



# Practical actions to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems

## Toolkit for cities





Credit: Bengawalk

## Authors

The principal authors of the report are:

### Tanya Zack Development Planners

- Tanya Zack
- Kirsten Harrison
- Melanie Samson
- Luyanda Hlatshwayo

### C40 Cities

- Josu Mozos
- Connor Muesen
- Kathrin Zeller
- Krisztina Campbell
- Silvia Marcon

### Independent consultant

- Josephine Agbeko

We are grateful for the input of all the city officials and expert stakeholders members of the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP), the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) and Women in Informal Employment Globalizing & Organizing (WIEGO), who gave their time to be interviewed.

Edited by: [Inkwell Communications & Design Studio](#)

Designed by: [Hampson Studio](#)



## Acronyms and initialisms

- AIWP** Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers
- AMA** Accra Metropolitan Assembly
- ARO** African Reclaimers Organisation
- ASMARE** Association of informal waste workers in Belo Horizonte
- BBMP** Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike
- CBO** Community-based organisation
- DBSA** Development Bank of Southern Africa
- EBRD** European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- EPR** Extended producer responsibility
- GCF** Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees
- IAWP** International Alliance of Waste Pickers
- ICA** Inclusive climate action
- ITT** Integration task team
- IWWIC** Informal waste workers integration committee
- KKPKP** Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat
- MEAL** Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning
- NGO** Non-governmental organisation
- PPE** Personal protective equipment
- PRO** Producer responsibility organisation
- SALGA** South African Local Government Association
- SAWPA** South African Waste Pickers Association
- SWG** Stakeholder working group
- WIEGO** Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
- WRI** World Resources Institute

# Navigating the toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to provide cities with a range of concrete, practical actions for integrating informal waste workers into inclusive and sustainable municipal solid waste management systems.

In **Part 1**, you will find some essential background information about the contributions that informal waste workers make across the intersecting domains of climate action, public health, and the economy – and the many challenges and inequities that they face.

This section also highlights the important benefits that integration can bring to multiple stakeholders in your city – not just the informal waste workers themselves, but to residents and industry, too. Our aim in Part 1 is to place the practical recommendations made by this toolkit into context, helping cities, as they undertake these actions, to keep in mind why and to whom this journey is important.

**Part 2** forms the toolkit itself – seven practical actions, each representing a separate dimension of effective integration. These are then broken down into smaller steps, providing an additional layer of guidance to help cities fulfil each action.

While the actions are presented in a broadly sequential, numbered order, it is not expected that cities will always work their way through

them in a linear fashion. Rather, we have designed the toolkit so that readers can navigate the actions in an order that makes sense for them, moving between steps and actions flexibly and responsively based on their city’s reality.

Throughout the toolkit, **a navigation bar at the top of the page** makes it easy for readers to quickly move between sections and actions or back to the main contents page. There are also hyperlinks throughout to signpost where one step or action has linkages with another, allowing readers to easily navigate between the two.

Within each of the actions you will also find additional features including helpful tips; real examples from cities around the world; and template checklists that cities can adapt to their own contexts and use to cross-check their steps towards effective integration of informal waste workers.

This toolkit was developed based on research into international case studies and evidence on integrating informal waste workers. In addition, in-depth interviews were held with officials in cities that have led integration efforts, with experts in the integration of informal waste workers, and with representatives of NGOs and informal waste worker organisations.

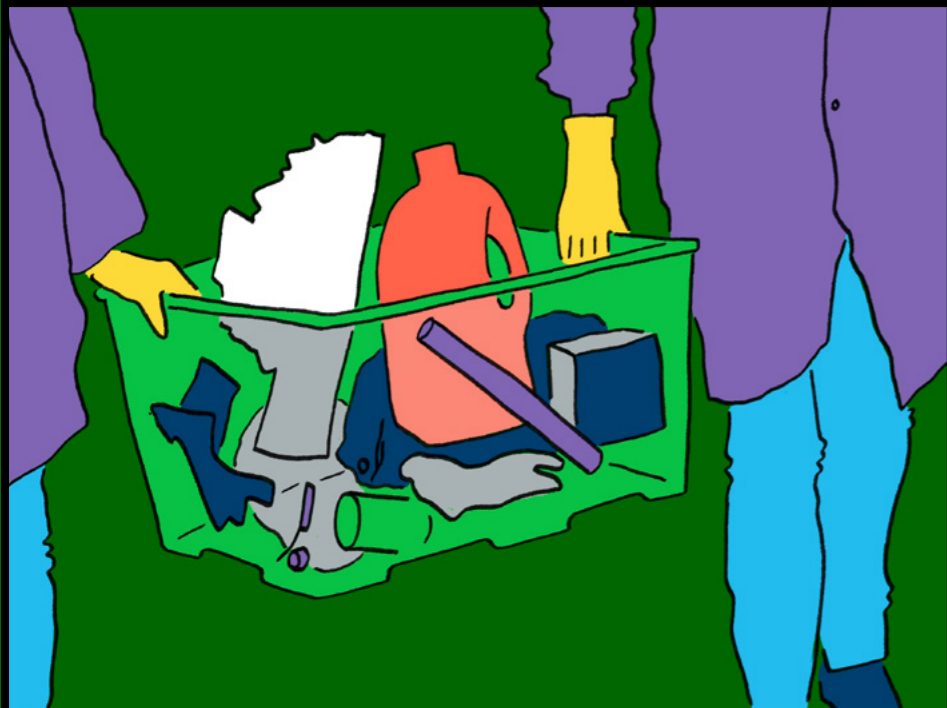
Workshops were held with the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) and the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) to obtain a first-hand understanding of integration experiences and ideas from informal waste workers.

# Table of contents

Acronyms and initialisms	3
<b>Part 1</b>	
<b>Background and context</b>	6
Overview	7
About this toolkit	8
How informal waste workers contribute to environmental, health, and economic outcomes	12
Multidimensional challenges faced by informal waste workers	14
The importance of integration for all stakeholders	16
Why and how cities can lead on integrating informal waste workers	19
<b>Part 2</b>	
<b>How to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems</b>	30
<b>Action 1</b>	
Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers	35
<b>Action 2</b>	
Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders	47
<b>Action 3</b>	
Undertaking education and capacity building	69
<b>Action 4</b>	
Developing informal waste worker support programmes	76
<b>Action 5</b>	
Developing an informal waste worker integration plan	110
<b>Action 6</b>	
Mobilising resources	117
<b>Action 7</b>	
Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)	124
Appendix: Integration Plan Template	136
Endnotes	146

# Part 1

## Background and context



This section provides background and context to the practical toolkit, starting with five foundational principles underlying the integration of informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems.

It places these efforts into context by highlighting the valuable contributions that informal waste workers make; the challenges and inequities that they face; and the multiple benefits that integration can bring – not just to waste workers themselves, but to residents, producers, and cities too. Finally, the section outlines the broad ways in which cities can lead integration efforts through their existing local mandates and by leveraging national government support.

### Overview

Integrating informal waste workers is about taking steps to formally recognise and include them in municipal solid waste systems. It means providing informal waste workers with fair working conditions, social protection, and training opportunities, and facilitating their participation in decision-making.

At the same time, the steps taken to integrate informal waste workers also benefit the city through improved organic waste treatment and recycling, increased coverage of waste collection and waste diversion, public health gains, enhanced livelihood opportunities, and better environmental outcomes.

*“Integrating informal waste workers is not about adding something new.”*

Integrating informal waste workers is not about adding something new – it is about recognising and strengthening a system that already exists, making it safer, fairer, and more sustainable for both cities and the workers who keep them clean.

# About this toolkit

This toolkit describes a set of practical actions for cities to integrate informal waste workers into inclusive and sustainable municipal solid waste management systems.

It offers guidance for mayors and city officials to create and deliver local policies, programmes, and processes for integrating informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management.

## Focus

### The importance of partnerships

Evidence from cities shows that the effective integration of informal waste workers relies on genuine partnership processes between the workers themselves, city authorities, civil society, industry stakeholders, and other key actors in the general waste, organic waste treatment, and recycling systems.

This toolkit advocates for an equal partnership between cities and informal waste workers. It calls for a long-term commitment by cities (all relevant departments), an openness to engagement and negotiation with informal waste workers, and the purposeful building of relationships and mutual trust. This commitment also extends to meaningful engagement with businesses, residents, NGOs, academics, and any other stakeholders who act and impact within municipal waste management systems.

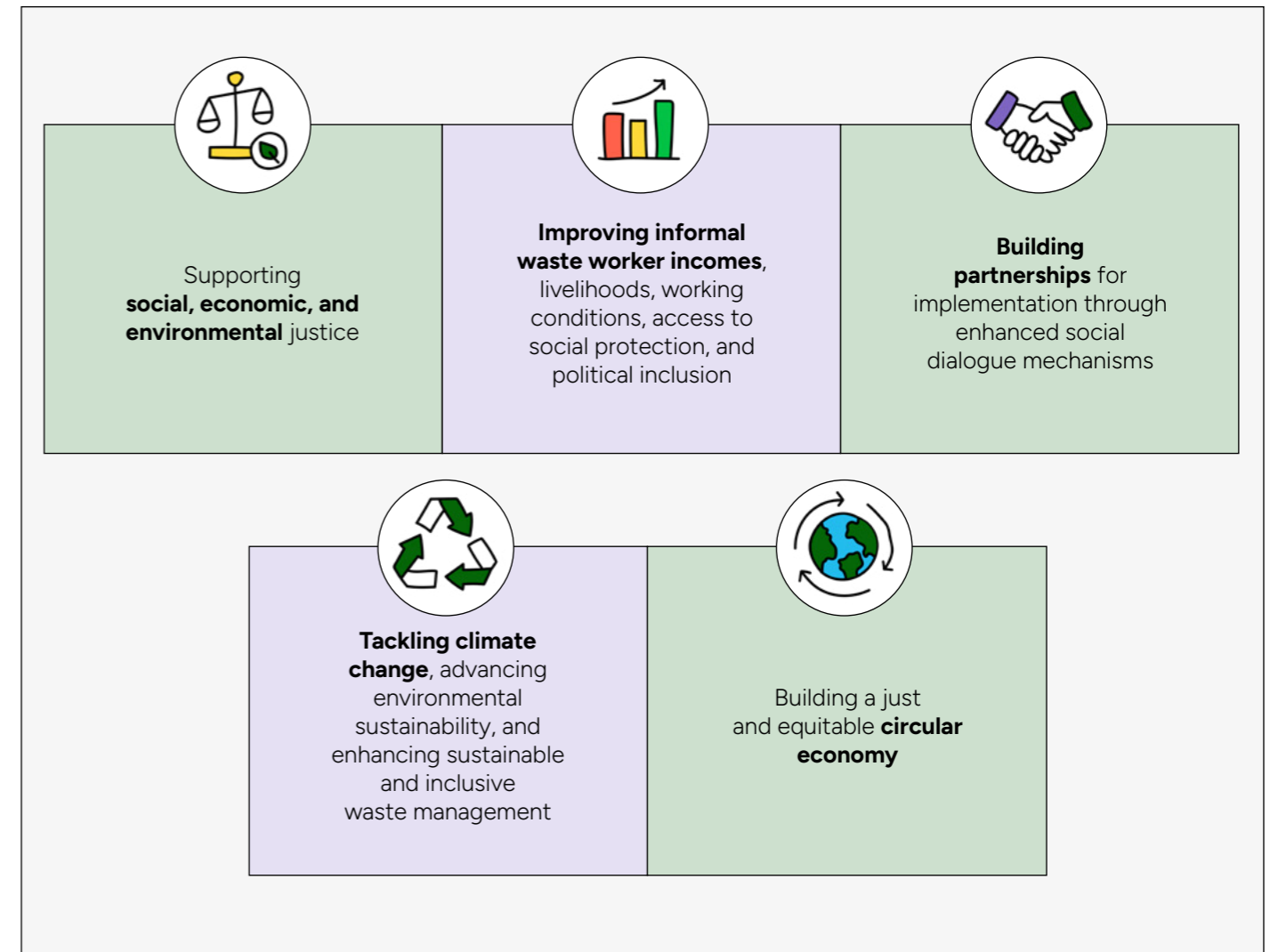
Each stage of the integration journey consists of multiple steps, with a range of embedded complexities. The full process takes time, resources, and commitment from both cities and from informal waste worker organisations.

This toolkit recognises that individual cities will be at different stages of the integration journey. Furthermore, each city has its own dynamics and contexts that will influence or determine the best way for it to initiate, plan, and implement an effective integration process.

*“Key elements of successful integration are organised workers, a willing (local) government, and a neutral facilitator (such as an NGO or academic) working together to build trust.”<sup>1</sup>*

While there will therefore be some differences in the journey across individual city contexts, it is important that any approach is both **locally generated** and **evidence based**. This means it must be supported by locally collected data on waste generation, collection rates, and demographics, and by impact analyses on local informal waste workers and environmental outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

The guidance and actions in this toolkit are built upon five foundational principles, shown in Figure 1. These can be seen as universal objectives and values underlying each city’s individual journey, helping to shape strategy and guide decisions as cities forge a pathway that best suits their own needs and context.



**Figure 1.** The five principles of integrating informal waste workers



Waste worker capacity building in Bengaluru

### What do we mean by “informal waste workers”?

Around the world, there are various terms used to describe the different workers across the waste value chain in the informal economy. For the purposes of this toolkit, we use “informal waste workers” as an umbrella term that includes a vast range of roles – on-route waste workers, dump/landfill waste workers, doorstep waste pickers, itinerant buyers, handlers/processors of organic waste, waste sorters, street waste pickers, professional and semi-professional informal enterprises, and many more besides.

