

FROM RURAL TO URBAN: THE PLIGHT OF WASTEPICKERS



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WHAT IS SOLID WASTE?

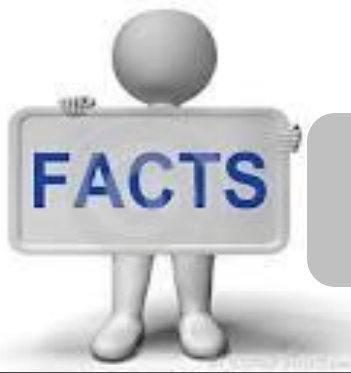
Solid waste here shall refer to all discarded household, commercial waste, non-hazardous institutional and industrial waste, street sweepings, construction debris, agricultural waste, and other non-hazardous, non-toxic waste*

Solid waste is the result of urbanization of modern societies.



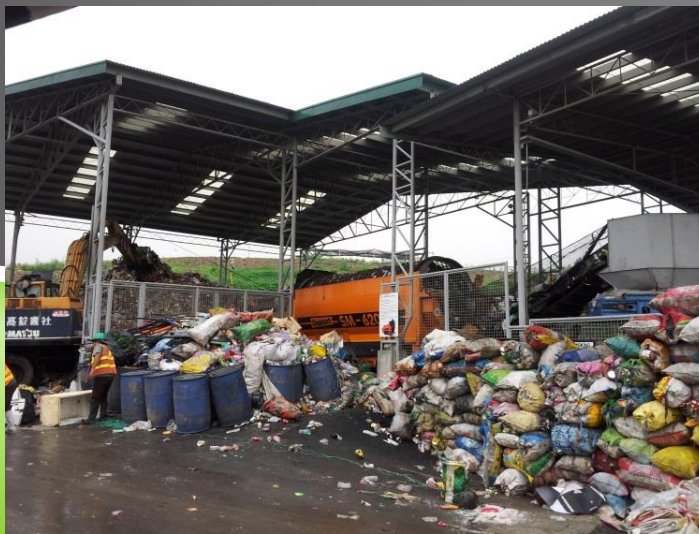
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ABOUT SOLID WASTE

- ▶ Generation rate in the Philippines: 30,000 tons/day*
- ▶ Metro Manila: 7,000 to 8,000 tons/day*
- ▶ Cost of collection: Roughly over PhP3.54 Billion annually (PhP1,450/ton)**



*NSWMC

**ADB

CURRENT STATE OF SOME DISPOSAL FACILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES



Cagayan de Oro City



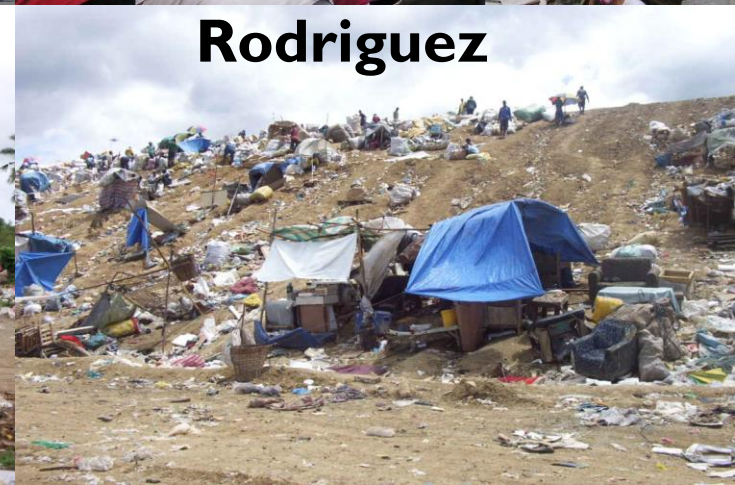
Legaspi City



Calajunan dumpsite



Bacolod City



Rodriguez

WASTEPICKING LIVELIHOOD: FROM RURAL TO URBAN

From farming (or other rural/urban jobs) to gleaning waste

Reasons:

- ❖ Don't have their own land to till
- ❖ Going from farm to farm to have work
- ❖ Planting and harvesting are seasonal: no work in between
- ❖ Waste picking is sometimes lucrative: yields immediate profit
- ❖ Requires no skills/schooling
- ❖ Earns more than other menial jobs
- ❖ Waste pickers can own their time



WASTE PICKERS

What are waste-pickers?

