

Proposal for Future Research and Engagements to Support Waste Picker Integration

Based on SACN Waste Picker Integration Workshop, April 12-13, 2016

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1. Background

On April 12-13 the South African Cities Network (SACN) ran a workshop on waste picker integration. On April 12-13, 2016 the South African Cities Network (SACN) ran a workshop on the integration of waste pickers into municipal waste management systems. Waste pickers salvage reusable and recyclable materials from the waste stream. The Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) estimates that through their informal work, waste pickers save municipalities between R309.2 and R748.9 million rands per year. Waste pickers are therefore, already an important part of municipal waste management systems. Waste picker integration focuses on how this can be acknowledged and formalised. The integration of waste pickers into municipal waste management systems is identified as a priority in the 2011 National Waste Management Strategy. The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) is tasked with developing guidelines on waste picker integration, and many municipalities are developing their own waste picker integration programmes. The SACN workshop was designed to support these processes.

The workshop was hosted by the City of Johannesburg. Participants included representatives from the waste management divisions in SACN member cities, the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), waste pickers involved in integration projects in SACN cities, DEA, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), CSIR, Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and groundWork. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Melanie Samson of Wits University. Dr. Sonia Maria Dias, WIEGO's Waste Sector Specialist, was an expert resource person.

At the workshop municipal officials and waste pickers discussed their experiences of waste picker integration initiatives. Drawing on inputs from Dr. Dias about the international experience, as well as reflections on the local experiences by CSIR, DEA, SALGA, SAWPA, WIEGO, and groundWork, participants identified: a) principles that should underpin waste picker integration; b) issues that require further research; c) areas where they need support to take forward waste picker integration; and d) activities which could be undertaken to develop national guidelines on waste picker integration. A full report of the workshop is available from the SACN on request.

At the workshop it was agreed that Dr. Samson would develop a proposal on how to take forward collaborative work on waste picker integration at a local level and how to develop national guidelines in line with the 2011 National Waste Management Strategy. This document presents the proposals developed by Dr. Samson on the basis of the workshop discussions as well as a review of literature on international experiences of waste picker integration. The proposals will be circulated to workshop participants for comment before being finalised.

International experience shows that the Guidelines for Waste Picker Integration must be based on evidence and meaningful participation of stakeholders. Accordingly, this proposal divides the suggested activities into three parts: 1) research; 2) knowledge management and information dissemination; and 3) capacity building. Proposals regarding the process to develop Guidelines on Waste Picker Integration are included in the document "Framework for the Development of Guidelines on Waste Picker Integration".

2. Research

This sections describes the content-driven areas of the proposed further research. The SACN is putting out these gaps in research on waste picker integration for any partner in the waste sector to lead. For some of them e.g knowledge management, dissemination and capacity building, there is a plan to work on them immediately between Wits, SACN, SALGA, CSIR and DEA.

2.1. Research on how to include non-South Africans in the integration processes

A significant number of waste pickers in the country are not South African. They are currently being excluded from integration initiatives. There are a range of reasons for this exclusion. Municipalities are unaware of how they could formally include people who do not have work permits. In addition, cooperatives are the preferred route to integrating waste pickers, and municipalities report that funding available to support cooperatives requires that all cooperative members be South African. Workshop participants identified a need to conduct research to identify ways that non-nationals can be included in integration initiatives.

Proposal: It is proposed that through the partnership with Wits University, the Africa Centre for Migration Studies (ACMS) be commissioned to conduct research on the inclusion of non-South Africans in integration initiatives. ACMS is the leading research institute focusing on migration into South Africa. It has specific expertise on migrants involved in informal work, and was the convener of the Migrating for Work Research Consortium (MiWORC). This research should investigate existing legal and policy barriers and how these can be removed, as well as social barriers to the inclusion of non-nationals (including discrimination and xenophobia on the part of both government officials and South African waste pickers) and how these could be removed. It should include desktop study, interviews with national policy makers and local officials, and interviews and focus groups with non-nationals and South African waste pickers. The department of Home Affairs should also be engaged on aspects relating to permitting.

Source of funding: New funding would need to be provided for this research, which could be included as an additional dimension of the CSIR-DST-DEA funded Wits research project on waste picker integration.

2.2. A Tool to Calculate the Cost of Airspace at Landfill

In order to accurately identify the financial contribution that waste pickers make by diverting recyclable and reusable materials from landfills, it is important that each municipality knows the cost of the airspace in their landfills.

Proposal: It is proposed that CSIR be requested to develop a tool that municipalities can use to calculate the cost of the airspace in their landfills.

Source of funding: CSIR would be requested to develop this tool. CSIR would need to indicate whether it requires additional funding for this activity.

2.3. Funding models to support waste pickers and obtain data from buy back centres

Bogotá, Colombia, has developed a model in which waste pickers who sell to accredited buy back centres receive additional payment from the municipality for their contribution to the municipal waste management system. Workshop participants noted that adopting a similar approach in South Africa would not only compensate waste pickers for the money they save municipalities and the contribution they make to the environment, but it would also create a mechanism that would allow

the municipality to gather more accurate data on the numbers of waste pickers, the types of materials collected, and quantities of recyclables extracted from the waste stream. It would also provide data on buy back centres and facilitate registration of buyback centres. The information gathered through this process would be valuable in the development of evidence based policy making at local and national level.

