opportunities to utilize organic waste, even if apparently not profitable. It is proven that there are substantial savings in area of the sanitary landfills and in not building more
- Find alternatives for contracting solidarity economy organizations
- Implement education processes and of image to "clean" the public opinion of waste-pickers

- Not to separate the environmental theme from the social theme. It is a political issue. The financial side is not the only one, there is an issue of social redistribution
- Waste-pickers also need some internal transformations
- Transition from waste-pickers receiving subsistence to the recognition of their work as a service, and strengthen themselves as a network to influence public policy
- This is only achieved through organization, strong organizations in all senses
- Affirmative actions and other mechanisms that will contribute to strengthen organizations and the cooperative system
- Not to forget the solidarity values and principles
- Execute social control over public policies
- Governments have focused for some time on profitability. They should focus on quality of life and of the habitat of societies
- New model for solid waste management from the political will of governments and organizations



Participants' Shared Experiences

The following experiences were shared at this session. All presentations can be found at the following link: www.recicladores.net/

India, Integrating Waste-pickers in Solid Waste Management, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Manali Shah

SEWA is a trade union of poor, self-employed women workers in the informal economy. It has a waste picker cooperative in Ahmadabad City. Members collect and sell separated waste from households and commercial buildings. But a new government changed the tendering system. The coop was forced to take lower rates for

the waste and members were subject to harassment from those who did not win contracts. Some contracts were given to councilors but services deteriorated and SEWA members got back some of the work. New tendering rules will again apply at the end of this contract.

India, Vermiculture Technology, Lokvikas Samajik Sanstha, Milind Babar

The rapid growth in urban population generates much solid waste. People do not dispose of domestic waste appropriately. Organic waste may cause epidemics if not managed in hygienic conditions. To solve this problem "Vermiculture" is a technique that not only discards domestic waste (bio-degradable) but also recycles it. The compost produced can be used in gardens.

Cameroon, Paradise on Earth, Sustainable Waste Management in Barenda, Martin Atanga

This presentation did not take place as Mr. Atanga could not travel to the conference, but the power-point is available in the conference webpage. The presentation conveys the experience in Barenda, Cameroon, for recuperation of different materials coming from dumpsites, organic and inorganic materials.

“Waste collectors do doorstep collection house to house, promoting home segregation of waste. This is decentralized, much cheaper than the public system of collection, recovers more materials and even has a program for organic waste. It protects the livelihoods of waste-pickers, reduces traffic and pollution, and increases the life of the landfill.”

Laxmi Narayan,
KKPKP, India



Perú – Healthy City, Albina Ruiz

“Where others only see waste, we see potential solutions.”

Why Ciudad Saludable? Why are the cities where more poor people live the dirtiest?

Why do recyclers have to earn their meals from garbage? Why is local government so inefficient at creating solutions? *Cuidad Saludable* (Healthy City) rebelled against this situation and decided to be an agent of change by:

- ❖ promotion of transparent governance
- ❖ institutional strengthening
- ❖ promotion of cleaner technologies
- ❖ community participation in decision-making
- ❖ awareness and capacity building in health and environment
- ❖ promotion of environmental management systems and enterprises

This holistic model includes organizations, educational and capacity building institutions, media, central government, local government, communities, waste collectors, and enterprises.

Results: 35 micro-enterprises of recyclers created with 15–20 waste collectors each. Each one needs start-up capital of \$500. Beforehand, each family earned \$2 per day, afterwards \$10 per day.

Colombia. Caso Bogotá y Costa Norte, Silvio Ruiz, G. Mejía y UAESP

This is a model of service delivery, recycling value chain, separation at source. Phase I, massive awareness campaign; phase II, media launch, press inserts and web page; phase III, TV, public bins and engagement in public spaces, with institutions and companies. Results:

Recycling centre set up (la Alqueria)

Associations promoted (17 organizations created)

Recognition of existing organizations and networks (49 orgs with 3560 people, ARB-ARA-ARUB)

Education and training provided

Links with child labour programs (860 children linked with educational activities designed to eliminate child labour)

Certificates of competency issued (177 issued, 1000 in process of certification)

Legal victory which recognized waste-pickers as professionals entitled to bid for SWM tenders

Direct empowerment of waste-pickers (instead of intermediaries)

Colombia, SINTRAEMSIRVA, Trade Union of Municipal Workers, Cali, Ciro Manyoma and Luz Elena Gongora

There was exclusion of waste-pickers when the municipality tried to privatize.

