

WOMEN WASTEPICKERS



Discussing women's empowerment and changes in their relationships with men



TECHNICAL SHEET

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Suggestions on how to improve it can be sent to: sonia.dias@wiego.org.

PRESENTATION



Working on women's empowerment does not imply the exclusion of men; on the contrary, it works towards contributing to everyone's emancipation, including that of both men and women.

Keeping this in mind, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Waste Pickers (Red Lacre), the National Movement of Waste Pickers of Recyclable Materials in Brazil (MNCR) and WIEGO began discussions on the importance of creating an open debate on the issue of gender and waste picking in 2012. Taking advantage of the relationship established with The Women's Studies Research Centre (NEPEM) at the

Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), a pilot programme was developed in Minas Gerais, which sought to map out and explore the main issues for a future programme on gender training at both the national level and also for the Latin American continent.

Throughout 2012, the process of elaborating the project occurred in a participatory manner. Several meetings with women waste pickers from local cooperatives in the state were held. As a result of these meetings, it was decided that exploratory workshops would occur in four regions across the state. After this

participatory process, the Gender and Waste Project was created in 2013 with support from MNCR/ANCAT, WIEGO, NEPEM and INSEA.

This exploratory project had the objective of involving women waste pickers in discussions regarding the multiple areas where women face discriminations, including at home, at work and as political leaders. In addition, the project also initially mapped out the strategic and practical needs of the women waste pickers in relation to training and professional qualification that are considered necessary for women to gain political and economic empowerment.



Focusing on this objective, workshops were held in various regions of the state of Minas Gerais.

Women discussed themes such as autonomy, masculinities and femininities, the barriers to their empowerment, as well as suggestions on how to confront them. The energy, the quality of the discussions, the women's commitment and their passion in the struggle for a more just society for all, but specifically for men and women waste pickers, was quite evident in the workshops. It became clear that discussing gender should not be seen as a problem, but a means for a solution instead. Adding gender issues to the debate is important because it

can not only contribute to and promote internal democracy within organizations, but also help establish more egalitarian relationships between men and women.

In other words, discussing gender is closely related to the agendas of the waste picker's movement, which, upon the movement's creation, confronted the issue of the invisibility of this sector.

Congratulations to the women waste pickers, congratulations to MNCR for embracing this cause. Congratulations to all the partners involved in this project. Sonia Dias.

WIEGO



Icon represents a moment for debate.



HELLO WASTE PICKERS!
MY NAME IS MARINETE AND I AM PART OF BRAZIL'S
WASTE PICKER'S ASSOCIATION. THERE ARE MANY
ISSUES WE NEED TO ADDRESS IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH
SOME PROGRESS: POOR WORKING CONDITIONS, THE STATE
GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR RECYCLERS, LAWS, ALCOHOL-
ISM...WELL, THERE'S CERTAINLY A LOT TO TALK ABOUT!!!
BUT THIS BOOKLET AIMS TO DISCUSS WOMEN'S ISSUES
IN OUR SECTOR.

IT'S A BOOKLET FOR YOU TO ENGAGE IN D-E-B-A-T-E
WITH OTHERS, NOT TO BE READ ON YOUR OWN. THERE-
FORE, LET'S MAKE A DEAL: AT LEAST TRY TO READ IT
IN PAIRS! HOWEVER, IN THE BEST OF WORLDS, WHILE
USING THIS BOOKLET AS A GUIDE, IT WOULD BE EVEN
BETTER IF YOU CREATED A REFLECTION GROUP IN
YOUR ASSOCIATION, AT WORK OR AT HOME.



I GUARANTEE THAT USING THE BOOKLET THIS WAY
WILL BE MORE ENJOYABLE AND MORE PRODUCTIVE.
IT'S LIKE THAT AFRICAN SAYING: "TWO HEADS ARE
BETTER THAN ONE". SO LET'S GET STARTED, KEEP
YOUR MIND OPEN AND GET YOUR FAMILY, WORK-
MATES, AND COMPANIONS IN THE STRUGGLE
TOGETHER AND MAKE THE MOST OF IT!

A BIT OF HISTORY

FROM 2011 TO 2012,
MANY TALKS WITH WASTE
PICKERS' NETWORKS
TOOK PLACE...



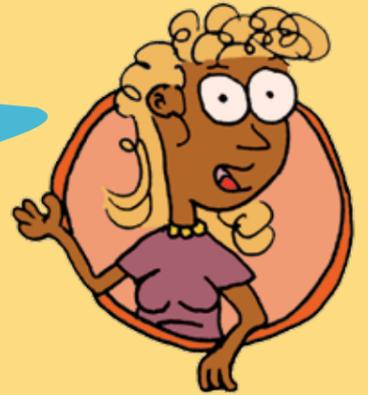
THE IDEA OF TACKLING GENDER WAS
DISCUSSED IN VARIOUS MEETINGS,
INCLUDING REDLACRE'S MEETING
IN NICARAGUA.