Under the umbrella of informal waste workers, it is particularly important to highlight the role of ‘waste pickers’ as a category of worker. These workers are not only the most numerous, but also the most precarious of all informal waste workers. Throughout the text, often when we are referring to the most vulnerable, stigmatised, and marginalised informal waste workers, we are referring to waste pickers.

The International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) defines waste pickers as:<sup>3</sup>

*... people who participate (individually or collectively) in the collection, separation, sorting, transport and sale of recyclables and reusable materials and products (paper, plastic, metal, glass and other materials) in an informal or semi-formal capacity, as own-account workers, or in a cooperative or social and solidarity economy setting, and as workers who subsequently receive formal work arrangements through their organisation. Our description includes itinerant waste pickers, current and former waste pickers who have new roles and engagement in waste pickers’ organisations, and those who have been integrated into municipal solid waste management systems and continue to retrieve, sort, and sell recyclables.<sup>4</sup>*

*“...although we use the umbrella term “informal waste workers”, it is the economy, rather than the worker, that is informal.”*

It is also important to note that although we use the umbrella term “informal waste workers”, it is the economy, rather than the worker, that is informal. For this reason, informal waste workers should be understood as waste workers who form part of the informal economy.



Training for Junior Health Inspectors in Bengaluru

# How informal waste workers contribute to environmental, health, and economic outcomes

Informal waste workers make a critical contribution to society, across the intersecting domains of climate action, public health, and the economy.

Recycling is one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is also linked to multiple other positive climate outcomes (see [Figure 2](#)). Better waste management could cut 10–15% of greenhouse gas emissions globally and up to 35% of emissions in Global South cities – and cutting one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> through recycling costs 30% less compared to doing so through energy efficiency measures, and 90% less compared to wind power.<sup>5,6</sup>

Informal waste workers have a key role to play in these critical environmental outcomes, helping to reduce emissions, improve air quality and public health, and strengthen urban resilience (see [Figure 3](#)). Recycling is also highly labour-intensive and can create millions of jobs on a global scale, with 15–20 million people worldwide already earning their livelihoods across the sector.<sup>7</sup>

## Case study Informal waste workers treat organic waste

In some cities across Africa and Latin America, especially in Brazil, several informal waste worker cooperatives operate composting plants that treat organic waste while creating jobs and new income streams. In **Belém**, a new public composting unit processes up to 180 tonnes of food and green waste per month, operated by *catador* cooperatives integrated into the municipal collection system, with compost supplied to family farmers. In **Poços de Caldas** and other cities, cooperatives such as Coopersul run composting yards that process several tonnes of organics monthly, producing certified compost and fertiliser for local markets and significantly strengthening cooperative finances.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2. Climate and environmental impacts of waste in cities

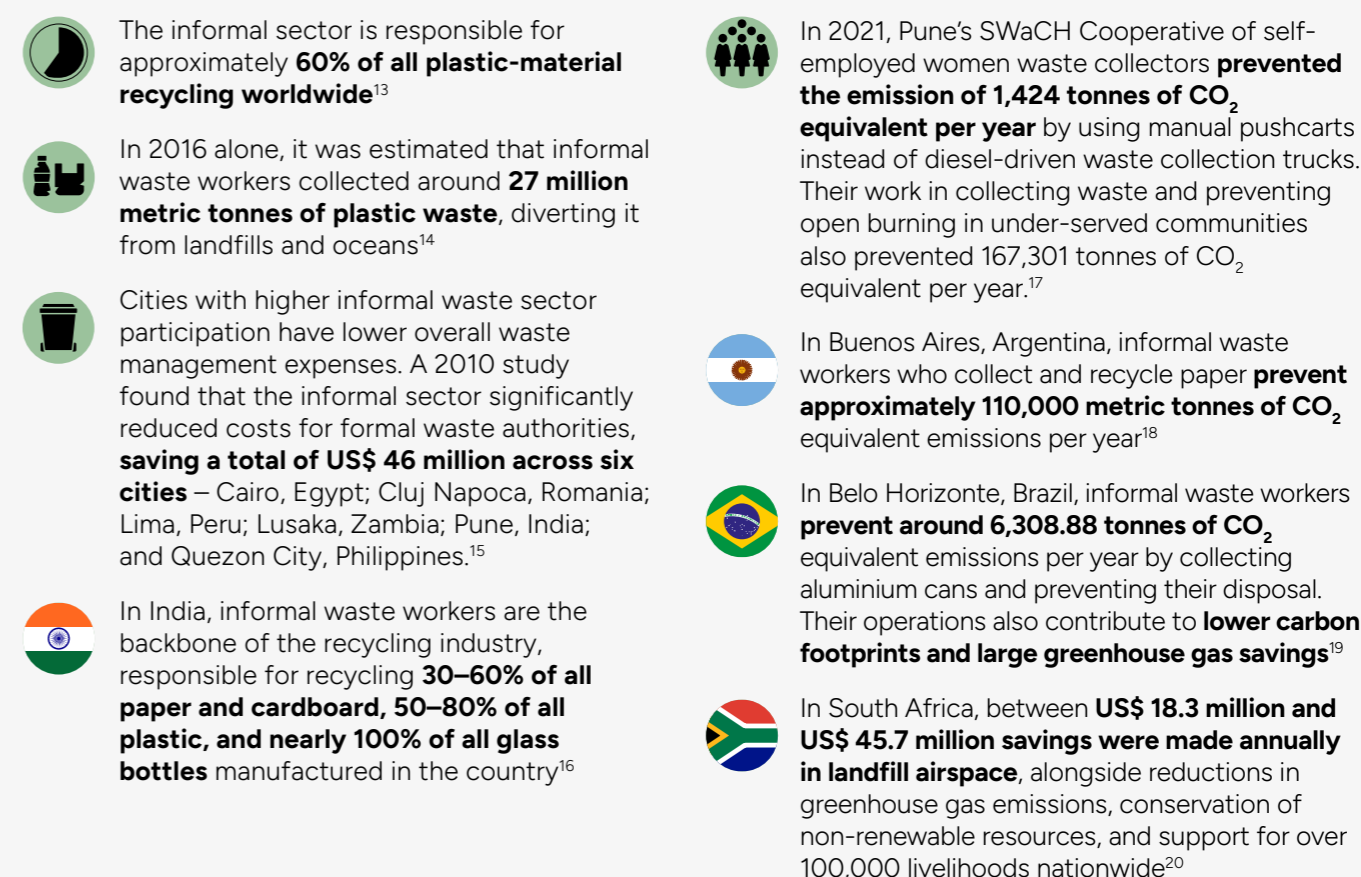


Figure 3. Contribution of informal waste workers

# Multidimensional challenges faced by informal waste workers

Instead of being rewarded and remunerated for their many contributions to society, informal waste workers often bear disproportional costs. They often work precarious jobs – under poor conditions and for low pay – lack many social protections, and suffer social and economic marginalisation. Key challenges include:

- **Limited political and institutional support:** Informal waste workers have little backing from public or private waste authorities, because formal established waste management systems do not readily recognise or adapt to the inclusion of informal work.
- **Exclusion from decision-making:** Informal waste workers are often not consulted about plans for new waste facilities, infrastructure, or policy decisions, leaving their needs unrecognised and their expertise underutilised. Decisions made without their input can restrict access to recyclables from streets, dumpsites, businesses, or homes, which in turn can have both livelihood and environmental impacts due to reduced recycling.
- **Competition from formalised services:** Procurement processes often favour established contractors, because of the challenges cities face in adjusting their systems to different approaches and the unique dynamics of informal operations. Often, without dedicated attention and focus, cities’ own systems and processes can hinder opportunities to favour informal waste workers cooperatives through more creative contracting processes.
- **Vulnerability and weak social protections:** Informal employment leaves waste workers exposed to unsafe working conditions and social risks, and with no access to formalised social protection systems for support. Women and migrant workers in particular also face additional vulnerability because of discrimination.<sup>21</sup>

*“Informal waste workers should be framed as climate-resilience assets to justify investment in their work infrastructure and to build city-wide resilience.”*

— Interview with WIEGO representative (2025)

- **Stigma and delegitimisation:** Informal waste workers can be treated (by governments, private companies, and/or residents) as competitors to city or corporate waste collection systems. They can be seen as undesirable, are criminalised and socially marginalised, and their contribution not recognised – further limiting their access to waste markets and public decision-making.<sup>22</sup>
- **Economic contributions overlooked and underpaid:** When integration of informal waste workers is done well, the city can benefit from cost savings through waste collection, diversion, organic waste treatment, and recycling carried out by informal workers. On the other hand, lack of recognition and infrastructure keeps their work informal and less competitive.<sup>23</sup> This in turn ensures low prices for the materials sold by informal waste workers and perpetuates a lack of fair payment for their services, keeping them in poverty.
- **Impacts of climate change:** Extreme heat, floods, and droughts disproportionately threaten informal waste workers’ health and safety, damage their work equipment and infrastructure, and expose them to climate-related losses and damages.<sup>24</sup>
- **Intersecting risks:** Most informal waste workers also live in informal settlements. This overlap between informal housing and livelihoods exposes informal waste workers to combined and heightened levels of risk.

## Focus

## Intersectionality

Informal waste workers face multiple intersecting disadvantages and vulnerabilities that limit their rights, representation, and access to resources and services. Intersecting identities each have their own constraints, which are combined and amplified where they overlap. For example, migrant women in the informal workforce face the exacerbated burden of all the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by women informal waste workers *and* migrant informal waste workers. Similarly, migrant informal waste workers who also face racial or caste prejudice often suffer intersecting discriminations due to restrictive social and cultural norms and unequal rights.<sup>25</sup>

# The importance of integration for all stakeholders

## Why is integration important for informal waste workers?

Research shows that integrating informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems significantly improves their livelihoods, dignity, and working conditions. Formal recognition gives informal waste workers access to safer and more stable income opportunities, infrastructure (such as sorting and storage facilities), and essential services such as protective equipment, health care, and social protection.<sup>26</sup>

Integrating informal workers – and thereby legitimising their work – also reduces the harassment, exclusion, and exploitation faced by those in the informal workforce. Studies from countries such as Brazil, Colombia, India, and South Africa demonstrate that when cities formally include informal waste workers through cooperatives, contracts, or payment schemes, they gain stronger bargaining power, more predictable earnings, and better access to organic waste treatment and recycling markets.<sup>27</sup>



Consultation with Junior Health Inspectors in Bengaluru

## Focus

### The consequences of non-inclusive waste policies

International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) representatives who were consulted during the development of this toolkit highlighted how multiple factors – including waste management policies such as exclusionary separation at source, the use of incinerators, lack of provision of personal protective equipment, lack of access to sorting spaces, and more – have profoundly negative impacts on informal waste workers’ health, job security, and ability to support their families. Furthermore, waste management programmes that involve decommissioning landfills or establishing incinerators can damage informal waste workers’ livelihoods if not designed with informal workers’ needs, livelihoods, and experience in mind. Representatives emphasised that when city policies are developed without meaningfully including informal waste workers in decision-making processes, they can cause direct harm and hardship to those individuals.<sup>28</sup>

## Why is integration important for residents?

Residents play an important role in the integration journey. By separating their recyclables for collection by informal waste workers, residents support these workers’ livelihoods while helping to promote a cleaner, healthier environment. Collaboration between cities, residents, and informal waste workers leads to cleaner neighbourhoods and more reliable waste collection in low-income areas. Residents also stand to benefit from improved social cohesion, as recognition of informal waste workers promotes fairness, inclusion, and respect for the essential services they provide in keeping cities clean and liveable.

## Why is integration important for producers?

The private sector is increasingly a critical stakeholder in the integration process, as extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation and regulations require producers to be accountable for and reduce the waste associated with their products.<sup>29</sup> This makes informal waste workers natural partners for manufacturers.

In countries such as Chile, Argentina, and South Africa, where informal waste workers are recognised within national EPR legislation, many companies are now also recognising that informal waste workers play a crucial role in existing circular economies. Enterprises from micro to larger scales are starting to collect and treat organic waste, creating value through fertilisers or biogas and closing local feedback loops. Formal integration strengthens these efforts by improving traceability, collection efficiency, and material quality, and helps producers meet their sustainability commitments and regulatory targets to divert waste from landfill and incineration.

### Why is integration important for cities?

Integrating informal waste workers offers multiple benefits for cities. These workers already collect, sort, and recycle large volumes of waste, improving service coverage and waste diversion, organic waste treatment, and recycling rates while reducing operational costs and extending landfill lifespans. Their work helps cities meet their sectoral waste goals, as well as their climate and environmental targets, by cutting methane emissions and supporting circular economy goals.

Coordinated integration also enhances public health and urban cleanliness, reduces conflict between workers and authorities, and promotes social inclusion by formalising livelihoods for marginalised or under-served populations.



Waste picker collecting recyclable material in Vingunguti Ward, Dar es Salaam

Credit: Tanzania Alliance for Climate and Sustainable Society (TACSS)

## Why and how cities can lead on integrating informal waste workers

Integrating informal waste workers is not only a social and economic imperative but also a climate and environmental necessity, forming a key component of a just transition to greener, low-carbon cities. Cities are uniquely positioned to support informal waste workers as part of this transition. They have a broad mandate across multiple domains that can be leveraged to enable informal waste worker integration, including by ensuring that regulatory and policy frameworks, climate actions, and green economy policies are inclusive, equitable, and create decent work.

Integrating informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems is key to this approach as it recognises their contributions, improves livelihoods, enhances social protections, and ensures that the shift to a low-carbon, circular economy benefits *all* residents rather than leaving informal workers behind.

With direct influence over waste systems and close ties to residents, cities are able to co-design and implement – alongside informal waste workers and other stakeholders – locally relevant policies and solutions that balance climate, economic, and social objectives. Partnering with informal waste workers ensures that programmes respond to the actual needs, experience, and knowledge of these workers, who play many roles in collecting, sorting, transporting, and processing waste.