The global union federation, Public Service International (PSI), set terms that privatized entities must include policies and work with waste-pickers. It proposed that these be adopted in all of Colombia.

There is a need to have solidarity economy so that the coops can realize their dreams.

There is a need for national policies which favour Member Based Organizations (MBOs), not just environmental protocols, but promoting employment, labour standards and popular participation, and discourage take-over by businesses.

Chile, Municipality of Ovalle, Romana Juarez

Policies needed to diminish solid waste:

- compost (work with community – unions of “ferias libres” and private enterprises)
- recycling (work with Agrupacion de Recolectores, AREI on recycling campaigns)

For recycling, we need separation of solid waste, environmental projects, strengthening of organizations, discussion with communities (including schoolkids)

For an holistic environmental management approach we need: waste collectors, enterprises, political authority, community. The relationship between public sector and waste collectors is a political process (not technical)

The poorest carry out public cleaning services. There is a need to overcome discrimination and have an inclusive system.

Colombia, Coop from city of Pasto.

The main issue for coop members is employment

Authorities should consider their livelihoods instead of tenders for enterprises

Panel: Public Policies from Social, Financial and Gender Perspectives

Carlos Julio Ramirez, *Colombian Experience, National Board of Recycling*

The general objective of the National Recycling Board is the integral and balanced development of strategies and instruments for the strengthening of productivity, competitiveness, and the socio-economic conditions of the recycling value chains. The thematic axes are financial, commercial and economic; judicial, administrative and institutional, training, technical assistance and research; infrastructure; and formalization.

The presentation in the conference webpage provides details on the key aspects developed for each of the thematic axes.





Day 3: March 3rd, 2008: Building Networks

Panel: Integrating our Efforts in Global Networks

Roberto Laureano, Catasampa, Brazil

Local Network

“There is a need to build a critical mass of cooperatives, with more materials of better quality to be able to commercialize directly without intermediaries, and therefore achieve more benefits for the waste-pickers.”



These logos that appear in the powerpoint presentation are of the organizations that supported CataSampa at the beginning. CataSampa started because the National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil had to respond to its members' needs to provide more added value to their work. It was decided that it would not be an organization incubated by any other entity, it would be an organization that from the beginning would be built by the waste-pickers themselves. Petrobras, the Brazilian giant oil firm, collaborated with the strengthening of this network.

“Four years ago, I was a simple waste-picker of the street, I was introduced to the Clean Life Program and there I discovered that I was a leader, I fight for our rights. I am proud of our class.”

Maria Monica da Silva,
Vida Lima Program, Brazil

One of the fundamental issues is the commercialization process, adding value. All the cooperatives participate in a network process of the value chain. CataSampa is able to generate larger amounts of material. Physical infrastructure was developed to deal with the material but also a social structure. One of the big discussions in the network is how to promote public policies and direct actions.

Belo Horizonte shared the experience of the need to insert waste-picker coops into the productive chain. With this they generate more and more income. There are 9 associations of waste pickers involved in the local network, *Cataunidos*. Initially they served 300 waste-pickers, but the goal is to reach 1,000. Without strong organizations, waste-pickers cannot reach these achievements.

Pat Horn, StreetNet International
Global Network

“In 1995, the Self Employed Women Association of India, SEWA, organized an international meeting of street vendor representatives and legal councilors of 11 countries, to understand the urban space problems faced by them. One of their problems was lack of representation, a forum that could represent their needs and interests. A declaration was made with regard to their demands- the Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors. WIEGO took on the responsibility to raise start-up funds for setting up an international network, and also identified a coordinator to perform that job.”

Around the world there are many street vendor organizations. Many were created when a crisis took place, but when the crisis passed, the organizations did not stay together.

That was the situation they faced when trying to set up an international network. Many organizations that existed operated much as a street mafia, claiming to represent the interests of street vendors.