AND IN 2013, A TOTAL OF 60
WOMEN PARTICIPATED IN
THE 4 WORKSHOPS HELD IN
MINAS GERAIS.



OK FRIENDS SO THIS IS HOW IT WORKS.
WE'LL ASK SOME QUESTIONS, YOU DISCUSS
THEM AND SOMEBODY COULD EVEN TAKE
NOTES. ONLY ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE
WILL WE SHOW YOU WHAT WAS DISCUSSED
DURING THE WORKSHOPS ... AND THEN YOU
CAN TALK ABOUT WHAT CAME UP IN THE
WORKSHOPS. SO, LET'S GET STARTED?!

I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE FOR
TAKING THE TIME TO COME
TOGETHER. LET'S BEGIN BY
TALKING ABOUT HOW THIS
BOOKLET WAS CREATED.



This booklet touches on the
main topics that came up dur-
ing the workshops. The book-
let is not a shortened report
of the workshops, nor does it
reproduce the activities the
women waste pickers partici-
pated in. It mainly looks at how
women waste pickers from
Minas Gerais see themselves,
at HOME, at WORK and within
the MOVEMENT. This booklet
highlights some statements
made during the meetings;
however the women's names
do not appear in order to
protect their identity.



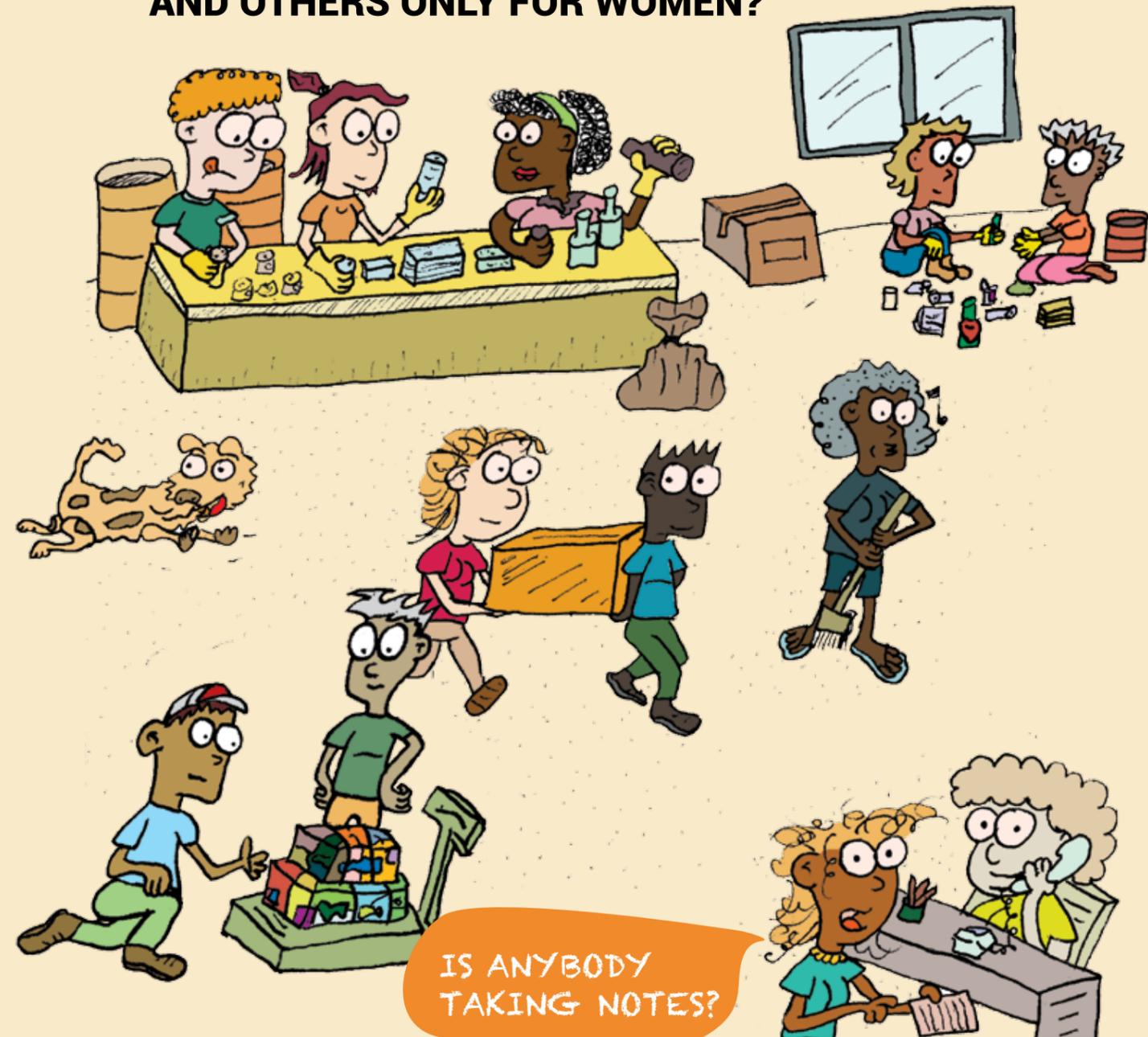
QUESTION: ARE THERE ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN?