Cities have broad mandates that define and enable their role in informal waste worker integration. These include:

- **Urban planning and service delivery:** Cities manage sanitation services, waste collection, recycling, organic waste treatment and other waste infrastructure, making them central to integrating informal workers within these operational systems.

*“Partnering with informal waste workers ensures that programmes respond to [their] actual needs, experience, and knowledge...”*

- **Policy design and local regulation:** City governments can develop structured programmes, enforce standards, and allocate budgets to formalise and support informal waste workers. These should align with the city’s Climate Action Plan, which sets specific waste management targets and greenhouse emissions reduction targets.
- **Social protection and workforce development:** Cities can provide training, skills-building, support for cooperatives, and access to social protection, health services, and safe working conditions for all residents, including informal workers.
- **Environmental stewardship and climate action:** By incorporating informal waste workers into circular economy and climate mitigation strategies, cities can enhance waste diversion, organic waste treatment, and recycling rates; reduce landfill methane emissions; and advance sustainability goals.
- **Community engagement and advocacy:** Cities act as conveners, engaging stakeholders, workers’ cooperatives, unions, and communities to co-design inclusive solutions and advocate for supportive national and regional policies.
- **Policy alignment for a just transition:** By aligning with international and national government responsibilities for a just transition, cities can lead the creation of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable waste management systems that respond to global and national imperatives as well as the fulfilment of their own mandates.

**Focus**

**The role of cities in regulating producer responsibility organisations**

**Extended producer responsibility (EPR)** policies make producers accountable for their products and packaging across their full lifecycle – including what happens after consumers discard them. By shifting the cost and responsibility of waste collection, sorting, diversion, and recycling from cities to producers, EPR policies incentivise better product design, reduced waste, and easier waste treatment. Increasingly, countries around the world are adopting EPR legislation for packaging, electronics, batteries, and other waste streams.<sup>30</sup>

**Producer responsibility organisations (PROs)** are entities that help companies comply with EPR laws by managing waste and recycling, waste minimisation, waste treatment, and safe disposal of products at the end of their life.<sup>31</sup> They coordinate the waste minimisation, collection, recycling, diversion, treatment, and safe disposal of materials on behalf of producers, enabling companies to meet their legal requirements while promoting a circular economy, reducing waste, and creating employment opportunities. In doing so, however, the work of these private agents can significantly impact that of informal waste workers, making regulation of PRO practices critical to the integration process. Cities can achieve this through policy development, legislation, contract enforcement, and social dialogue mechanisms, to ensure informal waste workers remain part of recycling, organic waste treatment, repair, and second-hand trade systems.



Training waste collection staff in Bengaluru

## What can cities do at a local level to support integration of informal waste workers?

Cities have multiple existing competencies and levers available to support the integration of informal waste workers. Some key examples are illustrated in Figure 4.



### Policy inclusion

Explicit mention of informal waste workers in local and national waste management strategies, legislation, and byelaws



### Social protection

Enabling informal waste workers to access health, education, and social security benefits



### Rights protection

Enforceable labour rights, occupational health and safety requirements, and anti-discrimination laws



### Recognition

Legal status for informal waste workers and informal waste worker organisations



### Partnering

Ensuring a commitment to partnership and meaningful participatory processes



### Infrastructure

Providing informal waste workers and informal waste worker organisations with access to infrastructure and equipment to improve their working conditions and efficiency, and to support informal waste workers in moving up the value chain



### Supportive instruments

Spatial plans and mechanisms for accommodating the needs of recycling and waste value chains, climate and spatial plans, and waste management plans



### Supporting organising

Providing informal waste worker organisations with resources that strengthen their capacity to organise and effectively represent informal waste workers in participatory integration processes



### Procurement

Contracting with informal workers for waste management services

**Figure 4.** City levers supporting the integration of informal waste workers

## Focus

### Integration: The importance of a systemic approach

Integration goes beyond simply legalising informal work. It involves building a framework that recognises, values, and remunerates the contributions of informal waste workers; includes them in participatory policy development; and promotes their access to health care and other social protections.<sup>32</sup>

Successful integration of informal waste workers into waste management, organic waste treatment, and recycling systems begins with recognising the existing informal system and formally including those workers within the city's structures – expanding and strengthening their role in line with their expertise, and ensuring that system changes, such as the decommissioning of landfills, *support* rather than *disrupt* their livelihoods. This approach values informal waste workers' autonomy, skills, and experience, and enables them to play a recognised role in the broader organic waste treatment and recycling value chains.<sup>33</sup> It also gives cities a strong foundation from which to plan future steps towards full integration of the informal waste workforce.<sup>34</sup>

## Leveraging national government support

Cities are at the forefront when it comes to informal waste worker integration – but they can also collaborate with national governments to help scale their efforts and ensure that integration is aligned with national priorities. National governments can provide essential resources, legislative backing, and vertical integration, while cities initiate, shape, and implement practical integration efforts at the local level.

Cities are well placed to mobilise this support from national government, including:

- Ensuring the city has a voice in national policy discussions, bringing vital local knowledge into decision-making processes and ensuring that local needs are recognised and addressed.
- Participating in the development of nationally mandated integration frameworks and guidelines to strengthen city-led action and enhance legitimacy.

- Advocating for national social protection policies to be extended to informal waste workers.
- Working with national counterparts to ensure informal waste workers are recognised and protected within national EPR legislation.
- Working with national governments to secure access to vital funds and resources, including national and international climate finance.
- Lobbying for enabling frameworks and policy environments such as labour reforms.

### Case study Supportive national legislation in Argentina

In Argentina, 150,000 informal waste workers work under difficult conditions across more than 2,200 municipalities – only 37% of which have official separation-at-source programmes.

National guidelines were established in 2005, via the National Integrated Solid Waste Management Strategy. *Law No. 25,916*, the Minimum Standards for Environmental Protection of Households Waste of 2004, recognises the importance of informal waste workers and calls for their formalisation and integration into the municipal workforce.

In Argentina, official statistics reported that only 6% of waste was recycled in 2023.<sup>35</sup> However, the real rate was much higher, due to the unrecognised contributions of informal waste workers. This context is now changing, since the introduction of the national *Law 992* in 2002 established the requirement for a register of informal waste workers, recognising their work as an “essential activity”. The Autonomous City of **Buenos Aires** has progressed social inclusion through the integration of 6,500 informal waste workers, who now co-manage municipal solid waste as part of waste worker cooperatives alongside the city government. This co-management model is being promoted and used in other cities in Argentina.<sup>36</sup>

### Case study Cities taking the lead: Bengaluru

In **Bengaluru**, the municipal corporation (BBMP) took the unprecedented step of allocating a budget to register and integrate informal waste pickers into the city’s solid waste management system.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the government of Karnataka issued state-wide solid waste management model byelaws and made budgetary allocations for the creation of dry waste collection centres (DWCCs) across the state, drawing on decentralised, DWCC-based models pioneered in Bengaluru.<sup>38</sup>

### Case study National recognition in Brazil

The integration of informal waste workers in South American cities has progressed through supportive national policies that recognise their right to work – either by legally classifying their occupation (as in Brazil and Colombia) or by legalising informal waste work outright and recognising, partnering with, and providing financial support to informal waste worker organisations.<sup>39</sup>

Brazil has made significant progress in integrating its informal waste workers (*catadores*), whose important work is recognised and acknowledged at national, state, and local levels. A national movement of informal waste pickers has also been formed with the support of municipal waste and citizenship forums.<sup>40</sup>

*Catadores* have been recognised in Brazil since the 1990s at the city level, including in the cities of **Belo Horizonte**, **Porto Alegre**, and **Diadema**, and by a series of state and federal laws since the 2000s. In 2007, a federal law recognised the important role of informal waste workers, allowing cities to hire informal waste worker cooperatives without having to go through the usual bidding process.<sup>41</sup> This was followed in 2010 by the National Solid Waste Policy, which provided further recognition of informal waste workers as key actors in the recycling value chain.<sup>42</sup> These acts of recognition were the result of a community of activists, informal waste workers, and government officials who all used the political system to support progressive legislation.<sup>43</sup>

**Case study** Social protection in Quezon City

In **Quezon City**, Metro Manila, inclusive climate action focuses on supporting informal waste workers through the principle of *kapitbahayan*, or community solidarity. As part of this initiative, city officials have connected informal waste workers to national social protection programmes that offer benefits to improve their welfare.<sup>44, 45</sup>

**Case study** National guidelines for informal waste worker integration in South Africa

In South Africa, cities – along with research institutions and supporting organisations, like the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) – engaged with the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, leading to the creation of the national [Waste Picker Integration Guidelines](#) in 2020.<sup>46</sup>

**Supporting informal waste worker associations and cooperatives**

Informal waste workers are increasingly organising and demanding formal recognition. In cities across the Global South and Global North, both street-level and landfill-based informal waste workers have formed organisations (including cooperatives, unions, and associations) that can lobby for legislation, influence social inclusion policies, participate as equal partners in formal solid waste management projects, and initiate and implement their own integration projects.<sup>47</sup>

Organising also helps to legitimise informal waste workers' labour, reduces stigma, and enhances social recognition, helping these workers gain dignity, community acceptance, and improved status within formal institutions and society in general.

Informal waste worker organisations are a significant benefit to the integration process, and strengthening and supporting them is a crucial aspect of the development and implementation of cities' integration strategies.

*The **International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP)** is a global network of organisations that represents more than 460,000 waste pickers across 34 countries.<sup>48</sup>*

**Focus**

**Unions and cooperatives**

Informal waste worker unions and cooperatives serve complementary roles in supporting informal waste workers. Unions or less-formal worker associations focus on advocacy, collective bargaining, protecting workers' rights, ensuring legal recognition, fair policies, and protection from harassment or eviction.

Cooperatives, on the other hand, organise workers into member-owned enterprises that provide waste collection, recycling and organic waste treatment services, enabling access to contracts, shared infrastructure, better income, and improved working conditions. Together, unions and cooperatives combine social protection and political representation with economic empowerment and formal inclusion, strengthening both the livelihoods and rights of informal waste workers.

**Case study**

**Cities engage informal waste worker organisations at multiple levels**

Informal waste worker organisation occurs at multiple levels – internationally, nationally, and locally. Internationally, networks such as Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) support policy change and connect informal waste worker organisations across North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. At the national level, associations like the Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers (AIWP), the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), and the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) play important roles in advocating for social recognition and labour rights for informal waste workers.<sup>49</sup>

At the local level, community- and trade-based associations and cooperatives like the Borla Taxi and Tricycle Association in Accra help to advocate and lobby for improved recognition and enhanced integration of informal waste workers. Cities engage with these organisations at various levels. They benefit from the policy work carried out by national and international informal waste worker organisations; participate in dialogues and policy development around environmental compacts with organisations nationally; and partner with organisations at a local level in all the actions taken towards integration.

**Case study** The Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers

The Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers (AIWP), founded in 2008, is a national network of informal waste worker organisations, cooperatives, self-help groups, and trade unions, connecting over 100,000 informal waste workers across India. The AIWP advocates for informal waste workers through training, policy development, research, and organising efforts. Its work contributed to the formal inclusion of informal waste workers in the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, and has enabled access to social benefits such as Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (a government-run health insurance programme), scholarships for children in unclean occupations, and training programmes through the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation and the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology. AIWP members also serve as resource persons for municipal official training and have represented Indian informal waste workers in international forums, including at UNFCCC COP and UN-Habitat meetings.

Initiatives implemented by the AIWP to support informal waste workers include:

**Policy analysis and recommendations:** Since 2015, the AIWP has monitored and provided inputs on solid and plastic waste management rules, advocating for the inclusion of the informal sector.

**National database of waste pickers:** The AIWP is creating a database of over 100,000 informal waste workers to facilitate registration, track welfare benefits, guide capacity-building efforts, and support evidence-based decision making.

**Social audit of EPR:** Following the establishment of national EPR regulations in 2022, the AIWP engaged stakeholders to identify challenges and integrate informal workers into formal waste management under EPR frameworks.

**“We speak too” initiative:** In partnership with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, this programme connects informal waste workers with residents, enabling dialogue, raising awareness, and building coalitions to advocate for worker inclusion.

**Capacity building:** The AIWP provides training for member organisations on social entitlements, financial literacy, and operational skills. Municipal authorities are also engaged through awareness programmes facilitated by the National Institute of Urban Affairs.<sup>50</sup>

**Case study** Training in Belo Horizonte

Since 1994, the city’s Public Cleansing Agency has run training programmes for *catadores* in partnership with the local association of informal waste workers. Courses have covered topics such as traffic safety, recycling and the environment, how to run and be part of a cooperative, human relations, and literacy.<sup>51</sup>



Waste pickers in Dar es Salaam

Credit: Tanzania Alliance for Climate and Sustainable Society (TACSS)

# Part 2

## How to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems



This section outlines the practical steps cities can take to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems. It defines seven actions, each broken down into various steps. Alongside these are a number of helpful tips, tools, real examples from global cities, and checklists for monitoring and progressing each action.

This section describes seven key actions that cities can take to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems. Within each action are a number of individual steps. Although the seven actions, set out below, are numbered for ease of navigation, it is important to note that **they do not necessarily happen in sequence**. Rather, they form a bigger picture, coming together to represent the journey that cities can lead towards effective, successful integration.

