

The 3W Approach: WORK



INTRODUCTION

Access to a safe, dignified and reliable source of employment is one of the key determinants for urban health and safety. Families with access to decent work are more likely to send their children to attend school, provide nutritious food for the family, pay for safe and dignified water and sanitation services, and afford medical care when required. Children growing up in families who do not have access to safe work opportunities are at a higher risk of being sent to work to supplement the family income, more at risk of receiving a deficient diet, have less access to safe water and sanitation services, and are often not able to access medical care when required. The ability of parents to access decent work is critical for childhood health.

Moving beyond the local household to the community and city level, decent work is central to a city or nation's economic growth, with the growth of employment opportunities being one of the most important components for city-wide economic development and poverty reduction.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper presents an introduction to some of the critical issues of consideration when discussing the integration of work and economic development into urban water, sanitation and solid waste management interventions. It seeks to present current discussion points and provide an overview of lessons that have emerged from relevant community based projects and labour organisations.

In this report work is defined as the engagement in activities which result in the individual receives payment, in the form of either cash or equivalent good and resources, for the effort exerted throughout the activity. Waste focuses on municipal solid waste; acknowledging that this excludes hazardous and industrial waste streams. Finally, urban water refers to the broad definition that incorporates the three inter-related streams of urban water supply, sanitation and drainage services.

OBJECTIVES

This paper, like the other pre-reads developed for the Urban Thinkers' Campus on "Healthy and Safe Cities for Children and Youth" has three objectives, two short term (within the next two months) and one medium term (within the next 12 months).

- **Short term:** This paper aims to inform participants attending the Urban Thinkers Campus on "Healthy and Safe Cities for Children and Youth" who have not invested extensive thought into the issues of providing decent work conditions for those engaged in water or waste related sectors. It seeks to be an introductory, background paper that provides an overview of the issues which need to be considered.
- **Short term:** provide an initial (and very flexible) structure that participant case studies and insights will be able to be integrated into, and to provide a platform for sharing and evidence building.
- **Medium term:** it is proposed the following the UTC, the outcomes of this event will be incorporated into this document to provide a widely informed policy paper. that can be a resource to feed into the New Urban Agenda dialogue in the lead up to Habitat III, and can provide policy recommendations for interested organisations and member states.

LIMITATIONS

This paper does not claim to be fully comprehensive but rather to provide some preliminary responses to the questions listed above. It is a step forward in providing some high level discussion points substantiated by practical examples. We welcome input and feedback on this paper and on the work that World Vision does in this context.

THE 3W APPROACH: AN INTRODUCTION

The idea of the '3W approach: Water, Waste and Work' focusses on integrating waste, water and work in sustainable development activities. It seeks to address three of the critical challenges of the twenty-first century: (i) providing the urban poor with access to adequate water, sanitation and waste services; (ii) increased economic opportunities as a means for alleviating urban poverty; and (iii) addressing the global challenge of environmental sustainability. This paper seeks to focus on the challenges, needs and opportunities of providing decent working conditions and opportunities for employment creation through the provision of improved water and waste services in urban contexts.

Social development activities and the physical environment must no longer be addressed in silos with minimal integration. The tradition of treating environment and society as separate pillars of sustainable development is required to change. Rather we must understand them as closely related dimensions with strong positive feedback loops. This approach will see the promotion of environmental sustainability as a key driver for social development: with environmental sustainability enabling more and better jobs, promoting social cohesion, and working for poverty reduction. All of these in-term can likewise be used as motivators and enablers of further improving the urban environment. However, the opportunities for gains will only be realised with changes to both the policy and practice arenas.

The International Labour Organisation's conclude that it is "in workplaces that the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development come together inseparably."¹ With this background the ILO began to campaign for 'Decent Work' beginning in 1999, setting a vision that employment is provided in a manner which improves the employees' economic, social and environmental outcomes. This vision has since been advocated widely including at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012

Increasingly the consensus is that climate change will fundamentally, and disproportionately, impact the world's urban poor. In developing countries 21 percent of urban dwellers live in exposed low elevation coastal zone, where the poorer communities are particularly at risk, as they have the least resilience and adaptive capacity.² Additionally, environmental degradation and climate impacts are now known drivers for rural-urban migration with the UNHCR estimating that 24 million people globally became displaced because of floods, famine, and other environmental factors.³

These are complex and interrelated global issues: the need to promote healthier urban communities, work towards the protection of the natural environment and the urgent requirement to establish opportunities for decent work for the world's urban poor. Despite the challenges it is suggested that well designed job creation processes and opportunities can go hand in hand with poverty reduction and improved environmental outcomes.