1. ARE THERE CERTAIN THINGS THAT ARE ONLY FOR MEN AND OTHERS ONLY FOR WOMEN?



THIS IS A GOOD QUESTION, ISN'T IT?! YOU CAN START TALKING ABOUT THIS, BUT THERE'S ALSO ANOTHER QUESTION ON THE OTHER SIDE.

2-AND WHAT ABOUT IN RECYCLING, ARE THERE CERTAIN TASKS ONLY FOR MEN AND OTHERS ONLY FOR WOMEN?



HERE ARE SOME ANSWERS THAT CAME UP DURING THE WORKSHOPS:

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LIFE

M x **W**

FATHER
BEARD
MOUSTACHE



PREGNANCY
MOTHERHOOD
MENSTRUATION

THE GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

M x **W**

PULLING THE CART
LEAD MEETINGS
NEGOTIATIONS



SORTING
SINGING IN MEETINGS
DOOR TO DOOR



SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ALL THIS?



In the old days it was very clear what men and women's roles were in society. Men went to work while women took care of the house and the children.

Given all the feminist struggles, and especially women's presence in the labour market, it's more difficult to figure out what is a man's role and what is a woman's role. Nowadays, there are women who work as aircraft pilots and men who work as chefs.

Men are physically stronger, but in many associations women are the ones who compress the materials, drive trucks and negotiate with businesses.



"In recycling, the majority of the workers are women, but in the management of the associations and the movement, the majority are men."



"Women give birth, but raising children is also a men's duty."



"In the associations, people have to work in shifts: we do a bit of everything so we are aware of the difficulties involved in each task."

LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THE POSITION WOMEN CURRENTLY HOLD IN SOCIETY.

LET'S TALK?

Women are still in a subordinate position in society.



Women earn less than men.

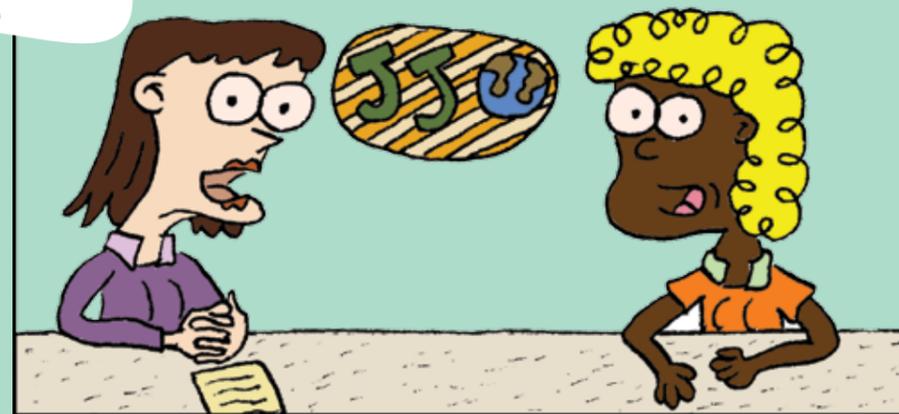


On average their salaries are 70% of those earned by men.

Women represent around 22% of all national parliament members in the world.



Of the waste pickers who work in private scrap shops and earn up to 3 or 4 minimum wage salaries, 95% are men.



So as a matter of fact, we still live in a highly sexist society where men hold most of the power, and in order to confront this, women need to gain autonomy.

 **QUESTION: WHAT DOES WOMEN'S AUTONOMY MEAN IN WASTE PICKING?**

SHALL WE SEE WHAT WAS DISCUSSED IN THE WORKSHOPS? AUTONOMY FOR A WOMAN WASTE PICKER IS:



Women need to be masters of their own selves



Many men feel uneasy when women gain power.



To work and not financially depend on their husbands

So what if I want to have a hot dog with ice cream?

That's OK by me.



Women have the right to choose what they want to do.



Always hold one's head up high and face life



Be free, to have an active voice, be happy



Pay bills and negotiate with businesses



Fight together, being closer to each other

Wear whatever we want without being judged or harassed



QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES WOMEN FACE?

Women began thinking about their situation at home, at the work place and in the movement. 6 main key points stood out: Violence, ignorance, fear, sexism and discrimination, illnesses and work overload.

Now let's think about each one of these:



"My stepfather tried to abuse me. When I told my mother, she didn't believe me. I ended up in the streets at the age of 13 or 14 with a friend who was in the same situation as me."



"When I get home after work, he takes all my money, leaving me with nothing. He beats me, he mistreats me."