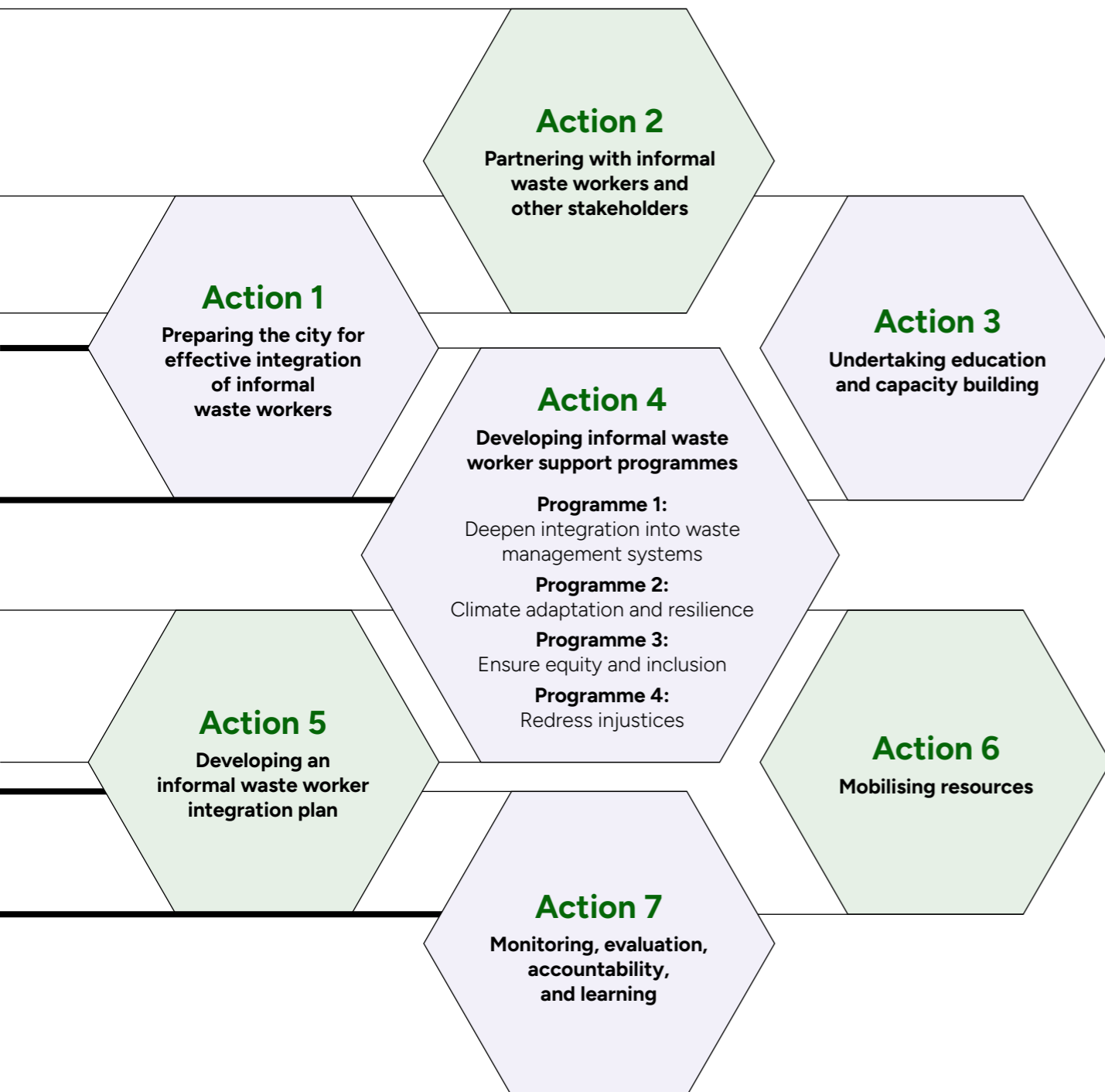
Because the actions do not need to be followed in sequence, cities can start with the actions that are best suited to their existing context – either based on the level of integration they have already achieved, or to fit their current resources and capacity while they attract additional support. Cities can decide to tackle actions that will make the most impact first, or to start with those that are the quickest to implement. They can proceed with subsequent actions in any order, and can undertake more than one action in parallel if they choose.

Wherever a city chooses to start, it is important to create a roadmap of the actions it will take and how these will be planned and implemented. But most importantly, it is essential to develop this **in partnership with informal waste workers**.

*“Cities can decide to tackle actions that will make the most impact first, or to start with those that are the quickest to implement...”*



# Seven actions towards integration



## Seven actions cities can take to integrate informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems

### Action 1

#### Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers

Cities make a political commitment to integrate informal waste workers, and create an internal integration task team (ITT) to establish targets and responsibilities across all relevant departments.

### Action 2

#### Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders

Cities identify and engage with informal waste worker organisations as equal partners in the process. They establish an official stakeholder forum for ongoing consultation, with clear processes to guarantee transparency and accountability.

### Action 3

#### Undertaking education and capacity building

Cities provide education and capacity building for informal waste workers, city officials, elected representatives, and other stakeholders, and run public awareness campaigns to highlight how each group can support informal waste worker integration.

### Action 4

#### Developing informal waste worker support programmes

Cities lead programmes and projects to deepen and expand the fair integration of informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment, and recycling value chains, while advancing climate adaptation and resilience, ensuring gender equity and the inclusion of marginalised groups, and addressing historical injustices related to caste and race.

### Action 5

#### Developing an informal waste worker integration plan

Cities develop a comprehensive informal waste worker integration plan that maps out the steps and actions required for effective inclusion. The plan should define its aims, objectives, and guiding principles; set clear targets and outputs; and include an analysis of current and planned waste diversion, recycling, and organic waste treatment systems.

### Action 6

#### Mobilising resources

Cities lead resource mobilisation for informal waste worker integration by identifying how to fund and support integration efforts.

### Action 7

#### Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL)

Cities establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems for informal waste worker integration.

#### Reminder

While the actions presented in this toolkit are in a broadly sequential, numbered order, **it is not expected that cities will always work their way through them in a linear fashion.** Rather, we have designed the toolkit so that readers can navigate the actions in an order that makes sense for them, moving between steps and actions flexibly and responsively based on their city's reality.

### Action 1

## Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers

This action involves cities defining where they currently stand in the journey towards effectively integrating informal waste workers into municipal solid waste management systems.

It includes making a political commitment to integration and creating an internal integration task team (ITT) to establish targets and responsibilities across all relevant departments.

#### Step 1

Commit the city to integrating its informal waste workers

#### Step 2

Establish an internal integration task team (ITT)

#### Step 3

Build a database

#### Step 4

Strengthen the city's understanding of integration

#### Step 5

Analyse internal city policies

#### Step 6

Set clear budgets, roles, and targets

## Step 1: Commit the city to integrating informal waste workers

City leadership can signal its political commitment to integrating informal waste workers through public statements, official declarations, and policy pronouncements. This is an opportunity for strong messaging that acknowledges the contributions of informal waste workers, pledges support for fair and safe working conditions, and commits to structured programmes and resources dedicated to achieving their inclusion within municipal waste management systems.

The city leadership (mayor or council) should release a simple statement that commits to integrating informal waste workers, developing and implementing an integration plan, and sharing timelines for when the plan will be completed and integration programmes will commence. Developing the detailed integration plan may take time. A guide and template for this is provided in [Action 5, Step 1: Develop an informal waste worker integration plan](#).

Link

Mayoral or council approval provides a mandate to the city administration to undertake the actions required for integration. It ensures ongoing support and budgeting for the steps ahead, and signals the city's commitment and values to partners and other stakeholders.



Zero waste program in Dar es Salaam

### Case study

#### Accra's public statement of support for informal waste workers

This public statement by **Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)** – made on the occasion of Global Waste Pickers Day, 2024 – encapsulates some of the clear commitments that cities might include in their messaging:

*The AMA acknowledges the invaluable contributions of waste pickers and reaffirms its commitment to supporting their rights, ensuring their safety, and improving their working conditions. We recognise that waste pickers often face significant challenges, including unsafe working conditions, social stigma, and limited access to essential services. Therefore, we are dedicated to working collaboratively with waste pickers and relevant stakeholders to address these challenges and create a conducive environment for their meaningful participation in waste management activities.*

*As part of our ongoing efforts, the AMA continues to implement initiatives aimed at integrating waste pickers into formal waste management systems, providing them with training opportunities, access to protective gear, and other necessary support services. Additionally, we are committed to raising awareness among residents about the vital role of waste pickers and fostering a culture of appreciation and respect for their work.<sup>52</sup>*

### Case study

#### Establishing a commitment to integration through legislation in Fortaleza

In **Fortaleza, Brazil**, political support was critical to the informal waste worker integration policy. Two laws – *Law No. 10,975/2019*, which created the social programmes *E-Carroceiro* and *E-Catador*, and *Law No.11,324/2022*, which established the *Mais Fortaleza* programme – were proposed by the executive branch and approved by the Fortaleza City Council, thereby institutionalising the city's solid waste management agenda. Fortaleza City Council actively supported and prioritised the programme.

The *Mais Fortaleza* programme is based on three pillars: infrastructure and innovative technology; social inclusion; and education and environment. Institutional mechanisms and the support of the mayor have created cross-sectoral alignment and ensure continuity of the programme and of the city's underlying policy of integration.<sup>53</sup>

**Case study** Supporting integration using inclusive tools in Quezon City

**Quezon City** illustrated its commitment by allocating 21% of its budget to support climate action in 2025 including a programme to support informal waste workers.<sup>54</sup>

Ten city departments came together to work on ensuring inclusivity within this programme, with each department presenting their existing and planned projects and jointly identifying areas of collaboration. Following a capacity-building workshop, Quezon City’s Public Employment and Services Office then began drafting a five-week action plan to develop the informal waste worker programme using the newly learned inclusive tools.<sup>55</sup>

**Tip**

Political support is key to effectively including informal waste workers, while technical leadership is essential for operationalising integration. A strategic approach is to appoint both a political and a technical champion for integration within the city.

A political champion can help secure wider political backing and cross-departmental buy-in for integration.

A technical champion appointed from within the city administration – for example, the integration task team leader – can help ensure the sustainability and continuity of the integration objectives, even across changing mayoral/political administrations.

**Step 2: Establish an internal integration task team (ITT)**

Establishing an ITT will require a political directive from the city government. It is important that the team has political support, based on the city’s commitment to integration. (See [Action 1, Step 1: Commit the city to integrating informal waste workers.](#))

Link

**Who should be represented on the ITT?**

- All city departments that interact with informal waste workers can make important contributions to the team. These departments could include those responsible for waste management, local economic development, urban planning, social development, public health, climate change, local-level policing, parks, roads, and others.
- The ITT should ensure gender diversity among its members.

**Who should lead the ITT?**

- The ITT should be led by a senior official with decision-making authority. Where possible, this should be a senior leader from the department with primary responsibility for achieving informal waste worker integration goals (in different cities this might be a waste management, environment, planning, or climate action department).<sup>56</sup>

**What form should the ITT take?**

- The ITT should be an official forum that meets regularly with a strategic agenda. It should have a secretariat function that provides administrative, organisational, and procedural support, including managing meetings, maintaining records, and handling communications to ensure ITT meetings and processes run smoothly.

### Step 3: Build a database

In order to decide what interventions are required, cities first need to understand how many informal waste workers exist, who they are, and how and where they currently work. This is essentially a mapping exercise, involving quantitative and qualitative data collection as well as spatial mapping.

An initial **baseline assessment** that collects and maps existing data should be carried out in partnership with NGOs, academics, and organised informal waste workers wherever possible. Collaborating with informal waste workers and the organisations that support them enables cities to learn from and share in the workers' knowledge and experience. Cities will also gain knowledge from existing databases and research undertaken by NGOs and academics.

The exercise involves collecting, documenting, and mapping existing information about the demographics of informal waste workers within the city's administrative borders; their challenges and needs; and the routes, collection points, storage locations, and infrastructures that support their work.

Importantly, the output from this exercise should be seen as a live, working database that will be updated, extended, and refined as partnerships are established and integration efforts proceed. This will become a valuable tool that can support cities in setting priorities, co-producing knowledge with informal waste workers, and utilising their existing experiential knowledge base.

**Tip**

Data collected in this step is used for planning and designing targeted programmes of support to informal waste workers. It is separate from the registration of informal waste workers, although the data may also inform the registration process at that stage.

### TOOL: Baseline mapping of informal waste work in the city

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

Data type	Methodology	Key data points
Quantitative	Surveys/questionnaires	Number of informal waste workers; demographics (age, gender); working days/hours; volume/weight of material collected; types of materials collected; income levels; transportation methods; migrant status
Qualitative	Interviews/focus groups	Key challenges and needs; collection systems and routes; relationships with buyers/value chain; proposals for formal integration; needs of specific groups (e.g. women)
Spatial	Participatory mapping & geographical information systems (GIS)	Collection routes and hotspots; illegal dumpsites/sorting areas; buy-back centres and storage locations; areas with or without municipal waste services

Output from the baseline assessment exercise will also be used in building a stakeholder map and needs assessment as the city takes steps to establish partnerships (see [Action 2, Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment](#)).

**Link**

**Case study**

**Resources for baseline mapping**

A baseline mapping study developed as part of a framework for informal waste worker integration in Mpumalanga's Gert Sibande District Municipality in South Africa is available [here](#).

A methodology to assess the living income of informal waste workers in the context of the Global Plastics Treaty has been developed by the Fair Circulatory Initiative, available [here](#).

## Step 4: Strengthen the city’s understanding of integration

Before they begin meeting with informal waste workers and their organisations, the integration task team (ITT) needs to learn more about the work that they do, their role in waste management, waste diversion, recycling, and organic waste treatment systems, and how to engage them through inclusive, participatory processes.

**Link**

The mapping exercise in [Action 1. Step 3: Build a database](#) above will provide important information that can be used by each department and by the team as a whole to reflect on what they know about the informal waste sector, and how and where municipal waste management systems currently intersect with informal waste work.