Three regional workshops were hosted to consult about 3 important issues that had to be established right from the start of the global network. Gender: the organizations represent 80% women members, but the leadership was 100% men. NGOs: what would be the position of NGOs in the structure, would they be direct members or not. Political affiliations: would StreetNet have it or not. The official launch of StreetNet International took place in Durban, South Africa, in November 2002.

The Constitution and the name of the organization were adopted, and an Interim Committee was elected. The Constitution stated

a 50% quota of women on all structures of the organization. NGOs were not entitled to be affiliates – instead, engagement with them will be sought to have them as service-providers to members. There is a policy of non-party-political affiliation, to preserve the independence of the struggles based on issues affecting street vendors. Priority was given to developing national alliances of street vendors in as many countries as possible. Alliances, unions, city alliances could be included, as long as they were membership-based organizations. Funding for the first 3-year plan was raised, from 2003 to 2005.

In March 2004, the National Organization of Street Vendors of Korea hosted a meeting of members. The international council was elected, consisting of 15 people who come from the membership organizations. Eight have to be women. Many of the affiliates started to be aware of their own gender policies; some of them developed their women leadership a bit more consciously.

StreetNet encourages the formation of national alliances to improve government recognition. Governments used to play organizations against one another. In 2004, the ILO gave recognition to StreetNet as an international organization of street vendors, which allows it to participate in the Workers Group of the International Labor Conference, to influence the resolutions that come out. It is very difficult to influence the instruments of an organization like the ILO which is very bureaucratic. It is a major achievement to have that recognition. It also allowed StreetNet to influence trade unions so they start organizing informal workers and street vendors.

StreetNet shares news through the website, such as street vendors being evicted from some place, and sends messages of support from organizations of street vendors from around the world. This means that they are assisted by others and taken more seriously. In 2007 StreetNet

held its Congress, which takes place every 3 years, in Brazil. It used this opportunity to make contact with the waste collector's movement. StreetNet representatives visited the MNCR and invited them to participate in a social dialogue held in Sao Paulo. It was eye opening for the street vendors to see how the waste collectors are organized. And to see common problems they face, like when the livelihoods of catadores are given to private businesses.

As a network, StreetNet keeps looking at alliances with other informal worker organizations. We foresee keeping a strong alliance with the waste collectors, and other organizations of the poor, slum dwellers, and others, as street vendors are affected by the same problems that all the poor face”.

Parallel Sessions – Regional Groups

Participants were divided in working groups according to the regions from where they come: Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa (together). The Latin American group was divided in two separate sessions, one for waste-pickers and one for supporting technical participants.

Waste-pickers from Latin America, each representing their country, then held a meeting focused solely on the Latin American network. After this meeting, they deliberated with representatives of Asia and Africa/Europe to develop a joint final declaration of all waste-pickers. During the work session of the Latin American network, the rest of participants shared, in plenary, the presentations that did not take place previously due to lack of time.



Conference Plenary

Dr Liu Kaiming, The Institute of Contemporary Observation, Labor Issues and Waste Collectors in China

“China is a huge country with a very large population. The country has grown tremendously in the last 20 years. People go to cities to find work. Most of the work is migrant work. There are more than 6 million waste pickers, who work in different big cities. In Shenzhen, there are 15 million inhabitants, mostly migrant workers, with 200 thousand waste pickers, mostly women. But it is men who make crucial decisions.

Regulation and law does not permit waste pickers to work in the city. It is very difficult to build a network. This non-profit organization works with migrant waste-pickers enhancing capacities in health, providing medical examinations, care for children, social dialogues, and training for waste pickers. It facilitates improvement in public policy”.

Ana Luzia Florisbela dos Santos
Gender in Solid Waste Management,

The study aimed at having available systematized information about the participation and contribution of women and men at the different stages

of the integral solid waste management. In general, women are poorer and are more in charge of separation, storing and collection. Most of the positions in management, private and public are performed by men. At the dumpsites, men are a majority. Women perform more difficult tasks and obtain less income because their access to waste is secondary to that of others, and of less market value. To improve this situation, it is necessary to promote a stable and systematic dialogue with government and social institutions, in order to create capacities in the theme of incorporation of a gender perspective in urban SWM.