Proposal: Research should be conducted to develop a model for paying waste pickers a service payment via registered buy back centres as a means to compensate waste pickers and improve data collection. This research should include investigating similar processes used in other countries, as well as the logistical, financial, and policy mechanisms that would be required to support this initiative in South Africa. CSIR could be requested to conduct/commission this research. Piloting of this model could be conducted as part of the SACN programme proposed below in Section 4.

Source of Funding: CSIR could be requested to conduct/commission this research. If it does not have funding and capacity to do the research internally then additional funds will need to be raised to conduct this research.

2.4. Review of policy instruments

International experience demonstrates the importance of aligning existing policy instruments to support waste picker integration in order to ensure that they do not unintentionally undermine waste picker integration and that they support the institutionalisation of waste picker integration. In South Africa some key relevant policy instruments include, but are not limited to: Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMPs), Supply Chain Management Plans; Treasury regulations; landfill permits; and funding for cooperatives.

Proposal: It is proposed that desktop research be commissioned that identifies: all relevant policy instruments (including financial instruments); how they currently hinder and/or facilitate waste picker integration; and how they should be revised to facilitate waste picker integration.

Source of Funding: CSIR could be requested to conduct/commission this research. If it does not have funding and capacity to do the research internally then additional funds will need to be raised to conduct this research.

3. Knowledge Management and Information Dissemination

3.1. Establish a website on waste picker integration to share documents and resources

Stakeholders would benefit from access to studies and reports on waste picker integration in other parts of the world and in South Africa. Sharing these documents would provide useful resources for local processes as well as a common knowledge base for stakeholder engagement in the development of national guidelines.

Proposal: Wits should establish a website with resources on waste picker integration. This website could be linked to/hosted by the Waste RDI Roadmap website and the DEA website.

Source of funding: This could be conducted as part of the existing CSIR-DST-DEA funded Wits research project. CSIR would be requested to provide technical assistance in setting up the website and linking it to the Waste RDI Roadmap and DEA websites.

3.2. Dissemination of Reports

Most waste pickers do not have reliable access to the Internet and may not have technical ability to read technical/academic papers. In order to ensure maximum participation, it is important to create popular versions of certain technical reports and academic papers. These could take the form of photo essays, simple reports, brochures etc.

Proposal: There should be a commitment to producing popular versions of all key reports. All stakeholders should commit to reproducing and distributing these reports.

Source of funding: Wits will consider developing a popular version of the SACN workshop report as part of the existing project. As only a limited print run will be possible, SACN member cities will be requested to reproduce the report and make additional copies available for dissemination to waste pickers in their cities. Funding will need to be secured for the production of popular versions of reports on future activities. It is important that this be included in the development of activity budgets.

4. Capacity Building and Support

4.1 Support to SACN members and other municipalities for on-going work on waste picker integration

SACN member cities and other municipalities across the country have been implementing initiatives to integrate waste pickers for a number of years. These initiatives will continue while DEA facilitates a process to develop national guidelines on waste picker integration. Workshop participants noted that the inputs and engagements at the workshop had been tremendously useful, and stated that they would like to continue meeting with each other with other stakeholders and to receive on-going support to assist them in integrating waste pickers. Such a process would not only assist participating municipalities in developing better programmes at local level, but would also create experiences and generate data that would be of tremendous value in developing national guidelines. A key insight from the workshop, which is supported by international experience, is that the development and implementation of successful waste picker integration programmes requires on-going, meaningful participation of stakeholders in collective processes to gather and analyse relevant data in order to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate locally appropriate models.

Proposal: It is proposed that the SACN and SALGA collaborate to develop a programme on how to sustain a platform for on-going engagement and support for municipalities. This programme would feed into the process of developing coherent waste picker integration programmes and national

guidelines through participatory processes. The programme could be developed through either a series of workshops or an annual conference modelled on the initial April 2016 workshop, combining expert inputs with stakeholder reports and meaningful, focused engagement. Participation would be expanded to ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders (including provincial government, other relevant government departments, business, and unions), and all stakeholders should participate in designing the programme.

If the workshop approach is adopted, then each workshop would focus on one particular challenge related to integration. The first workshop should be held in the second half of 2016 and should focus on establishing local stakeholder structures and one key issue, such as mapping the local recycling system in the city and the role of waste pickers in this system which would serve as a basis around which to form the local structure. [This is just an example, we would need to agree on a priority issue that will help each municipality to have a grounded project around which to establish the stakeholder structure and which will provide information necessary for the development of a locally relevant approach to waste picker integration]. At the second workshop, to be held in the first half of 2017, participants will report back on their progress and problems encountered, collectively brainstorm ways to address problems, and then focus on the next key issue. The workshop discussions will be documented and provide a resource for participants as well as inputs into the process to develop national guidelines. Alternatively, rather than having several workshops each year, there could be an annual conference in waste picker integration in which different sessions would focus on specific challenges related to waste picker integration.

Source of funding: SACN member cities pay for their own participation in workshops. Non-SACN cities wishing to participate would need to finance their own participation or funds would need to be raised to finance their participation. SALGA should be requested to assist in sourcing funding for the participation of non-SACN municipalities. The SACN host city provides the venue for SACN workshops. As numbers will be expanded for these workshops to include non-SACN municipalities, there may be a need to source funding for venues. Funding may need to be obtained for meals and tea at the workshops. Funding will need to be raised to pay for: workshop design; workshop co-ordination; waste picker participation; facilitation; resource people; and production of the formal reports and popular reports.