There are several steps that the ITT can take to strengthen its knowledge and understanding of the informal waste workforce and the integration process. Specific examples might include:

- learning from one another, by sharing the programmes and plans of each department that intersects with waste management or with the work or livelihoods of informal waste workers;
- learning from other cities, through case studies and learning exchanges;
- learning from informal waste workers, by participating in immersion days, where city staff can work alongside informal waste workers; visiting their workspaces (sorting spaces, warehouses, etc.); or inviting informal waste workers to conduct workshops and seminars for city officials and elected representatives;
- building officials’ and elected representatives’ skills to conduct meaningful engagement with informal waste workers and key stakeholders;
- asking informal waste workers, academics, and relevant NGOs to provide training for all city staff on informal waste worker integration and inclusive climate action awareness, including a clear understanding of the links between the two;

- arranging training for city staff on laws and regulations that affect informal waste workers at both national and local levels; and
- bolstering team knowledge by sharing information about existing national and local programmes that support marginalised groups such as women, people with disabilities, and migrants.

## Step 5: Analyse internal city policies

City officials need to analyse the city’s existing policies, commitments, programmes, and projects to clarify what it is already doing and any commitments it has made that directly or indirectly affect informal waste workers. This will provide a baseline of information about various city programmes and allow city officials to define any linkages across departments. It will also help establish lines of responsibility and potential collaboration within the city that can be leveraged throughout the integration process. More detailed analysis of city policies and programmes is included within [Action 4: Developing informal waste worker support programmes](#) and [Action 5: Developing an informal waste worker integration plan](#).

**Link**

**Link**

### Case study Social dialogues in Accra

In 2022, the **Accra Metropolitan Assembly** hosted a high-level inter-agency roundtable dialogue on informal waste sector engagement, with key representatives from leading city waste management decision-making agencies and informal waste sector leaders. Discussions included how to improve waste management, with a particular focus on gender and social inclusivity.<sup>57</sup>

**Case study** Capacity building in Bengaluru

**Bengaluru** conducted training for its officials and other frontline waste sector workers, covering climate change impacts, solid waste management practices, and the Bengaluru Climate Action Plan and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) byelaws. Hands-on modules built technical knowledge and aligned efforts with broader climate and waste goals.

Between March and June 2025, the city ran a structured social dialogue with 75 frontline workers – including marshals, link workers, and informal waste workers – through listening sessions and zonal focus groups. These discussions highlighted ground-level challenges and supported the co-creation of solutions to improve working conditions, service delivery, and resilience.

In July 2025, a city-level social dialogue brought together frontline groups with BBMP and Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited leadership, strengthening participatory governance by providing workers a platform to share experiences, co-develop actions, and shape reforms. The process concluded with firm commitments from city leadership to advance safer and more equitable working conditions.<sup>58</sup>

To learn more about Bengaluru’s local, community-driven models for just and climate-resilience waste management systems, check out the C40 case study [here](#).

**Step 6: Set clear budgets, roles, and targets**

This is a core task for the integration task team, beginning with all relevant departments outlining their current programmes, plans, budgets, capacities, and any additional tasks needed to start the integration process. Budget allocations will follow each city’s budget cycle. Departments will need to budget for various steps to be undertaken over several years, as integration is a multi-year process.

Departments can also consider how to include informal waste worker integration in departmental- and city-level performance scorecards.

**Tip**

Cities face competing urban priorities and departmental interests, and a dedicated budget for integration may not be feasible. In such cases, cities can incorporate informal waste worker integration within departmental annual action plans. For example, capacity building on the informal waste worker integration process can be incorporated into the annual action plan of the waste department under its staff development budget line.

Overall, setting an agenda and programme for the ITT involves multiple complex considerations that will define what is feasible in terms of budgets, roles, and targets. The following checklist provides a range of prompts and questions to help guide the ITT in this scoping process, and determine the city’s readiness to act on inclusive waste management.

**TOOL: Pre-integration checklist**

Indicate Yes or No for each question and add comments as needed.

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

Category	Have you considered...	Yes	No	Comments
<b>Leadership</b>	Who to appoint as your integration political champion and technical champion (team leader)?			
<b>Baseline mapping</b>	Mapping the entire waste management system, organic waste treatment system, and recycling value chain in your city, including all informal and formal actors, to understand the linkages and dependencies across the waste system and where your city operates as an actor in the value chain?			
	What baseline waste data already exists? What waste data must be collected to improve integration practices over time?			
	Which additional stakeholders in the waste ecosystem can support or derail the city’s informal waste worker integration objective?			
	How the city might engage these specific stakeholder groups?			

<b>Gearing different departments</b>	Which different city departments need to be involved in the internal integration task team?			
	How to incorporate informal waste worker integration plans into different departmental mandates and activities?			
	What mandates and programmes in each department impact on the work of informal waste workers?			
	How do the different departmental programmes connect?			
	What resources can each department contribute to support the initiation of the integration process?			
	How can the programmes of each department be adapted, improved, or expanded to fulfil the tasks required for integration?			
	What capacity-building programmes the city needs?			
<b>Resources</b>	What city policies and budgets are needed to support integration?			
	What resources are available from national and subnational state sources to fund integration?			
	What resources and funding are available from industry to support integration?			
	What resources and funding are available from donors and climate funds?			
<b>Policy assessment</b>	How existing city policies affect (positively or negatively) informal waste workers, including all unintended consequences?			
<b>Policy alignment</b>	The linkages between informal waste work and the city's waste and climate action mandates?			
	The national EPR policy, and how to build an inclusive EPR framework?			

**Action 2**

## Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders

This action involves identifying and collaborating with informal waste worker organisations as equal partners in the integration process. It also involves establishing an official stakeholder forum for ongoing consultation and social dialogue, ensuring it has clear processes to guarantee transparency and accountability.

**Step 1**

Partner with informal waste worker organisations

**Step 2**

Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment

**Step 3**

Establish a stakeholder working group (SWG)

**Step 4**

Design stakeholder engagement strategies

**Step 5**

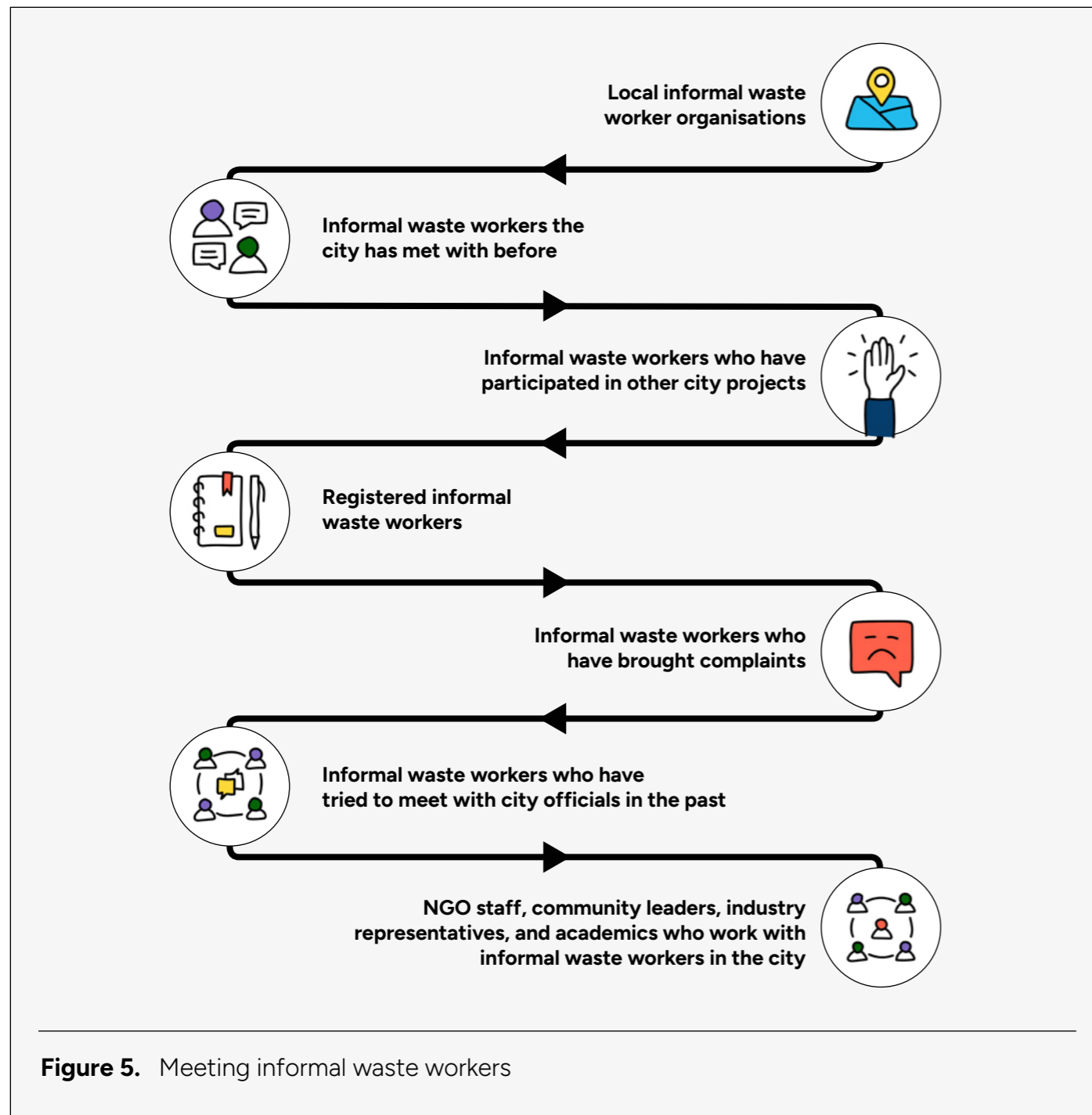
Establish a permanent informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC)

### Step 1: Partner with informal waste worker organisations

The most critical partnership for a successful integration process is direct collaboration with informal waste workers. These workers are equal partners in shaping the plans and strategies that affect their work. Establishing direct partnerships early in the process is essential to ensure meaningful participation and shared decision-making. This step is about identifying and setting up these crucial relationships.

**Where can the city team meet informal waste workers?**

There are multiple different ways in which a city team can meet with informal waste workers. Engagement will depend on the specific context of each city and the existing dynamics between the city and the informal waste sector. Figure 5 outlines several ways that the city team can meet informal waste workers.



**Figure 5.** Meeting informal waste workers

**Tip**

**How to engage with informal waste workers effectively**

- Meet with informal waste workers and their organisations on a regular basis.
- Co-design engagement mechanisms that align with city structures while also being practical for informal waste workers.
- Define how far along your city is in the integration process and the limitations of your role as city officials at this moment in time.
- Listen to informal waste workers’ concerns and proposals.
- Meet with all different categories of informal waste workers (e.g. pickers, sorters, landfill workers).
- Ensure that informal waste workers of diverse gender, race, ethnic, migrant status, caste, and other identity categories are represented among those you engage with.
- Create space for more marginalised groups of informal waste workers (e.g. women, migrants) to share their needs and proposals.
- Choose a venue that is convenient for workers, such as in a local neighbourhood or at a local workplace.
- Ensure meetings are inclusive and accessible, taking into account cognitive, social, and cultural needs as well as physical accessibility. For example, this might include thinking about the most appropriate time for meetings, and allowing workers to bring children safely to meetings if childcare support is unavailable. For more specific advice on how to ensure accessibility, you can access C40’s resource pack on delivering disability inclusive climate action [here](#).
- Arrange for translation or interpretation services if required.
- Make it as easy as possible for informal waste workers to attend and participate in meetings, for example by arranging free transport and offering stipends to ensure workers are not losing income.
- Provide informal waste worker organisations with resources to hold workshops for members, where they can explain the city’s intentions around integration, inclusive climate action, and equitable partnership.

To learn more about how your city can strengthen partnerships with the informal waste sector, **you can access a valuable resource at:** C40 Knowledge (2023) [City stories: Strengthening partnerships with informal workers to deliver a just transition.](#)

## How to create or strengthen worker organisations in your city

Below are some examples of specific actions cities can take to support the creation of informal waste worker associations and cooperatives, or to strengthen existing ones:

- **Build organisational management capacity:** Topics for training and skill-building workshops could include inventory management of recyclables, negotiating with large buyers, occupational health and safety, membership management, conflict resolution, democratic voting procedures, record-keeping, and financial transparency. It is also critical to provide training and resources to help association leaders become effective negotiators and advocates. This may involve, for example, training on city budget analysis and public speaking, helping cooperative leaders to present their case effectively to the city council during annual budget discussions. Such skills building equips leaders to participate as equal partners in city decision-making processes.
- **Lower the legal and bureaucratic barriers to entry,** making it easier for informal waste worker groups to formalise. Cities can partner with local university law schools, bar associations, or legal aid NGOs to offer free legal assistance to informal groups wanting to organise. This could cover the specific legal requirements for registering a workers' association, a cooperative, or a worker-owned company, including drafting the necessary constitutions, byelaws, and internal governance rules. Cities can also use city funds or special grants to cover the required state or national registration fees and notarisaton costs for waste worker cooperatives. Since informal waste worker groups often lack initial capital, removing this cost barrier to formalisation can be a critical enabling factor. Furthermore, a legal entity often requires a physical, verifiable address, the lack of which can also be a significant barrier. Cities can remove this by allowing the newly formed cooperative to use a designated room or secure office space within a municipal building (like a community centre or a sorting centre) as its registered legal and operational address for the first years.