Oscar Espinoza, IPES

Evaluating the local recycling sector using the Balance of Materials

This presentation shows the process to follow to estimate the amounts of waste materials generated at a district, and the role of the different agents in their management. It presents an exhaustive description of the stages in SWM and it can serve as a guide to those who start work in this theme at a district level.

Manali Shah, SEWA

Regional Networks: the example of HomeNet South Asia

“HomeNet South Asia was formed in 2000. It is composed of National Networks of home-based workers in four countries: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A total of 700 organizations are part of the Network, representing 450,000 home-based workers.

A regional workshop was convened in 2000 to discuss women in the Informal Economy. The workshop recognized home-based workers as the most vulnerable workers. It agreed to create a network. HomeNet South Asia has emerged as the collective voice of home based workers in the region, and attempts to influence policies, laws and programs of national governments.

It has carried out a mapping exercise in the countries to identify home-based workers’ organizations. This has been a useful organizing tool. It has also done action research on social protection. Current campaigns are: national policies, ratification of ILO Convention 177 on Homework; social protection for home-workers”.



Sonia Dias,

Waste and Citizenship Forum, Brazil

This was not delivered in the plenary session. The presentation can be found on www.reciladores.net.

Conclusions presented to Plenary by the Regional Groups

1. Asia

The group comprised members from India, Hong Kong, Nepal, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

“It is necessary to move to higher levels in the value chain, not to be stuck in the separation stage. This does not mean to stop being waste-pickers, but that our organizational processes should take us there.”

Speaker in Group 4 discussion on Corporate Social Responsibility and Strategic Alliances

Discussion was centered on the following themes:

- Lessons from Bogotá conference and interaction
- Need for ongoing interaction/contact
- Nature of such contact, structure/format
- Requirements for the same

Lessons from Bogota conference and interaction

Lessons learned over the course of the conference and the formal and informal interactions during the 3 days include:

1. The impressive progress of cooperatives, and also their focus on maintaining their own autonomy
2. The strong, spirited movement, that has almost created an alternative culture of expression, music, dance etc
3. The total ownership of the networks by waste-pickers themselves
4. The ability to integrate vertically and develop programmes and processes so that they move higher up on the value chain.
5. The collective advocacy efforts that had resulted in the creation of local policies that supported waste-pickers
6. The ability to market products and services and remain effective partners in the market
7. The creation of national boards for recycling
8. It was felt that trends in waste and the informal sector were not discussed enough, as also well as the impact of waste handling on the health of the waste-pickers community.



The following trends in India, in comparison to Latin America, were identified:

1. Predominant focus on integration of waste-pickers in doorstep collection of waste
2. All demands made largely *vis a vis* state; slightly lower dependence on continued external funding
3. Overarching concern in India regarding sustainability of economic models
4. Strong focus on engaging closely with researchers, academics, environmentalists and other stakeholders. Continuously soliciting support of newer partners.
5. Resistance of waste-pickers to change profession and enter into newer aspects of processing, recycling etc.
6. Looking at privatization as an opportunity and claiming stakes of waste-pickers as a private entity which the state must partner with
7. Larger scale of operations by groups in India. Larger numbers of waste-collectors involved.
8. Trying different organizational models: trade unions, NGOs, cooperatives and private companies
9. Integrating all models within framework of solid waste management that is decentralized and environmentally sound
10. Taking stronger positions against incineration-based processing technology as it displaces livelihood options for waste-pickers.

Need for ongoing interaction/contact:

1. Share translations of all policy documents, formal MOUs, agreements and concessions etc., given by the different city, state and central government.
2. Get a clear idea of the actual support given by the state, private enterprise, civil society organizations, like minded organizations and funders
3. Document best practices, including the funds, efforts and processes that went into each
4. Use the legal advocacy support available in Latin America for regions in Asia
5. Document support of local boards in Philippines etc that have promoted decentralized spaces for MRFs (material recovery facilities)
6. Create an inventory of recycled products and services in waste management that have been made. If possible include processes, costs, technological inputs and markets required for the same. Include organic processing components in this.