People (men, women, children) whose main activity is **sorting waste from dumpsites or any place where waste is disposed**. They belong to the lowest rung of the society and live in **informal settlements**, oftentimes close to Municipal solid waste disposal facility





PICKING WASTE



PROFILE OF SOME WASTE PICKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

- ▶ Formerly called “Scavengers” waste pickers are called “mangangalakal”, “mangangalahig,” “mambabasura”, “mangaykayay” etc.
- ▶ Cavite City - migrant wastepickers, mostly come from the poorer regions of the country (Samar, Leyte, Bicol), some parts of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao – lost homes due to floods, typhoons or left home due to other problems
- ▶ In Pili (Cams. Sur) and Butuan- some waste pickers are part time farmers who spend their time picking waste during periods when plants are waiting to be harvested/or who abandoned farming in favour of waste picking



PROFILE OF SOME WASTE PICKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

- ▶ In General Santos city – among the wastepickers are members of Indigenous People's tribes such as T'boli and B'laan.
- ▶ In Cagayan de Oro City – many wastepickers came from neighboring towns looking for work.
- ▶ Wastepickers are composed of men, women and children (even below 14 years old)



TYPES OF WASTEPICKERS



1. **Itinerant waste buyers** – those waste collectors who go from house to house to buy recyclable waste
2. **Garbage truck wastepicker** – those who recover recyclables from the dump truck while collecting garbage from house to house
3. **Street wastepicker**
4. **Informal waste collector**
5. **Dumpsite and street wastepicker**
6. **Dumpsite wastepicker and informal waste collector**
7. **Dumpsite wastepicker-** recovers recyclable waste at the disposal facility



This Photo from WIEGO (BY: Sonia Dias)



Photo from Eileen Sison Ecowaste Coalition)





WASTE PICKERS AS WASTE DIVERTERS: THE SILENT PARTNER IN RECYCLING



According to UN HABITAT:

- ▶ Waste pickers are responsible for collecting 50%-100% of recyclable waste in most cities in developing countries — at no cost to the city budget.
- ▶ Informal waste pickers' efforts have made recycling rates in some developing countries competitive with those of developed modern urban systems.
- ▶ Waste pickers are considered green economy workers



Photo source: UN Habitat



Photo source: Globalrec.org



COMMON ASPECTS OF WASTE PICKERS (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES)*



- ▶ Workers are subject to social stigma, face poor working conditions, and are frequently harassed.
- ▶ Waste picking is highly responsive to market-driven conditions for recyclables.
- ▶ Waste picking is often a family enterprise. It offers flexible working hours (inclusive to women) and a high level of adaptability.
- ▶ In some cities, most waste pickers are migrants, likely coming from marginalized groups or rejected from global economic processes.

***According to WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing)**



COMMON ASPECTS OF WASTEPICKERS (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES)*



- ▶ Although waste picking appears to be chaotic work is very organized.
- ▶ Numbers of waste pickers fluctuate due to economic conditions and urban processes.
- ▶ Waste pickers are often not part of public solid waste management systems; they are socially invisible and seldom reported in official statistics (hence, INFORMAL).
- ▶ Waste picking is easily learned and usually does not require literacy. However, when working in a collective endeavour, some activities (for example, administrative tasks) do require literacy.
- ▶ Non-organized waste pickers are often recruited by middlemen.

ISSUES OF WASTE PICKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

- ▶ Often migrants from rural areas, find work in deplorable working conditions such as dumpsites
- ▶ Exposed to toxic surroundings (where carbon dioxide, methane and other toxic gases are released in huge quantities)
- ▶ Can't afford decent housing – live in shanties, in cemeteries, along the coast or near the dumpsites
- ▶ Lack access to decent source of water and sanitation
- ▶ No garbage collection in their communities – dump garbage anywhere or bring to dumpsites themselves (or burn their trash)



LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES: MAINSTREAMING THE INFORMAL WASTE PICKERS (SOCIAL INCLUSION)

- ▶ Opportunities to involve in formal solid waste management services
- ▶ Employment opportunities through skills training and education
- ▶ Organizing into cooperative or associations for better collective business arrangements
- ▶ Partnering with existing companies or with LGUs
- ▶ Assistance from the government through loans and other micro-financing schemes for alternative livelihood management



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AWAY FROM DUMPSITES: MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY

LGU-Meycauayan, Bulacan



Cavite City (Photo courtesy of Eileen Sison, EcoWaste Coalition)

CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Open dumping sites attract waste pickers
- ▶ Rural migrants who have no skills and have little education find waste picking the easiest choice for livelihood
- ▶ Waste pickers can improve their livelihood if given opportunity and proper training by the government
- ▶ Developing programs for integration of waste pickers into the mainstream is possible
- ▶ Micro-financing for livelihood opportunities can be attained through cooperative business enterprising
- ▶ Improvement of livelihood of waste pickers can contribute to economic growth
- ▶ Better waste management can be achieved through employing skilled SWM workers



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ The LGUs should include the informal waste pickers in developing their CLUP and SWM Plans
- ▶ Skills training and business management trainings should be provided to informal waste pickers for better integration into the formal labor force
- ▶ In the modernization of solid waste disposal facilities, the IWS must be given recognition as people who can be gainfully employed to help in the operations and management of such facilities
- ▶ Programs for alternative livelihood for IWS must be part of the government current agenda for economic growth.
- ▶ The waste pickers must be organized and form into cooperatives of people's organization and they should be given capacity building such that they can be attractive partners for business, whether by private or LGUs.



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TRAINING

ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

CAPACITY
BUILDING

JOBS
EMPLOYMENT
LIVELIHOOD



ORGANIZING

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!