- **Provide financial and equipment support to newly formed associations/cooperatives,** through grants or subsidies for the collective purchase of essential, high-value equipment. For example, providing cooperatives with a grant to purchase electric tricycles and baling presses, replacing manual carts, enables workers to collect higher volumes and sell compacted, higher-value materials, improving efficiency, increasing incomes, and reducing physical strain on workers. Typically, these benefits are offered to the cooperatives that cities give contracts and concessions to, as a way of improving equity and supporting the cooperatives to efficiently fulfil their contracts.
- **Provide waste-sector-specific technical assistance:** Cities can transfer their technical knowledge to workers' associations and cooperatives, helping to improve their business model. Cities can also share expertise on the specifics of the recycling market by training informal waste workers on material grading (e.g., differentiating types of plastic), baling techniques to meet industrial buyer standards, and understanding real-time market prices to ensure they receive fair value. Additionally, cities can collaborate with informal waste worker associations and cooperatives to map out their collection routes, volumes, and service areas, providing essential data for negotiating exclusive service contracts and demonstrating their contribution to the city. For example, the city department responsible for geographical information systems (GIS) could work with the cooperative to digitally map their collection zones using GPS technology, which then could serve as the basis for their service agreement with the city.
- **Legally recognise informal waste worker cooperatives as the primary service provider** for specific types of waste, like dry waste collection, in specific city zones or neighbourhoods. This provides the cooperatives with a guaranteed income stream and exclusive rights, stabilising their work and incentivising organised membership. Alternatively, cities can provide informal waste worker associations or cooperatives with the exclusive use of a dedicated, secure, and equipped material recovery facility or sorting centre, with a lease at a nominal fee.

*"...cities can collaborate with informal waste worker associations and cooperatives to map out their collection routes, volumes, and service areas..."*

- **Facilitate access to social protection**, using the cooperative structure as a legal entity through which to enrol members in subsidised or contributory national social security and health schemes. This provides a critical social safety net, which is often completely absent for informal workers. Cities could also subsidise workers' contributions to the national health insurance plan for the first year following the cooperative's formal recognition.

**Tip**

A comprehensive list of informal waste worker organisations compiled by the IAWP is available [here](#).

**What to do if there are no informal waste worker organisations in your city?**

For the integration process to advance effectively, it is important to have representative or advocacy organisations that can engage with the city. However, if these do not exist in your city, you can still engage with informal waste workers.

Informal waste workers may not always see the value of coming together in organisations, and many may prefer to work alone. It can also be difficult to find and engage with individual informal waste workers as they may not have contact details or even a fixed location, and may generally be mistrustful of authorities. In these instances, cities can seek advice and assistance from community leaders, or look to find and approach organisations that are already engaging with informal waste workers, such as community-based groups, NGOs, civil society actors, or academic partners. These organisations can play a key role as intermediaries in facilitating mutual trust and supporting the city to build strong relationships with informal waste workers.

[Figure 6](#) suggests some other practical steps cities can take when there are no formal informal waste worker organisations to engage with.

**Cities can...**



**Leverage existing contacts and partnerships**

NGOs or academics can work with informal waste workers to advocate for their needs; negotiate contract terms; engage on regulations affecting the informal waste sector; and facilitate training for officials, workers, and residents



**Reach out to IWWs**

Cities might be able to engage informal waste workers directly by sending staff to locations where they work – sorting, baling, or selling materials



**Learn more about informal waste workers**

The absence of any informal waste worker groups can motivate a city to explore the data dynamics of its informal waste sector. A basic stakeholder mapping of informal waste workers can be beneficial in helping the city develop meaningful engagement and support strategies.



**Promote organising**

Cities can provide resources to NGOs to help promote informal waste worker organising and the formation of associations or cooperatives

**Figure 6.** What to do if there are no established informal waste worker organisations in your city

**Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment**

**Link**

In this step, the integration task team (ITT), in partnership with informal waste workers (see [Action 2, Step 1: Partner with informal waste worker organisations](#)), map the roles and influence of all stakeholders to identify how they can contribute most effectively to achieving successful and sustainable integration. This is followed by an in-depth **needs assessment** that provides insights into the specific needs of each stakeholder.

This step is also useful to map out the city's formal and informal waste management systems to understand where and how they connect with each other. This helps to design programmes that better integrate informal waste workers into various parts of the organic waste treatment and recycling value chain, and helps cities identify opportunities for partnerships with both formal and informal waste management stakeholders.

**Link**

In [Action 1. Step 3: Build a database](#), the ITT will have already undertaken a **baseline assessment** to gather existing data and background information on informal waste workers in the city. If further detail is required, this can be added at this stage in partnership with informal waste workers. In the current step, this informal waste worker data is supplemented with complementary data covering the role and influence of each stakeholder, as well as their specific needs.

A **stakeholder mapping** of the circumstances, sphere/degree of influence, and relevant contributions of each stakeholder group, as well as of what data currently exists for each group, can be undertaken. This will ensure the city has access to a single composite dataset, which will be useful for planning and monitoring and help to utilise resources more efficiently.

**Case study Stakeholder mapping in Bengaluru**

Between June and September 2023, **Bengaluru** mapped all stakeholders in the bulk waste generator value chain, including formal and informal frontline waste workers, to assess their vulnerabilities, powers, and interests. The process involved five workshops and over 25 interviews with 120+ participants, including government officials, contractors, community organisations, waste generators, and sector experts. The use of safe spaces, active listening, and participatory tools ensured marginalised groups – especially informal waste workers – could share their experiences. This analysis helped create engagement plans for each stakeholder group in climate action dialogues. The findings highlighted the need for stakeholders to work together to enforce existing policies while addressing gaps in capacity, implementation, and monitoring within the bulk waste management ecosystem. To advance inclusive climate action and equitable waste management, the city focused on upskilling frontline workers, junior health inspectors, waste contractors, and zonal officials, while establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure interventions are both inclusive and effective.

**Learn more about participatory approaches in waste management in Bengaluru and other Indian cities by checking out these two C40 resources: Bengaluru’s ‘Participatory approaches in solid waste management’ [here](#); and ‘Participatory approaches in waste management: An implementation guide for Indian cities’ [here](#).**

**TOOL: Stakeholder mapping template**

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

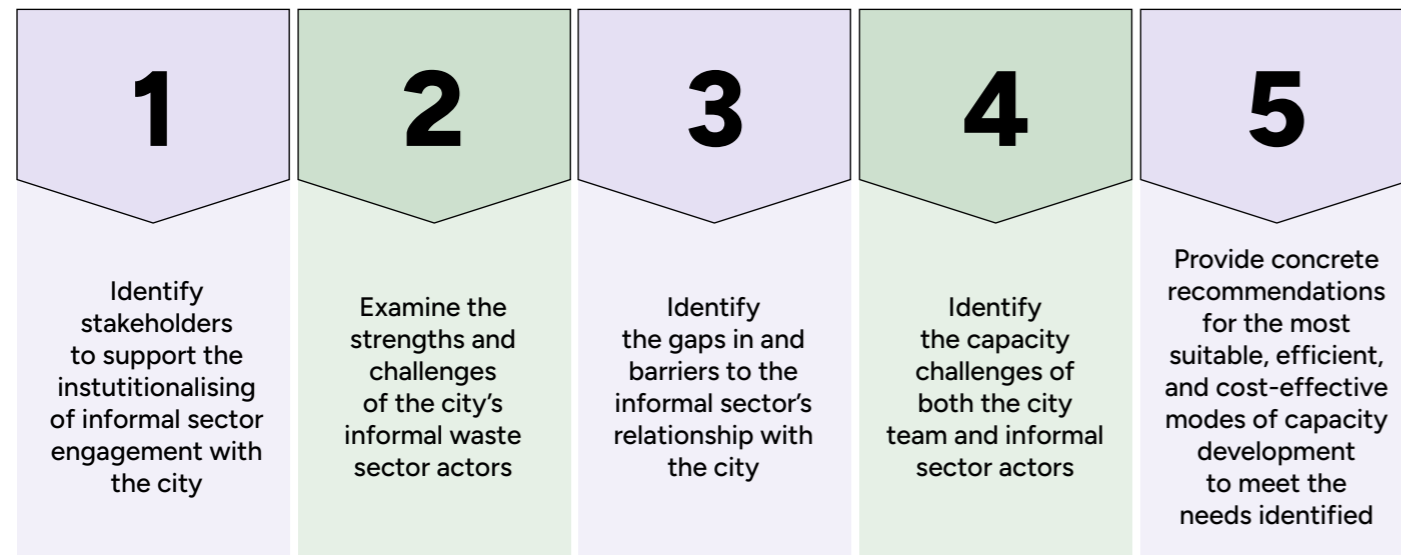
Stakeholder group	Name of organisation	Role in sector/ relevance to integration process	Type and extent of influence	Priority of engagement	Participatory strategy (e.g. focus group, public meeting, one on one)
Informal waste worker organisations					
Businesses					
Academics					
NGOs					
Civil society organisations					
Government departments					
Other					



Social dialogue between Bengaluru municipal corporation (BBMP) and waste workers

Once the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder have been clearly outlined, the city can conduct a strategic **needs assessment** to understand the specific needs of each stakeholder that the city's integration process should seek to address. The needs assessment provides the evidence to inform the design of an equitable and inclusive integration plan that serves everyone in the city.

In particular, it should provide an in-depth assessment of the needs, challenges, and barriers to informal waste actors' engagement and collaboration with the city. A participatory needs assessment process seeks to identify gaps and opportunities for the city to engage with informal waste sector workers. It also examines the availability, challenges, and constraints of local capacities, highlights opportunities for technical assistance and engagement by the city, and sets priorities for city action. A robust and effective needs assessment should:



Needs assessments can take different forms and will depend on the local context and objectives of the city. They should always involve speaking directly with informal waste workers in an inclusive and participatory way through surveys, focus groups, interviews, or other engagement methods. Including informal waste workers in the design stage of the needs assessment will help to secure buy-in and trust, and ensure the right questions are being asked. The city should be transparent throughout the entire process, including about the objectives of the needs assessment, and should avoid raising expectations about any outcomes.

To learn more about a city needs assessment, you can access a valuable C40 resource [here](#).

**Case study** Needs assessment in Accra

In 2021, the **Accra Metropolitan Assembly** conducted a comprehensive needs assessment centred on the relationship between the city administration and the informal waste sector, highlighting the needs, challenges, and barriers to informal sector engagement.

The assessment entailed engaging informal waste sector workers, as well as city staff and other stakeholders, in several workshops and a focus group. The sessions identified existing gaps and challenges, elevated opportunities, and increased understanding of the roles that city, regional, and national groups can play in strengthening the city's engagement with informal waste sector workers.

The needs assessment was the first of its kind in the city and demonstrated the power of hearing directly from informal waste workers from all parts of the waste value chain. Among the city and the informal sector groups, this enhanced capacity for and commitment to collaboration that, prior to these sessions, did not exist.<sup>59</sup>

You can find more information about Accra's needs assessment [here](#).

### Step 3: Establish a stakeholder working group (SWG)

Link

In this step, the city establishes a stakeholder working group (SWG) to develop and oversee the development of the Integration Plan (see [Action 5: Developing an informal waste worker Integration Plan](#)). This group will include designated city officials, representatives from all informal waste worker groups in the city (see [Action 2, Step 1: Partner with informal waste worker organisations](#)), relevant businesses in the waste value chain (such as buyers), as well as academics and NGOs. The SWG should establish regular coordination meetings to discuss progress towards the shared goals.

Link

(see [Action 2, Step 1: Partner with informal waste worker organisations](#)), relevant businesses in the waste value chain (such as buyers), as well as academics and NGOs. The SWG should establish regular coordination meetings to discuss progress towards the shared goals.

#### Tip

While every engagement process is unique, the following general questions may help you in identifying appropriate stakeholders:

- What individuals or groups have a stake or an interest in the issue?
- Who is influential in the policy arena?
- Who makes the decisions?
- Who can influence decisions?
- Who is critical to delivery?
- Who will potentially be impacted by the outcomes?
- Who can contribute resources?
- Who can potentially slow or stop the project?
- Who is currently excluded or may not have been considered?
- At what point(s) in the process are stakeholders being engaged?

#### Tip

Collaborate with all levels of government as needed, setting up multi-level partnerships to support integration. Work with national and local departments to see how their plans and strategies can help advance your goals.

#### Case study

##### Building partnerships in Belo Horizonte

In 1993, **Belo Horizonte** in Brazil began integrating informal waste workers into its waste management systems. The Municipal Waste and Citizenship Forum was formed in 2003 to unite civil society groups, city agencies, and organised informal waste workers.

The city government's Public Cleansing Agency worked hard to change negative perceptions of *catadores* through a number of environmental and community campaigns, and supported informal waste workers by renting warehouse space, running courses, and putting out recycling containers. Stakeholders also collaborated on the planning, implementation, and monitoring of recycling schemes.<sup>60</sup>

#### Case study

In **Fortaleza**, Brazil, the city formalised partnerships through an accreditation agreement between informal waste worker associations and the Fortaleza City Hall, via its Municipal Secretariat of Conservation and Public Services. This agreement built trust in the process and provided valuable certainty for both informal waste workers and city officials.<sup>61</sup>



Recyclers in an informal recycling facility in Accra

Credit: NIKACC commissioned by C40

## Agreeing guiding principles for the SWG’s work

An important part of building a meaningful partnership between all members is agreeing to the principles that will guide the SWG’s work. This should be discussed and agreed in a participatory process, with all partners helping to develop principles for working collaboratively.

### Case study

In the South African Waste Picker Integration Guideline,<sup>62</sup> the integration principles cover the following:

- Recognise, respect, and redress harm to informal waste workers
- Value informal waste workers expertise
- Engage meaningfully with informal waste workers
- Build on what exists
- Increase waste diversion and cost effectiveness
- Use evidence-based data
- Develop an enabling environment for informal waste workers
- Improve conditions and income of informal waste workers
- Compensate informal waste workers for services and savings
- Promote holistic integration

A full description of the principles can be found [here](#).

## Step 4: Design stakeholder engagement strategies

The actions that the city agrees to are informed by its own processes as well as by the input, resources, and needs of stakeholders – including residents, businesses, NGOs, academics, and informal waste workers themselves.