VIOLENCE

Violence comes from different sources: parents, uncles, grandfathers and also from work colleagues and mates. Despite these difficulties, women have started to present their complaints about violence, though this is never easy.



"Violence is not just sexual, but also psychological, which is even worse because you can't protect yourself."

"There is no respect towards homosexuals."



LACK OF QUALIFICATIONS

Isn't it nice to see a leader talking and debating with so much confidence? It's during these moments that women take note of the skills they lack, what they still have to learn. Take a look at this statement:



"I would look at Valdilene and think I had to be as brave as her, fight until the end, speak passionately. My eyes would sparkle when I used to see her and Eduardo."

FEAR / EMBARRASSMENT



"I was only certain that when I disagreed with something, my heart would start beating harder and I felt like talking but I didn't...I was scared to death to talk."

"Many women are embarrassed of talking. They are afraid of saying something wrong, afraid of being cast aside."



"Afraid of expressing their sexual orientation and not be respected."

DURING THE DISCUSSIONS IN THE WORKSHOPS, IT BECAME CLEAR THERE WAS A GENERAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WASTE PICKING, THE COOPERATIVES AND POLITICS.



SEXISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Sexism is directly linked to discrimination.

Most men discriminate against women because they think women are inferior; they think women are unable to do many things. This discrimination is not always obvious and is often concealed. There are also some women who think men make better leaders. This is a result of the fact men have socially and historically been given more space to be at the forefront of businesses and politics. Women are now looking to gain more recognition in such spheres since they have either been excluded or marginalized from public spaces.

Since this has been embedded in our culture and history, both men and women end up reproducing these sexist attitudes and ideas on a daily basis.



"...we know 85% of the workers (in the warehouses) are women. We know most of them are the ones who support their families' livelihoods."



"Men stay away during the sorting process, they think this is a women's job."

"You have the right to feel sexual desire, to touch yourself without feeling guilty..."



"In the association, I never participated in anything, they never invite anybody to the auditing process, everything is done behind closed doors, I'm powerless there."



"Our peers don't understand the difficulties of collecting materials with the truck when we are suffering from menstrual cramps."



Finally, women have to face two obstacles, which include illnesses due to hard work and the strains of having to work both at home and in the warehouse. Women have many duties: looking after children, the sick, the elderly and even inmates. How are they going to find any time for the struggle?

HEALTH ISSUES/SICKNESS AND WORK OVERLOAD

We have double and triple shifts.

SO MANY PROBLEMS, DON'T YOU AGREE? AND WE STILL HAVEN'T MENTIONED ISSUES SUCH AS DRUG USE AND THE NATIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICIES. BUT LET'S KEEP OUR HEADS HELD HIGH AND NEVER GIVE UP!



"Some women suffer from back problems - due to being bent down for long hours and having to carry heavy bundles."



"What happens to your arms and back when you lift a 200 to 300 kilo bundle?"



 QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN TO GUARANTEE THEIR AUTONOMY?

WHAT ARE THESE NEEDS?