As outlined by the ILO the development of responsible and appropriate job creation can "*emphasise that it should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy function of the Earth's ecosystems.*"⁴

As a child focused organisation World Vision is interested in work from a few perspectives: (i) that of ensuring decent work for parents of children so that children are not forced into child labour or begging, but are rather engaged in education for additional years and are provided with improved nutrition and health care; (ii) the provision of skills development and employment opportunities for vulnerable youth who have either completed

¹ ILO, 2007, Director General's report to the 2007 International Labour Conference 2

² ILO, *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*, 2013

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

or dropped out of school and are under or un-employed; and (iii) the ongoing need to advocate for more protection for children from child labour .

CHILDREN, WOMEN AND YOUTH AT RISK

Workers who deal directly with sanitation management, waste picking or waste recycling generally are among the poorest and most vulnerable. Unfortunately, of the 19-24 million working globally in this sector a large component is made up of women, youth and children. This exposes these already vulnerable members of society, to even high risks of injury, illness, abuse and shame.

Waste collectors, recyclers and sanitation works can be exposed to significant health risks, as will be described in greater detail below. Children and youth are especially exposed to these risks.⁵ They face verbal, physical and psychological abuse, they are less aware of risks than adults, and have required knowledge to minimise risks.⁶ These risks are exacerbated as children and youth also often have no protective equipment or clothing, poor sanitation, a lack of first aid and a lack of clean water to wash with after exposure.

Specific efforts will be required to keep young children off the dumpsite, as research has found that there is a clear deterioration in learning ability depending on length of time spent at a waste dumpsite.⁷ This reinforces the importance of providing parents with decent work so that children are not required to supplement the household income stream through their labour.

Young people, when they are first entering the work force, are also at high risk of exploitation, especially in contexts where unemployment is high and a highly competitive labour market. These situations will increase the pressure on young people to accept inappropriate, unsafe and underpaid jobs.

Unfortunately, the scale of this problem could actually increase in many countries in the coming years due to demographic changes as younger population bulges progress into the labour market. In the next decade this ongoing crisis of unemployment will face another challenge as an additional 400 million young people enter the labour market.⁸

⁵ Comaru, F., and Werna, E., *The health of workers in selected sectors of the urban economy* (Geneva, 2013)

⁶ ILO, *Children in Hazardous work: What we know, what we need to do* (Geneva, 2011)

⁷ S. Gunn and Z. Ostos: "Dilemmas in tackling child labour: The case of scavenger children in the Philippines", in *International Labour Review* (1992), Vol. 131, No. 6, pp. 629–646

⁸ ILO, *Global Employment Trends 2012: Preventing a deeper job crisis* (Geneva, 2012).

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

As a child focussed organisation World Vision desires to see all children and young people to live with increased health and wellbeing. For many young people who have either completed or dropped out of school their greatest need is to gain meaningful employment so that they can access the essential requirements – shelter, nutritious food, health care, fun, recreation and a freedom from chronic financial stress.

Global patterns of urbanisation and demographic changes are seeing children, youth and young people making up an increasing percentage of the urban population. The explosive growth of young urban populations is placing enormous pressure on the already stretched urban job market in developing and emerging economies. The social challenge of un- and under-employment affects hundreds of millions of people throughout the developing world. Current estimates place 200 million people unemployed, a record level of global unemployment. And alarmingly, young people (16-25) account for more than a third of total unemployment.

Additional challenges such as working poverty (where despite employment families are unable to escape the cycle of poverty) and poor job quality affect an additional 900 million workers, largely in informal, insecure and poor paying employment in the developing world.

Therefore to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction, there is an urgent requirement for the creation of hundreds of millions of sustainable and productive jobs in the next decade. The majority of these employment opportunities will be developed in urban centres, and must ensure a fair wage, decent working environments and access to improved living conditions. NGOs, for-profit social enterprises, impact investors and multilaterals wanting to enable youth and young adult livelihood improvements must be committed to ensuring ongoing job creation that provides access to safe, decent and dignified work. Specific attention will be required for the creation of sustainable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Collectively SMEs represent over two-thirds of the global employment and are responsible for the creation of most new jobs.