At this step, the SWG develops clear, tailored strategies for engaging all stakeholders, including specific approaches for effective engagement with informal waste workers. These stakeholder consultation strategies will be tailored to suit different stakeholder groups, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all engagement approach.

### Link

The stakeholder mapping template in [Action 2, Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment](#) includes prompts for thinking about which groups should be engaged as a priority and ideas for participatory approaches. This is a helpful starting point for identifying where to begin with stakeholder engagement, the appropriate level of engagement for each group, and the best formats to use.

Different forms of engagement may become more relevant at different parts of the integration process. Identifying the most relevant methodology depends to some extent on the stage of the planning and implementation process, and it is important to be clear on the purpose of the participation of a particular group at each stage (see [Figure 7](#) for guidelines).



Waste picker training in Dar es Salaam



### Project inception stage (pre-planning)

**The purpose of stakeholder engagement in this phase is to:**

- Present the intention to plan for informal waste worker integration, with an outline of the proposed methodology and timelines
- Agree on the scope of integration – and the limitations
- Share information about the city’s intentions and resources
- Listen to informal waste workers, businesses, and other community stakeholders to understand their needs and priorities
- Agree the methodology for planning and participatory processes
- Identify the key stakeholders who will be participating
- Agree the participation mechanisms and forums that will represent community interests in the integration process



### Planning stage

**The purpose of stakeholder engagement in this phase is to:**

- Present the results of needs assessments, policy analyses, and investigations
- Confirm the findings of analyses undertaken by the city
- Consult key individual stakeholders and representative community groups on relevant issues
- Discuss the implications of the research or information provided by stakeholders for the plan
- Present draft ideas at various stages while developing the integration plan – from conceptual to more detailed proposals and action plans
- Discuss various possibilities and agree on priorities to be taken forward in the plan
- Agree on the final plan to be submitted to the relevant institutional authorities for approval

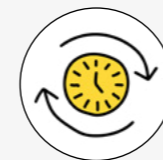
**Figure 7.** Stakeholder engagement at different implementation stages of informal waste worker integration projects



### Programme and projects implementation stage

**The purpose of stakeholder engagement in this phase is to:**

- Localise the project by agreeing on the stakeholders and participants who will be involved in detailed planning, and in overseeing implementation on behalf of the broader community and those in the areas where the projects take place
- Oversee the legislative changes made to accommodate legal, social, and economic integration of informal waste workers
- Confirm the arrangements for implementation and all the factors around job creation, sustainable project development, financing, and project management arrangements
- Communicate all the implementation steps and agree respective timelines
- Monitor the timing of implementation
- Resolve any problems that arise during implementation



### Long-term sustainability

**The purpose of stakeholder engagement in this phase is to:**

- Agree on key responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of facilities developed by the city
- Agree on programmatic/activation use of the space, infrastructure, and equipment



### Monitoring and review stages (which occur throughout the programme lifecycle)

**The purpose of stakeholder engagement in this phase is to:**

- Agree on the terms and tools for measuring the impact of projects that have been implemented
- Invite participation in data collection
- Receive and provide feedback on city- and stakeholder-generated reports

### Step 5: Establish a permanent informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC)

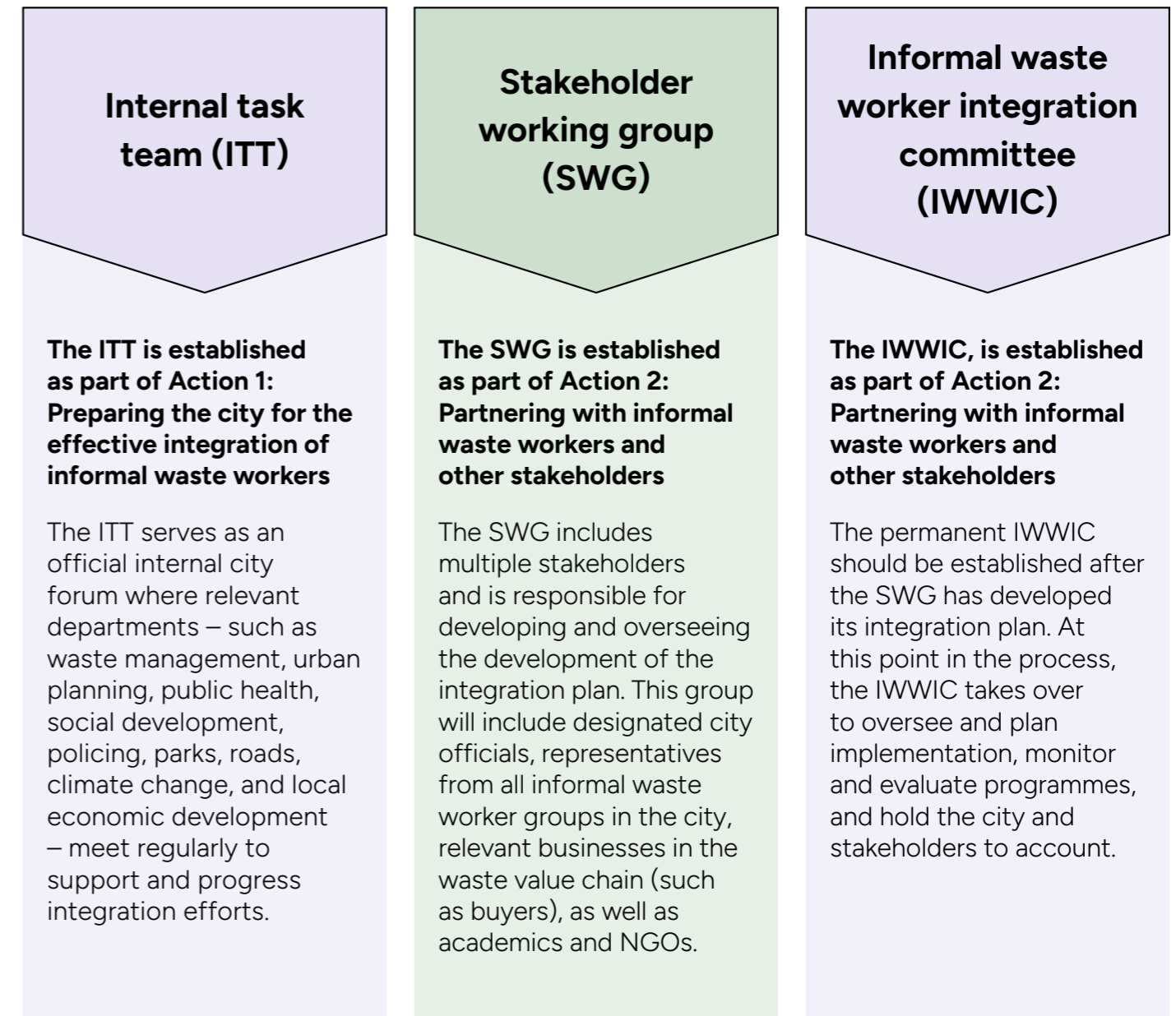
Link

The SWG has a mandate to develop an Integration Plan. Once the process of developing the plan is complete (see [Action 5: Developing an informal waste worker integration plan](#)), the city should establish a permanent committee to oversee the plan’s implementation, monitor and evaluate ongoing programmes, and hold the city and stakeholders accountable.

The informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC) should be formally constituted by the city as a permanent forum to oversee the ongoing work of integration. It should comprise representatives from departments on the ITT and from organisations represented in the SWG, including:

- representatives from all informal waste worker organisations at the relevant scale;
- representatives elected by independent informal waste workers;
- representatives from all relevant city, district, company, or industry departments; and
- a secretariat to ensure effective processes are in place for meetings and other committee business.

See [Figure 8](#) for a summary of governance structures working across the various actions and steps that make up this toolkit.



**Figure 8.** Governance structures for the informal waste worker integration journey

**Tip**

**Communication methods**

There are various communication methods that can be used at various stages to secure buy-in and promote participation in the integration effort. For example:

**Dissemination of information:** This is one-way communication. It takes place at the early stages of integration and may be useful for stakeholders such as residents’ forums, civil society organisations, and businesses. The purpose is to inform people about the overall integration process or a particular intervention or project. Information may be disseminated through pamphlets, radio, TV, newspapers, social media, or meetings.

**Consultation:** This is two-way communication. It takes place in smaller groups of stakeholders. It should follow after the dissemination of information, and is a process that allows people to discuss and influence the proposals. Maps, budgets, and reports may be presented, and people are given an opportunity, in small groups, to contribute to the ideas. Consultations are an appropriate method of communication for cities to apply throughout the integration process with informal waste workers, and with supporting NGOs/academics. During the project and programme development stages it will be important to widen the groups to also include residents’ forums and/or business stakeholders

**Participation:** This means active involvement of the core stakeholders in the planning of integration. It allows those who are affected by the proposals to understand and contribute to the integration plan, and ensures informal waste worker organisations are equal partners in planning integration with the city. Many tools may be used in the process, including maps, models, drawings, presentations, and exhibitions.

**Mobilisation:** This is aimed at actively involving a particular group of stakeholders, and focuses on community or informal waste worker stakeholders taking the lead in the development of proposals. Usually, mobilisation happens from within the community or informal waste worker group and is centred on the community taking responsibility for projects or proposing projects or interventions.

**Case study**

**Participatory engagement in Bengaluru**

**Bengaluru** used a range of participatory engagement methods in its process of integrating informal waste workers, including:

**Listening sessions:** One-on-one interviews were held with representatives from informal waste worker and support organisations to understand their lived experiences, build trust, and capture the perspectives of each group.

**Zonal drumbeats:** One-on-one interviews with representatives of informal waste workers, government, and supporting organisations to document the context and working conditions of each frontline worker group.

**Social dialogue:** A structured discussion and findings review, between informal waste worker representatives and city officials, to identify feasible actions and programme responses towards improved working conditions and formal integration based on the needs documented.

The social dialogues were particularly useful in enabling informal waste workers to have their needs and concerns heard by city decision-makers, and for the latter to make important commitments to action.<sup>63</sup>



**TOOL: Stakeholder participation checklist**

This checklist is designed to help stakeholder working group (SWG) members track whether they have taken advantage of all the opportunities and employed all measures to ensure an inclusive engagement process.

Indicate Yes or No for each question and add comments as needed.

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
1	Have you decided how to run a meaningful participatory process?			
2	Have you decided what form(s) partnership discussions should take (forums, social dialogues, multi-tier collaborations, etc.)?			
3	Have you identified all informal waste worker organisations, cooperatives, and institutional anchors such as unions, NGOs, and city departments that need to participate in the partnership?			
4	Have you decided how you will ensure equitable gender representation within the participatory process?			
5	Have you decided how you will involve the most marginalised or hard-to-reach groups, such as migrant workers?			
6	Have you identified other organisations (producers, private sector, government institutions, environmental NGOs, etc.) you need to partner with?			
7	Have you decided how to optimise partnerships for planning, purchasing, and service provision?			
8	Have you agreed how you will resolve any disputes that arise in the stakeholder working group?			

**Action 3**

# Undertaking education and capacity building

This involves educating and building the capacity of informal waste workers, city officials, elected representatives, and other stakeholders, as well as running public awareness campaigns to highlight how each group can support informal waste worker integration.

**Step 1**

Strengthen the capacity of city officials, informal waste workers, and other stakeholders

**Step 2**

Develop campaigns for public awareness-raising

## Step 1: Strengthen the capacity of city officials, informal waste workers, and other stakeholders

**Link**

In [Action 1: Step 4: Strengthen the city's understanding of integration](#), the city's ITT will have begun to educate city officials around the work of informal waste workers and their valuable contribution to society. Education and skills development continues in this step, as the city takes the lead in building the capacity of all stakeholders to better participate in integration processes.

**Link**

The SWG (established in [Action 2, Step 3: Establish a stakeholder working group \(SWG\)](#)) should be able to identify training and capacity-building opportunities for all stakeholders; these could include learning about the city's public management systems, waste sector regulations, health and safety, data collection, financial management, accessing social support, communication, digital skills, and more.

City officials, residents, and corporate stakeholders may also need to be educated in strategies that promote waste separation at source, while protecting informal waste workers' access to materials. For example, if residents are encouraged to separate recyclable materials, but those are collected by formal companies rather than informal waste workers, then this strategy harms informal waste workers.

Within informal waste worker organisations, capacity building and skills training can strengthen organising, leadership, and management. The specific focus of these efforts will depend on its local context and the experience of its informal waste workers in integration efforts so far. Cities can look to the needs assessments conducted in the [Action 2, Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment](#) to inform a tailored capacity-building agenda for informal waste workers.

Link

Systematic capacity building among informal waste workers represents a key step towards a more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable waste management system. It requires coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders including city officials, civil society organisations, private sector partners, and informal waste workers.

The many vulnerabilities faced by informal waste workers – including economic insecurity, health and safety risks, social marginalisation, and exclusion from institutions – require comprehensive, integrated interventions that address these challenges together. Training for informal waste workers may include building:

- Operational skills: Enhancing individual skills, including technical skill development, health and safety training, digital literacy, etc.
- Organisational capacity: Strengthening informal waste workers' capacity to organise through worker associations, unions, and cooperatives.
- Policy design skills: Strengthening abilities needed to effectively engage in the process of shaping public policy, including communication, critical thinking, relationship building, and understanding the policy development landscape.

*"...vulnerabilities faced by informal waste workers... require comprehensive, integrated interventions..."*

- Financial skills: Training informal waste workers to interpret city budgets and understand budget allocation processes.

It is important to note that comprehensive approaches are needed to address not only individual skill gaps but also institutional barriers. These include challenges such as the complexities of legally contracting with informal workers, which often prevent informal waste workers from accessing formal opportunities and support systems. (See [Action 4: Programme 1: Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment and recycling value chains](#)).