Asia region requirements:

1. The need to consolidate the Asian network was also expressed. This would mean mapping more organizations in the region, creating a database of waste-pickers, their numbers, situation, issues, role of local governments.
2. The need to share sources of funding for small projects in Asia that could offer seed capital for micro enterprises.
3. The need to keep environmental organizations, research groups, civil society organizations and municipalities on board



Nature of such contact, structure/format:

1. E-based, interactive, with a secretariat that could keep individual organizations together, share information periodically, organize regional meetings every quarter.
2. Develop a waste-picker day for the year in Asia, which could initially be celebrated separately in each city, but later cumulate in large national level programs

Requirements for the same:

Resources, funding, secretariat, people and organizations willing to commit time to the issue of networking

2. Latin America

For this region, participants were divided in two groups, waste-pickers, and technical staff.

Technical Staff

The meeting of technical staff from Latin America was sub-divided in 4 sub-groups:

1. NGOs and Foundations
2. Technical staff who work at waste-pickers cooperatives
3. Private industry/enterprise
4. State

Group 1 Technical Staff from Foundations and NGOs

Conclusions

The group agreed to:

- ❖ Create a Latin-American network, a space of work for technical organizations
- ❖ Exchange experiences
- ❖ Mobilize resource
- ❖ Develop studies and research to generate evidence
- ❖ Influence public policy on value chain, visibility of the trade (communication), legislation
- ❖ Develop a virtual network

AVINA offered its structure to manage the network, as it is the only institution that works in all of Latin America. Further agreed to:



- ❖ Work with the national and Latin-American movement
- ❖ Promote and strengthen national and regional movements
- ❖ Use the webpage “recicladores.net” for exchange (link with the e-group)
- ❖ Promote leadership schools for organizational strengthening
- ❖ Support the professionalism of waste-pickers
- ❖ Influence public policy for the integration of waste-pickers in urban solid waste management
- ❖ Support access to credit
- ❖ Carry our studies on recycling and carbon markets

Group 2: Technical staff who work at Waste-pickers Cooperatives

Conclusions

What needs to be done in different countries:

- ❖ Generate public policies that support organizational processes in all countries
- ❖ Promotion of local norms that favor selective collection and their control
- ❖ Elimination of tax burden on recycled materials
- ❖ Include organic/inorganic recycling in the processes of municipal collection, considering the inclusion of waste-pickers
- ❖ Promote special regime for the payment of social security

- ❖ Effective preference for waste-pickers in contracting services for waste collection and related services
- ❖ Exemption from the municipal tax for waste collection (as a kind of subsidy)
- ❖ Municipal enterprises to recognize waste-pickers organizations for the work they perform in recuperating materials and saving materials from going to landfills
- ❖ Database and exchange of information around recycling cooperatives
- ❖ Promote international norms that forbid product packaging in non-recyclable materials
- ❖ Part of the profits made by recycling organizations be re-invested in their organizations, and not passed all to the State
- ❖ Ask NGOs for training programs to consider the work schedule of waste-pickers
- ❖ Decentralize the support of NGOs
- ❖ Differentiate the norms for large and small enterprises
- ❖ Promote associative work where solidarity values are applied
- ❖ Waste-pickers organizations should take advantage of the spaces offered by the State (participatory budgets, assemblies, etc).
- ❖ Between NGOs and the State, create support funds for access to technology
- ❖ Promote formalization of the activity to defend it from competition
- ❖ Link with the different parts of the value chain guaranteeing minimal conditions for those who are at the bottom of the chain
- ❖ Link with the industry through social responsibility, guaranteeing purchasing volumes, fair prices, access to machinery
- ❖ Recognize the contribution of waste-picking to employment creation and the financial, social and environmental contribution. It is not a subsidy, it is a service offered to the population.

Group 3: Technical staff from enterprises / industry

Conclusions

- ❖ Develop enterprise policies of Social Responsibility
- ❖ Provide certification of origin
- ❖ Social security for Waste Pickers (because of the exposure to health risks)
- ❖ Involve the intermediary in the value chain (win-win)



Group 4: Technical staff from the State (Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil)

Conclusions

The group prepared the following statement: "We, representatives of the following countries of Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Perú, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, México and Paraguay, present at the Third Latin American Conference and First World Conference of Waste-pickers, understand the importance of the role of the State as promoter in the process of social, financial and political

development of people, democratically and with social control by citizens. In that sense, the proposals raised below aim at the strengthening of waste-pickers as citizens with universal rights, fundamental actors in the recycling value chain. They should also be recognized for their important work that generates financial, social and environmental impacts for the whole Latin American society.