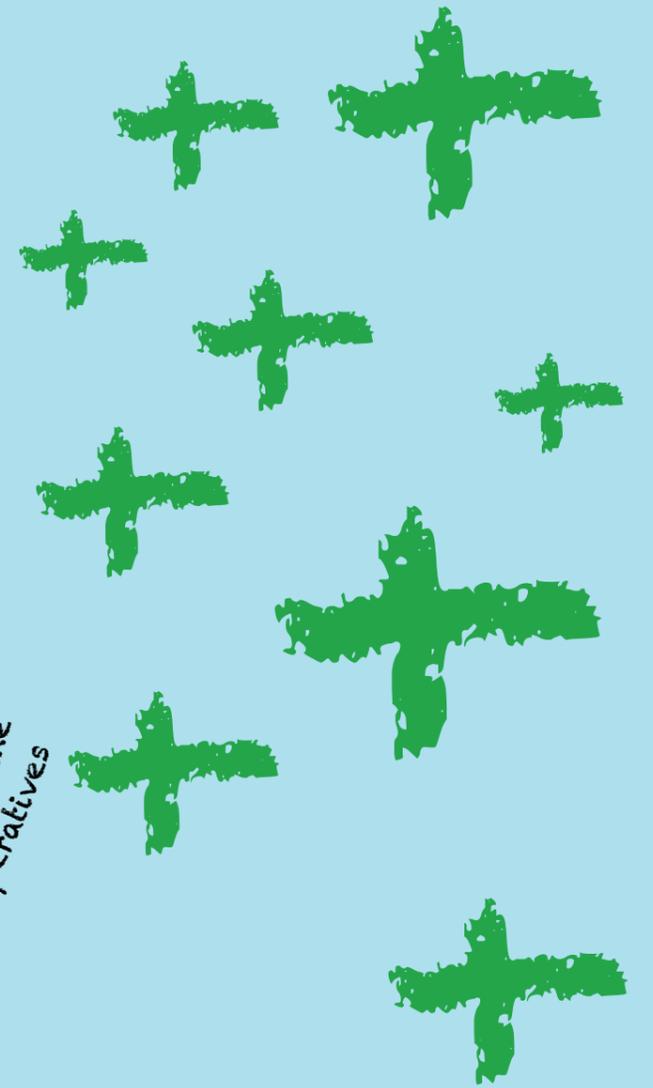
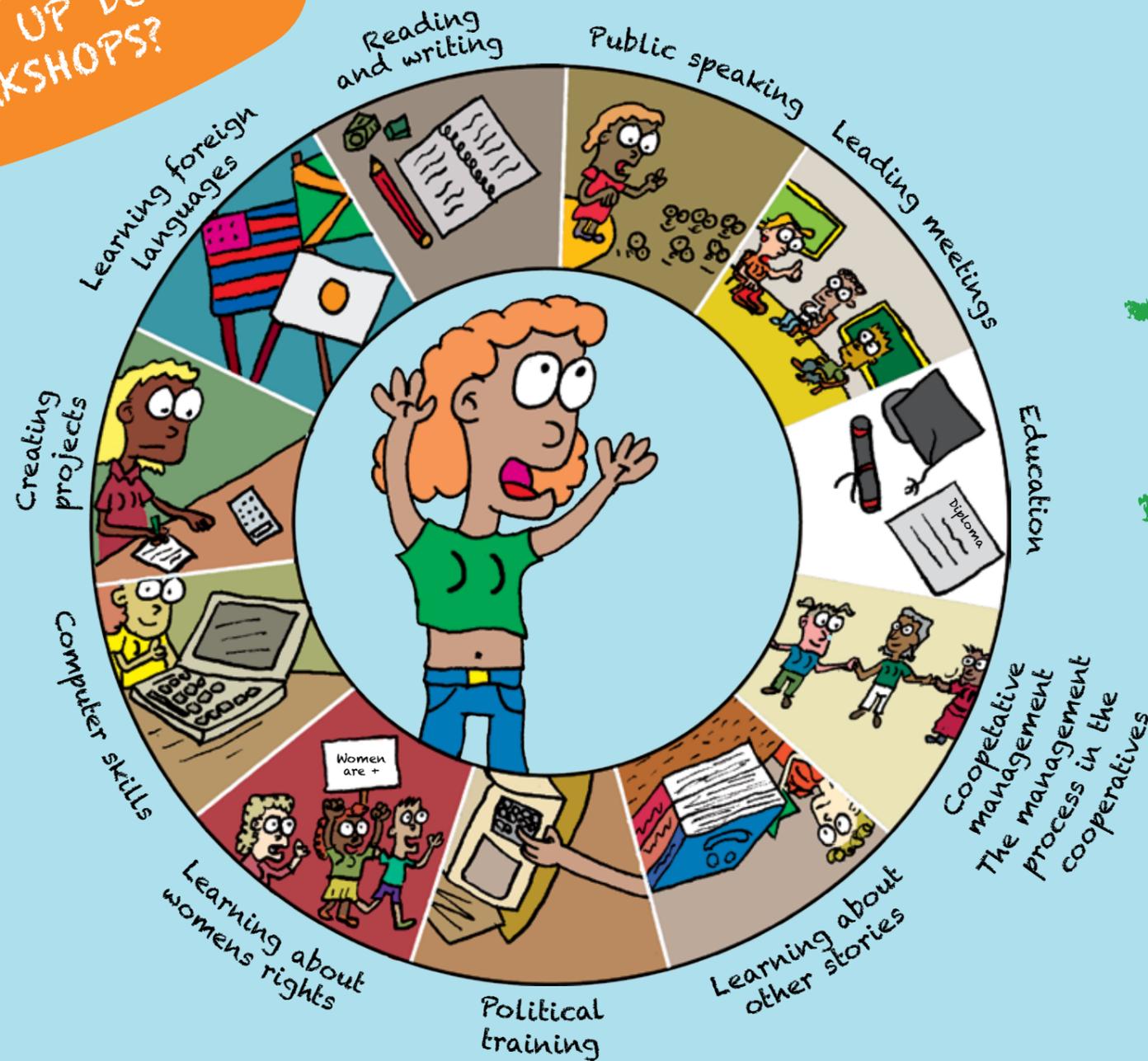


THE ISSUE THAT MOST CAME UP WAS THEIR DESIRE TO LEARN

MORE!