The International Labour Organisation's policy on youth employment is to provide both employment and training opportunities, but ensuring that special attention is paid to selecting roles and opportunities that are suitable and safe for young people, as opposed to fully developed adult or experienced workers.

To enable job creation of this scale there will need to be a concerted effort in the development of a competent, skilled and motivated workforce of young people desiring to work in dignified jobs. While there will remain job opportunities which require very low skilled roles, even within the solid waste/recycling sector communities will be empowered to access additional value if they are able to increase their skill base and capacity. This will both increase their income earning capacity and increased resilience to future shocks and stresses. A waste collecting and recycling example that demonstrates this principle is that when groups are equipped with skills and equipment required to do initial processing rather than immediate on-selling, a noticeable value add is recovered. This increases the economic benefits that the collectors can access.

Training in employment skills, life skills, leadership, problem solving, conflict resolution, budgeting and accounting, planning and management, are all 'soft' programs that NGOs can partner with local governments to provide that could then be leveraged to secure seed money for micro-enterprise investments and business credit.

Similar to the above discussion regarding the generation and sustaining of employment opportunities through the solid waste management sector, there is also potential to activate the often overlooked value of sanitation waste product streams. Globally, it is recognised that urban faecal sludge management will pose one of the largest environmental and public health challenges of the next century, however, if rather than viewing sludge a waste stream to be disposed of, if it could be identified as a potential resource through which income can be generated viable business models might begin to emerge. When septic tanks are full, or latrines require emptying, a pit

emptying fee can be charged for the removal service. Additionally, if the waste streams are then used to generate a viable product – generally fertiliser, compost, or energy - another potential income stream is generated.

Solid waste management and recycling

One area where improved connections between local government, private sector, NGOs, and multi-laterals could result in improved economic development opportunities and improved health and safety, is the solid waste and recycling sector. With an increasing awareness of the challenges of solid waste management, the increasing desire of multi-nationals to demonstrate social corporate responsibility, and the advancement of a global push for environmental protection, recycling rates will continue to rise. As recycling rates rise, employment in waste management and recycling will increase. Currently there is an estimated 19-24 million workers in the sector. While the creation of new employment opportunities is promising, an equally important challenge will be the formalisation of this predominately informal sector. Of the 19-24 million currently employed it is estimated that less than 20 percent of them are employed in formal roles. The vast majority work as informal waste collectors in developing countries.⁹

From an economic perspective, as it is known that there are far greater quantities of recyclable material recovered by informal waste collector, than the formal waste management systems, and thus they generate a net economic benefit. However, despite economic gains, this sector will only truly be contributing to sustainable development when the vast majority of workers and waste collectors are offered job security and formalisation. As well as offering security, protection and ensuring acceptable income levels, formalisation will be required to assist with the promotion and implementation of more complex recycling processes. Equipping and empowering collectives of waste collectors to implement some of the initial stages of these recycling processes will have far greater poverty reduction potential than the continuation of the status quo which sees the urban poor selling-on collected waste as untreated, low value commodities for the private sector to process and access the majority of the financial value in the waste streams.

The formalisation of waste collectors as cooperatives can, and has, contribute to social development, social inclusion and improved working conditions. Cooperatives have the ability to communicate the voice, needs and concerns of the individual waste collectors to ensure that they receive a suitable income, are provided with adequate protection and equipment. This process is most successful when cooperatives are recognised and approved by local municipalities, and they have in some contexts been engaged as subcontracted service providers. This is a much more beneficial approach than trying to minimise their role through privatising the sector and

The future nature of employment opportunities within the waste management sector will continue to diversify, reflecting the range of approaches from highly technical, automated mechanised treatment of rudimentary manual approaches practiced by individuals.

HEALTH CONCERNS OF POOR URBAN WORKERS

An important aspect of global poverty alleviation will be to ensure that urban workers have adequate health conditions. Currently poor urban workers bear the brunt of urban health problems. The health and safety related problems faced by poor urban workers have significant impacts on their livelihoods and security.

