OHS Learning Meeting
Waste Pickers Perspective
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Waste Pickers at Work
Hazards & Risks

• Handling waste poses many health risk to workers in general, formal and informal.

• Risks: even greater for informal workers due to unprotected daily exposure to contaminants and hazardous materials (fecal matter, paper with toxic materials, bottles with chemical residues, needles, batteries...)

• Some studies indicate a higher prevalence of minor psychiatric disorders amongst waste pickers, likely the result of stressful conditions.
Hazards & Risks

- Waste pickers may be run over by trucks or become victims of surface subsidence, slides, fires, toxic fumes.

Toxic fumes in a Maputo dump
Characteristics of the work

• Waste pickers jobs are not protected by the state and therefore are excluded from the social security system and other benefits of formal contracting.

• Waste pickers generally minimize risks as this work is generally the only source of income.

• They are most often resistant to use protective equipment as they argue they slow down their ability to recover recyclables.

• They are generally resistant to new work environment such as conveyor belts in recycling warehouses and other work improvements.
What is needed

1. Improvement of working conditions through:
   • Capacity building courses: e.g. safety at work, technical aspects of recycling, etc.;
   • Provision of infrastructure for sorting, baling, etc.;
   • Equipment for individual protection (gloves, masks, etc.);
   • Ergonomic manual carts for collection;
   • Ergonomic sorting devices at recycling warehouses

2. Health care and social protection schemes;
What is needed

3. Address risks specific to the sector through:

• Programs for the eradication of child labour;
• Incentives to help families keep children at school, with compensation programs to encourage eradicating child labour in the sector;
• Provision of work facilities such as crèches (day care services), etc.
• Move from open dumps to sanitary landfilling with incorporation of waste pickers in properly designed recycling sheds/warehouses

4. Plan interventions/innovations in a stepwise/participatory manner.
Thanks,
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