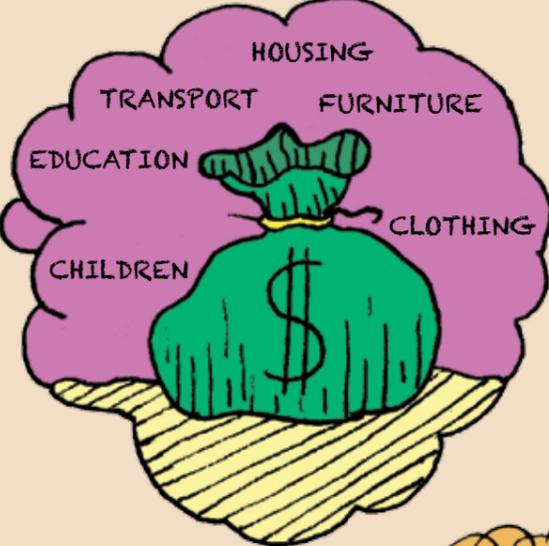
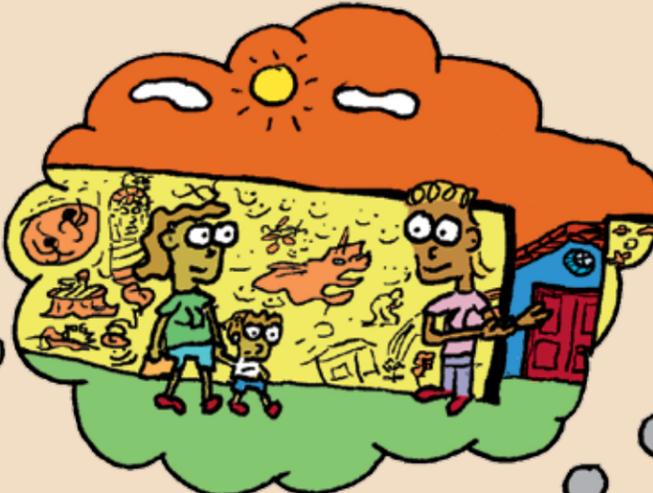


DO YOU KNOW WHAT DEMANDS WERE BROUGHT UP DURING THE WORKSHOPS?



AND THERE WERE OTHER PROPOSALS... 16

AS WOMEN, WE NEED TO IMPROVE OUR MATERIAL CONDITIONS



AND DO YOU THINK THAT WAS IT?





WOMEN DON'T WANT TO
BE JUST REMEMBERED ON
MOTHER'S DAY

WE WANT TWO VERY
IMPORTANT THINGS:

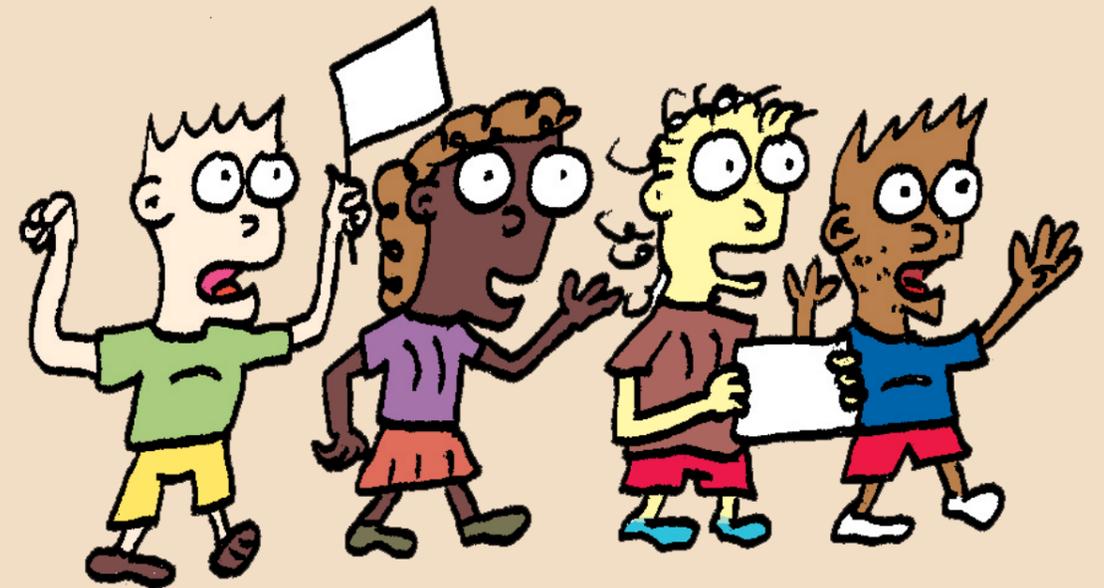
ADVISORY SERVICES

- Lawyers
- Psychologists
- Enforcement of gender violence laws



MEN'S INVOLVEMENT

- Support
- Recognition
- Partners in the struggle for women's rights



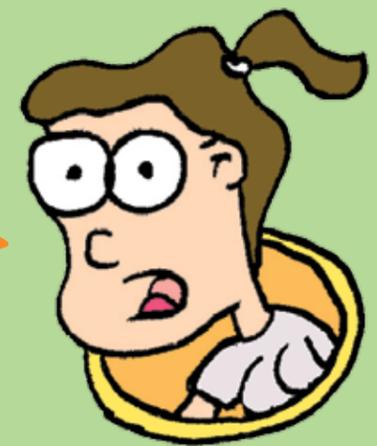


AS A RESULT OF ALL OF THIS, WE ARE NOW AWARE OF TWO THINGS

WOMEN WASTE PICKERS ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. BOTH MEN AND WOMEN WASTE PICKERS ARE MARGINALIZED FOR DEALING WITH WASTE, FOR BEING POOR AND FOR BEING BLACK!!!

