



CAPABILITIES & PARTNERSHIPS

Having sufficient staff and distributing talent strategically can help municipalities develop policies, enforce regulation and take other needed steps to improve waste management. Municipalities also often benefit from forming partnerships, such as resource and knowledge-sharing programs with other governments, as well as private-sector entities and civil society. In an ideal waste management system, stakeholders should have clearly defined partnership standards, with a joint strategy, and there should be a clear development pipeline of talent to sustain the system over a long-term time horizon.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Embed circular economy specific KPIs in municipal departments
- Develop circular economy capabilities across waste management stakeholders
- Incentivize and empower waste workers to keep improving the system
- Broker effective partnerships between formal and informal waste actors



RETHINKING RECYCLING ARGENTINA IN BUENOS AIRES

PARTNERING WITH INFORMAL WASTE COOPERATIVES TO INCREASE MATERIAL DIVERSION FROM LANDFILLS AND IMPROVE WAGES RECEIVED BY WORKERS

SITUATION

Most cities in Argentina have a formal waste collection service with unionized workers. In addition to this, the country has long had marginal numbers of "cartoneros", or informal waste collectors that have historically picked cardboard from street bins to sell for recycling as a means for living.

Following the 2001 economic crisis, the number of informal cartoneros working on the streets and in landfills skyrocketed. The informal workers organized themselves into cooperatives to benefit from synergies of scale and management. These cooperatives have since been able to collaborate with some local governments, for example, to expand the types of materials they pick (thereby helping some cities with recycling collection) in exchange for benefits like income subsidies and personal protective equipment.

ACTION

As part of the process of social and economic integration of Barrio Mugica into the rest of Buenos Aires, the city wanted to create initiatives to drive greater economic inclusion alongside the end goal of improving waste management and increasing recycling rates in the neighborhood. To do this, we:

- Partnered with the city and the 13 active labor cooperatives in Barrio Mugica to establish recycling and composting services
- Worked alongside the 13 cooperatives to formalize the labor conditions of waste workers in the Barrio, 67% of whom are women
- Provided training or upskilling for over 400 co-op workers in three stages to enable them to provide education on waste separation and recycling, and to deliver waste collection and sorting services for the Barrio community

RESULT

This led to the diversion of 510 tons of materials from landfills, of which, 340 tons was of recyclables (over 15% of dry recyclables generated in the area) and 170 tons was of organic materials. Workers' salaries were improved by about 10%, driven by the proceeds from the sales of recyclable materials, as well as the formalization of their employment to ensure they have health benefits and job stability.



GLOBAL CASE STUDY

PARTNERSHIPS FOR LOCAL CAPABILITY BUILDING IN SOUTH AFRICA¹⁸

SITUATION

Informal waste pickers are integral to recycling in South Africa, collecting 80-90% of post-consumer packaging and paper from the waste stream, but were not formally recognized by the municipalities. Furthermore, there was also no waste collection strategy for informal settlements. From 2015-2017, Oxfam Italia, the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa, the City of Johannesburg and a number of other Italian and South African governmental partners embarked on a project to improve waste management in an area of Ekurhuleni, while also creating local job opportunities for unemployed people. The project focused on capacity building for the local government, as well as local waste pickers and cooperatives.

ACTION

The project piloted an improved waste management model in three areas of Tembisa, Ekurhuleni by:

- Working with partners to change a by-law which outsources waste collection to cooperatives and/or small enterprises, rather than solely establishing private provider companies
- Providing capability-building with three local cooperatives and building new infrastructure for waste collection and sorting for the cooperatives
- Capability-building with Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality officials, such as improving knowledge and competencies of environmental issues, the green economy and waste management
- Increasing local community awareness of the value of recycling, both from an environmental and social point of view

RESULT

Overall, the efficacy of waste collection in Tembisa increased significantly. In the 12 months before the pilot project was introduced, the cooperatives collected 296,317 tons of waste. However, after only six months of the pilot project, the cooperatives had collected 210,009 tons of waste. Thus, the cooperatives collected more than 70% of the prior year's waste in half of the amount of time. The local municipality continues to work with Oxfam South Africa and other partners, multinationals (including Unilever), and private corporations to scale capacity building with cooperatives, among other initiatives. To date, 66 recycling cooperatives and small enterprises have been supported to establish the Ekurhuleni Waste Management Association.