- ❖ Have a national policy for solid waste that enforces separation at origin
- ❖ Selective collection should be operated by the grassroots waste-pickers.
- ❖ Recognize the category and integrate waste-pickers into the integral management of urban solid waste
- ❖ Recognize their right to work, to training, to social security, to a health system
- ❖ Systematize and disseminate best practices and the social inclusion of waste-pickers
- ❖ In the financial sense: access to credit, to funds, to subsidies, cooperation, offer the public service of waste collection and processes of transformation of materials
- ❖ Technology transfer at small scale and appropriate to enterprises
- ❖ No tax burden for recuperated materials
- ❖ Organizational strengthening to improve their management of the value chain
- ❖ Promote that waste-pickers can do processing, transformation and commercialization of all types of solid waste (organic/inorganic).
- ❖ Strengthen this theme in Mercosur (a treaty of economic cooperation between Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) of social and solidarity, with the creation of a working group to discuss public policies of social, economic and environmental inclusion of waste-pickers
- ❖ Develop a Latin American network of public entities that are involved in the social and economic inclusion of waste-pickers
- ❖ Develop a Latin American network for the virtual training and technology transfer (technical aspects and fundraising)



b) Waste-pickers

Latin American waste-picker participants agreed to have a representative from each country be part of the core group of the Latin-American network, which now has representatives from Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, Guatemala, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Perú, México, Venezuela. The representatives of the mentioned countries decided that the new secretariat of the network will be based at the National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil. The following agreements were reached:

1. Grow in knowledge and informatics training to be able to contact each other and communicate, through www.recicladores.net, at

- least once per month articulacionlatinoamericana.com should be operative starting in April
2. Change in the secretariat of the network, which should be renewed every year
 3. The country delegates would be those in charge of socializing/ sharing the experiences through alternative media
 4. Participate as a network at the World Social Forum of Brazil 2009 and present from there the reality of our sector of waste-pickers with 2 delegates per country as offices coordinated by the network
 5. Work to develop and implement the decisions of this 2008 conference
 6. Build centers of technological training relevant to Latin American waste-pickers
 7. Promote, as a network, national encounters in each country
 8. Take on the commitments agreed by the network in previous encounters
 9. Take on the themes and purposes proclaimed at the second Latin American congress
 10. Commit to maintaining the link with the global level, keeping in touch with the organizations of waste-pickers of the world.



The representatives of the National Movement of Waste-pickers of Brazil came to the stage to be greeted in their new position. There was also a celebration with Exequiel Estay from Chile who was leaving the position as secretary of the network. The new secretariat thanked the organizers for the event, the leaders of Colombia and Chile and Lucía Fernández as coordinator. They take on the responsibility to include all and thank them for the opportunity to have had a very rich plenary session with the waste-pickers only. The fight continues.

3. Africa and Europe

Given the small number of participants from these regions, they formed one single group to discuss the follow-up actions.

Conclusions

Issues identified by waste pickers:

1. Problem of middlemen and buyers. Waste pickers are looking for ways to bring waste directly to depots to process and distribute, without having to rely on middlemen who take out a big slice of the income.
2. Problem of working space. It is difficult to obtain land or open spaces in communities to store and sort materials.
3. In Europe, workers extract re-usable waste before it goes to the dump. This creates an additional opportunity for distribution of wealth at the bottom of the economy, which boosts the “people’s economy”. This is a stage which involves marginalized population groups (such as gypsies in Europe, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples in Latin American countries, etc.) who

are engaged in the repair and sale of “waste” as second-hand goods for re-use.

4. Representativity of different levels (sectors) of waste pickers is needed to ensure that those at the bottom of the “people’s economy” are also directly represented. This would ensure that organisations and networks are more inclusive.