N

WOMEN WASTE PICKERS AREN'T ONLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BY MEN WASTE PICKERS... WOMEN, IN GENERAL, ARE TREATED AS INFERIOR BY MEN AT HOME, AT WORK AND IN POLITICS.



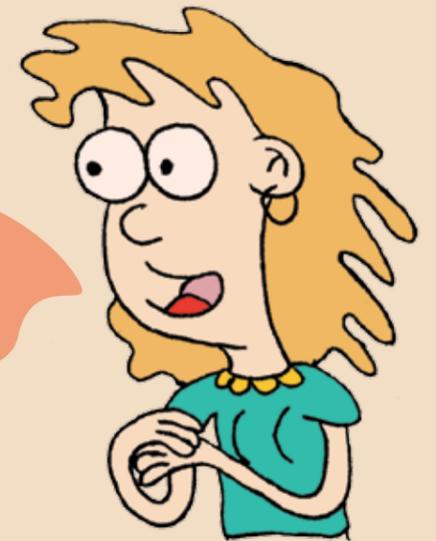
SOCIETIES ARE STILL RACIST AND SEXIST.

SO WHAT EMERGED FROM ALL THESE TALKS?



WOMEN'S VOICES ARE BECOMING STRONGER

WE ARE CONQUERING MORE SPACE



COOPERATIVES ARE SPACES WHERE WE HAVE SUPPORT AND ALSO LEARN

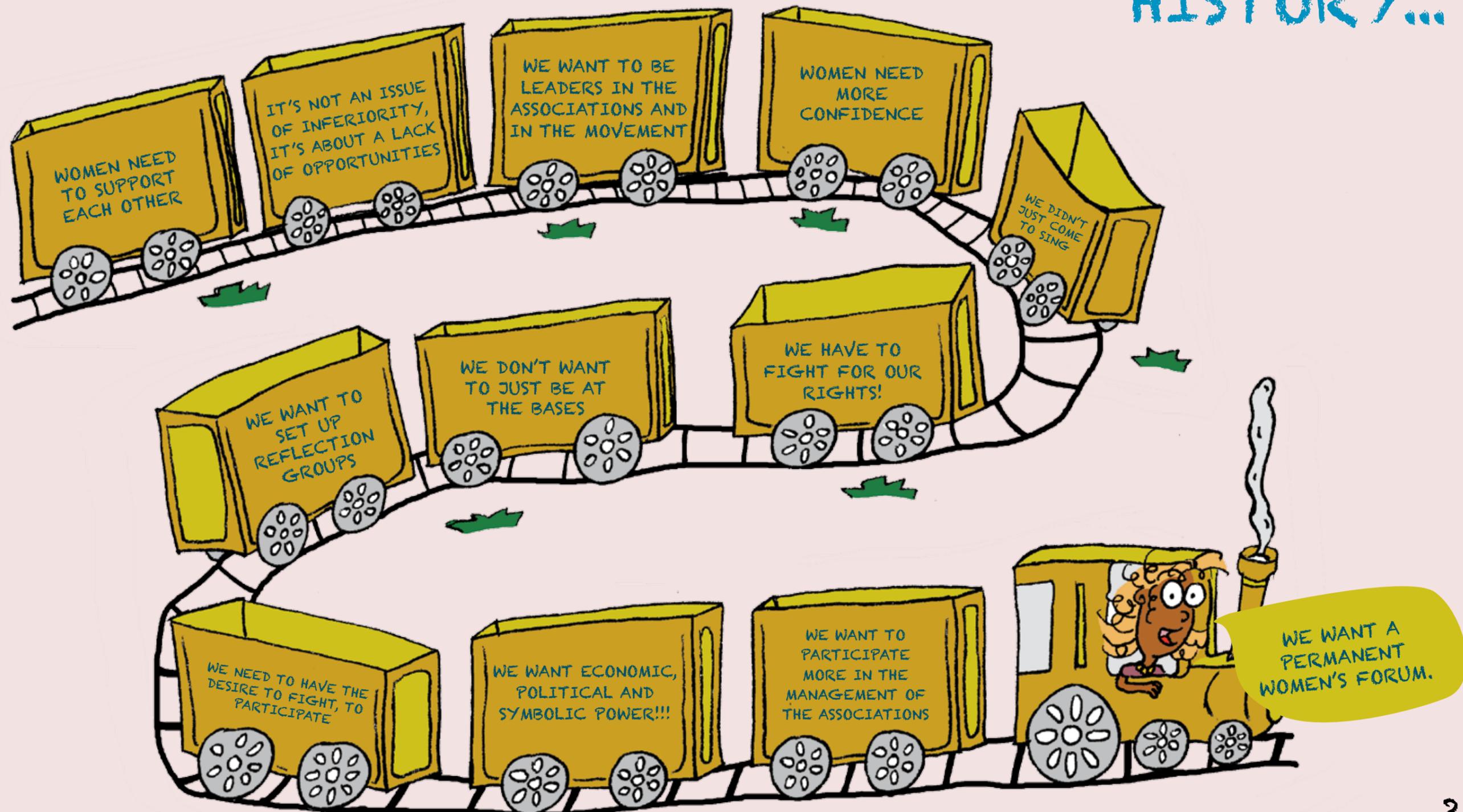


MANY WOMEN HAVE ALREADY OVERCOME ADVERSITY



I TAKE PRIDE IN BEING A WASTE PICKER

WOMEN WASTE PICKERS DON'T WANT TO MISS OUT ON BEING PART OF HISTORY...



SO, MY FRIENDS, NOW WE NEED TO HUMBL
Y THINK ABOUT HOW TO ADRESS ALL THESE
ISSUES IN ORDER TO BUILD A MORE JUST
AND KINDER COUNTRY.



THAT DESERVES A ROUND
OF APPLAUSE!

TO LEARN MORE

1. Dias, Sonia and Lucia Fernandez. "Waste Pickers – A Gendered Perspective." 2012. <http://wiego.org/publications/wastepickers-gendered-perspective>
2. Muller, Maria. "Gender, social inequality and waste management." World Bank, Draft Planning Guide for MSWM (Solid Waste Management), online document. www.worldbank.org/urban/solid_wm/erm/Annexes/US%20Sizes/Annex%201.2.pdf
3. McAnaney, Patrick. "Gender Dynamics in the Cooperatives." *Patrick Talks Trash*. Blog post. 19 Sept 2011. <http://patricktalkstrash.blogspot.com.br/2011/09/gender-dynamics-in-cooperatives.html>
4. *Radio Pink*. The Voice of Women at the People's Summit. Directed by Myriam Marques. People's Summit Radio Station. Rio de Janeiro, 2012. <http://globalrec.org/2012/09/25/debate-on-the-peoples-summit-radio-with-waste-pickers-street-vendors-allies-we-have-to-unite-waste-pickers-and-street-vendors/>
5. *Full Circle*. Directed by Amit Kumar Raj. Pune: Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) Productions, 2010. www.cultureunplugged.com/play/3942/Full-Circle



TO DO MORE

Addressing gender issues means a lot more than just organizing some events for women. These events are important, but they should reflect a plan for continuous action. In other words, they should not just be sporadic, but based on a group of coherent and inclusive actions integrating both men and women.

The following key issues must be taken into account: work to transform the structures that perpetuate women's discrimination; develop and *implement* empowerment programmes for women on a continuous basis; include gender demands in the waste pickers' collective claims at the local, state and national levels.