The urban poor are the least protected and most at risk of serious health and safety concerns. Risk exposure occurs at both city or local level, and at both places of work, and within urban dwellings, Some of the environmental health risks that these vulnerable communities are exposed to include:

⁹ ILO, *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*, 2013

At the city, regional and global scale we need to understand the ongoing health impacts of environmental degradation. Without a change in the approach and attitudes towards energy, manufacturing, consumption and transport, environmental will continue to accelerate over the next 100 years. The World Bank estimates that by 2025 the world will produce 2.2 billion tonnes of waste, in comparison to 1.3 billion tonnes in 2012.¹⁰ Ongoing environmental pollution of air, water and soil is decreasing ecosystem health, which in turn impacts their ability to provide health benefits for human settlements, decreases agricultural and fisheries productivity and is particularly acute in emerging economies and developing countries. Similarly, exposure to hazardous chemicals are increasing and concentration of pollutants are already above safety guidelines in some cities.¹¹ The OECD estimates that city or regional level air pollution will be responsible for 3.6 million deaths per year by 2050 due to airborne particulate matter in newborns. These city and regional pollution trends are likely to continue to increase the existing inequalities in cities and increase the vulnerabilities faced by the urban poor.¹²

At the local scale there are multiple work based urban health concerns faced by the millions of urban dwellers who are employed in solid waste/recycling, water or wastewater based businesses. Firstly, a lack of personal protective equipment results in workers having an unnecessarily high exposure to health risks. For those involved solid- or sanitation-waste collection industries a lack of shoes, gloves, masks and equipment exposes workers to injury, illness and in the case of sanitation collection services – very high risk of contamination. The global community can influence the safety of these informal sectors through encouraging policy and practice change that promotes the formalisation of these sectors, the provision of adequate PPE and the provision of adequate and reasonable vaccinations and medical cover.

For young people and females, any form of waste collection at either formal or informal dump sites presents risks of verbal, physical or sexual assault. Both once off and ongoing abuse significantly increases the risks of mental health illnesses. Urban workers in the waste, recycling or water industries are at risk of traffic accidents due to poorly enforced road regulations and uncontrolled urban growth. Especially waste collectors who are responsible for transporting their products in handcarts on busy urban roads

In addition to work place based risks, poor urban workers are often also exposed to urban environmental risks at home due to the precarious nature of their ongoing residences. Urban workers often live in sub-optimal living arrangement in low-income or informal communities. A lack of adequate, safe drinking water and sanitation is the largest cause of ill health in urban contexts. Additionally, informal and low-income communities are regularly characterised by an unhealthy overcrowding which facilitates the spread of both contagious water-borne and air borne diseases. Density and overcrowding has also been known to increase cases of sexual and physical abuse. The ongoing reliance on charcoal or wood fired stoves for cooking in informal communities increases the indoor air pollution risks exposing the community to respiratory disease. Finally, inadequate drainage infrastructure makes many dwelling localities for poor urban workers regularly exposed to urban flooding. Floods contribute to ill-health through the spread of water borne diseases, disease carrying vectors such as rats and insects, and also increase other safety risks such as electrocution and fire. Flooding also results in non-health impacts that directly affect livelihoods– domestic, economic or employment losses.

When urban workers are faced with any of the health problems noted in the previous section – illness, injury or disability – they are ill prepared to respond. They are some of the urban centre’s least resilient, least protected and least resourced occupants. Illness or injury to these members of society has a two-fold impact – (i) it decreases household daily incomes – potentially leading to destitution, child labour or debt; and (ii) it increases household expenditure for medical care, if any is accessible at all.

¹⁰ World Bank *What a waste: A global review of solid waste management* (Washington, DC, 2012).

¹¹ OECD: *OECD environmental outlook to 2050*, op. cit.

¹² ILO, *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*, 2013

A lack of adequate cash based savings or security means that there is very little resilience within many urban working families. Illness alone can be enough to pull children from the education system and force them into child labour or street-based begging.

BRAZIL – FORMALISING INFORMAL WASTE PICKERS

Brazil can claim the world's largest national waste-pickers' movement. Over the years it has been at the forefront of policy development to improve the livelihood and working conditions of waste collectors. As an outcome of these policies and the formalisation of informal waste pickers into a national, approved waste collectors movement, the income of its 60,000 members is now up to five times higher than the income earned by unorganized waste-pickers.

Local councils have implemented policies such as ensuring that waste collectors are provided with the technology and infrastructure required for sorting of recyclable waste, including large facilities for collection and storage; the development of policies that provide legal recognition of waste pickers involved in formal collectives; training and skills in entrepreneurship and business management; enabling formalised collectives of waste collectors to be eligible for municipality sub-contracting; the provision and enforcement of occupational health and safety services and precautions. Some of these policies, such as the formal recognition have been implemented into legislation, that supports the social inclusion of these workers and associations of informal collectors of recyclables.