Africa: plans for networking:

1. Continental conference to be organised, hosted in Egypt.
2. At the same time, continue to do research/mapping to identify what organisation of waste pickers already exists:
 - apply criteria and guidelines to identify different sectors/ occupations among waste pickers;
 - use other known informal economy networks and organisations (e.g. street vendors’ organisations in StreetNet, community organisations in SDI) to identify organised groupings in as many countries as possible.
3. Promote the principle of democratic worker-controlled (i.e. picker-controlled) organisations.

Europe: plans for networking:

In Italy workshops and seminars are already being run, and these should continue.

The following criteria/guidelines should be applied to future networking:

- principle of waste collectors themselves participating directly;
- problems which will need to be overcome to ensure direct participation of waste pickers:
 - (a) self-exclusion by waste pickers who do not see themselves to be best able to represent their own needs;
 - (b) travel problems of gypsies, migrants, and other people without documents;
- World Bank should not be the guiding force;
- use migrant networks to identify groupings working in waste collection and recycling.



Global networking ideas:

1. Use of the web
2. Use of civil society spaces such as the World Social Forum
3. Exchange of goods produced in recycling:
4. Use of grassroots researchers
5. An interim structure should be established, not to represent waste pickers in networking, but to co-ordinate networking and organisation of events in consultation with waste pickers themselves and their organisations.

Conference Declarations and Closure

Declarations

Declaration of the 3rd Conference of Latin American Waste-Pickers

See full declaration after Executive Summary



After the presentation of the Latin American Declaration there was a celebration by the Latin American network, with special thanks for Silvio Ruiz Grisales and Nohra Padilla of the ARB for all their effort in bringing forward this event. From now on, Silvio, Severino Lima (MNCR, Brazil) and Exequiel Estay (Chile, outgoing Secretary of the Latin American Network) will be called the “dinosaurs” of the movement. This was a comic way of referring to the fact that they are the old promoters of the original network in the region.

Global Declaration of the 1st World Conference of Waste Pickers

See full declaration after Executive Summary

The following persons participated in the inter-continental discussions, representing their regions: Laxmi Narayan for Asia, Nohra Padilla for Latin America, Federico Mastrogiovanni representing Europe and Noluthando Gqotso for Africa.

It was noted that arriving to a joint declaration had not been an easy task for the representatives of waste-pickers of diverse regions who have different problems and different situations.

Closure

“Thanks to God for having been able to have this event.

Thanks to all the teams for their work.

Thanks to the national delegations for their efforts.

Apologies to waste-picker and non waste-picker participants if there were unplanned inconveniences in the logistics/organization.

The mission of waste-pickers organizations is not to organize events, but to gather, collect, transport and select recyclable materials, and to reject public policies that do not include them”.

Norah Padilla, ARB

The Conference ended on a high note with a celebration. Participants sang the Latin American Waste-pickers’ anthem and danced together and in a group line dance.



PARTICIPANT LIST¹

Jean Christine Bonner	Steering Committee (SC)/ Comité Organización/WIEGO	South Africa
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Melanie Sampson	York University; CUBES	South Africa
Randall Keith Bester	Slum_Shack Dwellers International (SDI)	South Africa
Gershwin Evans Kohler	Shack Dwellers International (FEDUP)	South Africa
Ms Noluthando Gqotso	Shack Dwellers International_Sokana Recycling Cooperative	South Africa
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Marcelo Loto	Reciclando Sueños	Argentina
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Alex Alejandro Sánchez	Asociación de segregadores de Cochabamba.	Bolivia
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Shashi Bhushan	HARIT	India
Nitin Govind More	LEARN	India
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Silver Robles	Coomifur	Colombia
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Mery Perez	Recivel	Colombia
Gerzon Mayorga	Aso- Rec. De Málaga.	Colombia
Martha Carlier	Regional Aires.	Colombia
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Wilson Gualteros	Opción Vida.	Colombia
Luis Fernando Paez	Amway Colombia	Colombia
Omar Sánchez	Cooprin.	Colombia
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(Footnotes)

¹ The list of Colombian participants is incomplete. There were many local people who participated and helped with the Conference who do not appear on this list. We appreciate their participation and apologise for the omission.