Transforming gender relationships implies not only making changes in one's attitudes, but also making changes in the structures within the organizations that perpetuate structural gender inequalities. This means:

_ Setting up gender forums or committees within the regional and national waste picker's movements.

_ Establishing representative participation of women in leadership/coordination positions in the cooperatives and in the movement.

_ Creating a gender-based programme that includes continuous and inclusive actions: literacy programs, political training, management and public speaking training, educational campaigns on issues such as gender violence, day care centres, sexuality, women's health, and actions against homophobia, etc... The main demands of women waste pickers were identified in the workshops held in Minas Gerais, Brazil (see pages 17, 18 and 21).

Helpful resources to develop gender-based programmes in your cooperative, network or movement:

1. Visit WIEGO's website; www.wiego.org, for more information on the gender workshops and participatory process in Minas Gerais, Brazil. See: www.wiego.org/informal-economy/waste-gender-rethinking-relations-empowerment) and www.wiego.org/wee/gender-waste-project.



2. For guidelines on project development tools, see: Rudin, Victoria, 2013, "Gender and Recycling: Tools for Project Design and Implementation: Regional Initiative for Inclusive Recycling." www.iadb.org/en/publications/publication-detail,7101.html?id=72905
Chapter 3 of this booklet provides tools for working with gender issues in recycling.

Let's get to work and good luck.

Sonia Dias _ WIEGO

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Apaig
Ara
Ascab
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Ascapel
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Ascarip
Ascavap
Ascito
Ascob
Ascol
Asmac
Asmarcol
Asmare
Associação Senhor do Bom Jesus

Astrapi
Astriflores
Astrine
Atlimarjom
Camar Mariana
Coomarin
Cooperativa-CRT
Coopercata
Coopersol Leste
Coopersoli
Coopert
Nova vida
Padre Faria
Recicarmo
Recifor
Samonte

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The Women's Studies Research Centre _ NEPEM
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THANK YOU
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