Resulting from these progressive policies and legislations there has been improvements in working conditions, decreased child labour participation, and improved recycling efficiency, and therefore economic outcomes. The model of formalised waste collector cooperatives is now a central component of Brazil's poverty reduction strategy.

MOVING FORWARD: PROTECTION, EMPOWERMENT, FORMALISATION, JOB CREATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The first section of the report began by considering the current global challenges of inadequate job opportunities, resulting in record levels of unemployment, the need for rapid job creation and training, advancing urban employment opportunities and the current health and safety challenges face by urban workers. This section of the report now present multiple case studies of best practices from different NGOs, programs and countries around the world to learn from successful outcomes and to assist World Vison, NGOs, governments, multilateral and other interested stakeholders to move forward into the next few decades of urban development.

FORMALISING THE INFORMAL SECTORS

There have been some very successful case studies of informal service providers joining together into service provision cooperatives, and in doing so formalising their sectors. This has then enabled them as formal organisations to tender for and win, government contracts, or in other cases to sub-contract their services to the private companies responsible. Some steps that have proven effective in promoting formality in previously informal sectors include:

- The establishment of sub-city, city, regional or nation-wide waste collector collectives with union like bargaining power. This has allowed waste collectors to have a collective voice.
- The establishment of collectives has provided health, safety and financial support to workers – especially advocating for minimum safety standards, access to health services, and the provision of personal protective equipment.

- Collectives have also enabled other formal components such as the development of formal registration systems with IDs, equipment, training and certification to provide a sense of professionalism, dignity and to ensure self-value. This also might begin to minimise some of the negative stigma associated with waste collectors or sanitation workers. Highlighting the critical job that they are performing for society.
- In the sanitation sector, assisting entrepreneurs with formal processes such as business registration and accessing bank credit to begin or expand their businesses. Small-medium enterprises can be mobilised through providing business development capacity, which assists in the development of viable business plans.
- The formalisation of both waste collectors and sanitation businesses are the first steps in assisting them to gain access to sub-contracting work from local councils, or the private sector. This is especially the case for waste collection or faecal sludge collection in informal communities where traditional trucks and motorised sludge emptying machinery cannot access the communities.
- Formalising the informal sector can also increase the capacity to promote user pays approaches to waste/sludge collection at community or neighbourhood level, and to cross subsidise funds from wealthier communities.
- There is the potential for sub-contracting the service of water provision into communities without access to water supply.

EMPOWERING THE LOCAL VALUE CHAIN

Another area of involvement for the NGO sector and the private sector in advancing decent work opportunities in informal communities is through empowering the local value chain, so that materials which were considered to be either waste or of very limited value, are processed within the community to reveal their value and provide a means of economic development within the community. Some ways in what the local value chain can be mobilised includes:

- Increasing value of products before collection – encouraging the separation of waste materials into streams or organics, recyclables and waste for land fill – source separation as a critical component of recycling businesses
- Sanitation based composting – significant rates of production – use of gulper or other simple technology with adequate training and capacity
- Addressing low cost value addition in each of the streams – composting for organic waste; plastics treatment for recycling
- Identifying and mapping product flow patterns
- Establishing reliable local and/or international markets
- Reliable and sustainable purchasing price
- Working for tiered cost recovery approaches in high, middle and low income communities.

CONCLUSION

In summary this paper presents that work can, and must, play a critical role in enabling families living in informal communities to progress out of the cycle of poverty. However, these employment opportunities must be in the form of decent working conditions which minimises work place based risks, be of a responsible wage to ensure that families' basic needs are all met,

Regarding children and youth, this paper calls for the following specific actions:

- Making a renewed effort to ensure that all children are in school, at least until the minimum age of employment;

- Strengthening workplace safety and health for all workers, but with specific safeguards for youth between the minimum age of employment and the age of 18; and
- Providing the crucial legal foundation for action against hazardous child work, with the support of workers and employers.
- Striving to increase the number of decent employment opportunities available for youth, and equip them with the required skills to succeed in the workforce

Regarding the working conditions of waste collectors and sanitation workers, this paper encourages that worker cooperatives are formed and formalised with official recognition from local councils

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