Link

This step also intersects with: [Action 1: Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers](#) and [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#), which include information about waste worker organisation and needs assessment respectively.

Link

### Case study Capacity building in Dar es Salaam

Through [C40's Inclusive Climate Action \(ICA\) Cities Fund](#), **Dar es Salaam** implemented a programme to tackle waste challenges. The capacity-building initiative engaged informal waste workers, city officials, and community-based organisations to enhance skills for improved waste collection, organic waste treatment, and recycling. Following a participatory process, tailored training packages were developed on waste collection, sorting, treatment, leadership, and health and safety.

Additionally, a [Systematic Community Mobilisation Toolkit](#) was developed to strengthen local institutional capacity. With this support, waste collection rates in the Vingunguti Ward have increased by more than 55% and waste workers have increased their fees by 35%.<sup>64</sup> These efforts have also created over 30 new green jobs.<sup>65</sup>

**Case study** Awareness and capacity building in Bengaluru

**Bengaluru** ran a training programme for bulk waste management stakeholders, including city officials, contractors, formal waste workers, and informal waste workers in the Bommanahalli Zone. In around 30 meetings, over six months, experts, community members, and civil society groups helped design eight interactive training modules covering inclusive climate action, fair waste management, worker welfare, organic waste management, and sustainable practices. The sessions, held in May and June 2024, focused on practical skills and involved over 85 participants.

Support from city officials encouraged participation, ensured the training was inclusive and useful, and made it a part of regular city processes. The programme has strengthened the ability of officials and practitioners to carry out fair and climate-focused waste management in Bengaluru.<sup>66</sup>

**Case study** Capacity building in Accra

Empowerment and capacity building for informal waste workers in **Accra** focuses on developing workers' skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the green transition. This includes training on waste value chains, handling, and innovative or tech-based service delivery, as well as occupational health and safety. Informal waste workers are also trained on the city's just transition processes and guided on strategic engagement with city authorities, positioning them as active agents in sustainable waste management.<sup>67</sup>

**Step 2: Develop campaigns for public awareness-raising**

With targeted campaigns to engage residents and the private sector, cities can enhance waste separation at source, while simultaneously tackling stigma, improving public perceptions of informal waste workers, and giving public recognition to their contributions. Awareness raising also promotes public and political support for informal waste worker integration, as demonstrated in **Accra** through a city billboard campaign about the role of the informal waste sector. Informed by a social poll that revealed public stigma against informal waste workers, the campaign was successful in improving local perceptions. Campaigns can include simple tools like stickers, magnets, colour-coded bins, and visual guides, as well as more interactive approaches such as door-to-door instruction, community meetings, online guides, instructional videos, pamphlets, sorting games, radio broadcasts, TV advertisements, newspaper articles, social media posts, and school-based education initiatives.

*"...carnival parades, theatre performances, dance, and music, were employed as innovative methods to communicate important social messages."*

In **Belo Horizonte**, Brazil, various creative and cultural activities, such as carnival parades, theatre performances, dance, and music, were employed as innovative methods to communicate important social messages. These activities focused on raising public awareness about the significant role that *catadores* play in protecting and improving the environment.<sup>68</sup>

Establishing strong relationships between residents and informal waste workers is an important way to consolidate integration programmes. Residents can be important champions in the integration process, and can help ensure its continuation in the event of changing political administrations. Community education is often most effective when it is conducted by informal waste workers themselves.

**Tip**

In cities where informal waste workers face heightened stigma, education conducted by the informal workers themselves may not be the most effective approach. These cities may have to rely on community organisations, local partners, or the city's own community entry mechanisms for this education – at least in the initial phases.

**Case study** Residents and informal waste workers partner beyond cleaning efforts

In Brixton, a neighbourhood in **Johannesburg**, South Africa, the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) piloted a separation-at-source model, which involved partnering with residents, the private sector, and the city to create a system where informal waste workers educated residents and collected and sorted recyclables, and ARO provided the trucks, infrastructure, and coordination.<sup>69</sup>

Residents involved informal waste workers in various community events and activities, enhancing the relationship between these workers and other residents. Informal waste workers continue to play a role in events such as the periodic Brixton light festival and cultural and sporting events that are geared to building community spirit and making Brixton more liveable. Informal waste workers know and are known by many residents of the neighbourhood, giving them a community role beyond cleaning and the reclaiming of recyclable materials.

**Tip** Depending on resource availability, cities may be able to conduct a community survey to gain a generalisable understanding around local perceptions of informal waste workers, and/or identify any social/economic/political barriers to community–informal waste worker engagements.

The following checklist can help the SWG monitor the rigour of their training, capacity-building, and awareness-raising programmes.

**TOOL: Integration checklist for undertaking education, capacity building, and awareness raising<sup>70</sup>**

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
1	Have you developed programmes to educate and train all stakeholders working on the integration process?			
2	Have you articulated the key messages for residents? And for businesses?			
3	Have you identified the best ways to disseminate these messages? What are they?			
4	Have you provided training specifically for staff working on separation-at-source, organic waste treatment, and recycling programmes and contracts, to mitigate any unintentional harm to informal waste worker integration?			
5	Have you drawn on the expertise of informal waste workers and other experts in the field to develop and provide training?			
6	Have you provided training for informal waste workers on city regulations and legislation that affects their work?			
7	Have you mainstreamed this skills-development programme into city training frameworks, to ensure that new city officials develop the right skills and strengthen their capacity for the development, revision and implementation of informal waste worker programmes?			
8	Have you developed a timeline for awareness-raising activities? How frequently will activities be conducted?			
9	How will informal waste workers be involved in developing educational materials and conducting the activities, and how will they be paid for their work?			
10	Have you allocated a budget for awareness-raising activities?			
11	Have you developed a participatory monitoring and evaluation framework using data collected in existing needs assessments?			

Action 4

# Developing informal waste worker support programmes

This action involves cities leading programmes and projects to support integration. It includes four programmes, each with their own sequence of steps.

**Programme 1**

Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment, and recycling value chains

**Programme 2**

Climate adaptation and resilience

**Programme 3**

Ensure gender equity and the inclusion of marginalised groups

**Programme 4**

Redress caste and racial injustices



Pilot social insurance registration event in Accra

Credit: Accra Metropolitan

## Programme 1

Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment, and recycling value chains

**Step 1**

Recognise informal waste workers

**Step 2**

Promote legal protection of informal waste workers

**Step 3**

Register informal waste workers

**Step 4**

Promote economic integration and entrepreneurial programmes

**Step 5**

Promote social protection

**Step 6**

Consider EPR as part of integration

**Step 7**

Include informal waste worker social plans in projects for decommissioning landfills

**Step 8**

Determine and provide physical infrastructure needs

### Step 1: Recognise informal waste workers

There are multiple ways of recognising informal waste workers, across legal, social, economic, and infrastructural domains.

**Legal recognition** of informal waste workers means formally acknowledging their status and rights within the city. This can include registering their organisations and enterprises, issuing ID cards, legislating for their eligibility for social protection, and

meaningfully involving them as stakeholders in just transition programmes.

**Social recognition** involves acknowledging the contributions of informal waste workers in ways beyond financial and legal aspects. This includes engaging with communities; publicly recognising informal waste workers as essential service providers; advocating for decriminalisation; running awareness campaigns to replace negative attitudes towards the informal waste sector with positive appreciation of their many contributions; and providing informal waste workers with access to health care, education, and pensions.

**Economic recognition** involves incorporating informal waste workers in municipal waste service pricing negotiations and fee fixing; paying them for their service and environmental contributions; funding integration projects that will benefit informal waste workers; promoting the payment of fair prices for recyclables and other secondary resources sold by informal waste workers; and supporting informal waste workers to move up the value chain. It also involves awarding city-backed contracts to the informal waste sector.

**Infrastructural recognition** involves providing informal waste workers with access to the infrastructure required to conduct their work safely and efficiently. This includes making city land available to informal waste workers and providing them with sorting and storage facilities, warehouses, trucks and other vehicles, materials recovery facilities, and relevant equipment, such as baling machines and crushers.

**Case study** Recognition of informal waste workers in data gathering

Brazil regularly collects and reports official statistics on informal waste workers. The country's support of efforts to organise informal waste workers and improve their livelihoods led to the formal recognition of waste picking as a profession in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations under the title *catador de material reciclável* (picker of recyclables), which includes people who collect, sort, and sell materials like paper, cardboard, glass, metals, and other reusable items. This category of workers is captured in national survey data.<sup>71</sup>

**Step 2: Promote legal protection of informal waste workers**

It is important that informal waste workers are protected by laws and regulations across national, subnational, and city levels. Steps cities can take to support this include:

- Integrating and aligning urban waste management practices with progressive national legislation.
- Supporting lobbying and advocacy efforts for transboundary and cross-regional informal waste workers, particularly for undocumented migrants.
- Consulting the C40 Integration Toolkit during the drafting and review stages of developing regulatory frameworks. The advice provided could assist in aligning local regulations with broader integration objectives, ensuring consistency.
- Identifying byelaws that need to be revised to support integration, and which are most pressing. The stakeholder working group (SWG) can request support from relevant city officials and departments, such as the legal department and the mayor's office, to develop the necessary revisions. (See [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#).)

Link

**Focus**

Byelaws are the key regulations that direct implementation at city level. Byelaws relating to waste, transportation, and registration of service providers sometimes makes it difficult for informal waste workers to do their work, reducing their role in the sector and worsening their incomes and working conditions.

**Case study**

**National recognition of informal waste workers in Colombia**

Informal waste workers were recognised by the Colombian Constitutional Court in 2013. Colombia developed a national legal framework that makes it mandatory to include informal waste workers in municipal systems and pay them for the services they provide.

**Case study**

In **Medellín**, informal waste workers have been incorporated into municipal systems through a number of initiatives, including the provision of ID cards, capacity-building programmes, and regular censuses. The city has consulted with informal waste worker organisations around municipal solid waste management master plans, and some informal waste organisations are now involved in the management of collection centres.<sup>72</sup>

In **Bogotá**, informal waste workers are represented by the Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá. In 2013, the Constitutional Court granted legal protection to informal waste workers, recognising their vulnerability. The ruling required that informal waste workers be included in city waste management systems and be remunerated for waste collection, transport, and public recycling services. The city also introduced a payment scheme to remunerate individual informal waste workers for their contribution. This legal recognition has been a key milestone.<sup>73</sup>

**Step 3: Register informal waste workers**

Registration of informal waste workers matters because:<sup>74</sup>

- Informal waste workers are often “invisible” in official statistics, meaning their contributions are undervalued and overlooked. Registration – whether as individual waste workers or through organisations/cooperatives – recognises informal waste workers as legitimate economic actors, and establishes a legal and institutional basis for their work to be integrated into municipal or national waste management.
- Without registration, many informal waste workers remain excluded from occupational health and safety provisions, social protections, fair pricing for materials, and secure access to waste resources – exposing them to exploitation, harassment, and unsafe working conditions.
- Registration helps embed informal waste workers into broader waste-management strategies, including national policies and regulations like EPR. This provides a pathway to a just transition, where environmental sustainability does not come at the expense of vulnerable workers.

*“[A collective voice allows workers to] secure better pay and safer working conditions, and even enter into formal contracts...”*

- Registration of informal waste workers makes it possible to trace materials, ensure accountability, and fairly distribute the economic benefits of organic waste treatment, recycling and other waste treatment and revaluation processes – rather than leaving those benefits with middlemen or private corporations.
- Registration is also important for labour organising, through which informal waste workers gain a collective voice. That voice allows them to negotiate with cities or private-sector actors, secure better pay and safer working conditions, and even enter into formal contracts for waste collection, organic waste treatment and recycling services. This not only improves their livelihoods, but helps dismantle social stigma and marginalisation.

Key considerations for meaningful registration of informal waste workers include:

- Conducting initial mapping and baseline surveys of informal waste workers’ activities, with their active participation.
- Maintaining an open, ongoing registration process that is regularly updated to reflect worker mobility and new entrants to the city/informal workforce.
- Integrating registries into city systems so they are part of official databases rather than isolated NGO lists; use national registration systems where available.
- Providing official ID cards or certificates to recognise informal waste workers, enable access to social protection, and reduce harassment.
- Establishing feedback and accountability mechanisms that allow informal waste workers to update their information, address any exclusions, and raise concerns or grievances.

**Link**

See also [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#) for tips on how to engage informal waste workers.

**Tip**

**Umbrella informal worker organisations**

In some cities, umbrella workers' associations exist that comprise workers from all trades in the informal economy. In Accra, for example, the Union of Informal Workers Association (UNIWA) operates under the Trades Union Congress (TUC), a nationally recognised labour advocacy body. Such an organisation, where it exists, can be a good partner to support informal waste worker registration, and may also have valuable data on the informal waste sector that the city can rely on.<sup>75</sup>

**Tip**

**Co-developing registration processes with informal waste workers**

Informal waste workers' participation in the development and implementation of registration processes increases both credibility and success rates. In practical terms, this means that informal waste worker leaders participate in the design process and work with city officials to raise awareness among the informal waste workforce about the benefits and practicalities of registration. Partnership between informal waste workers and cities is important, but it is cities that are responsible for managing and delivering registration processes.

**Case study**

**Outcomes of informal waste worker registration in Bengaluru and Pune**

In **Bengaluru**, Hasiru Dala (an NGO coalition), collaborated with the city to enumerate and register informal waste workers.<sup>76</sup> This registration provided legitimacy to the sector, strengthened recognition of informal waste work among city authorities, and enabled informal waste workers to access identity cards and city programmes.

In **Pune**, registering informal waste workers helped provide more stable incomes, greater legitimacy, and better working conditions for informal workers, as well as improving service delivery for all residents.<sup>77</sup>

**Case study**

**Building a database for targeted projects in Medellín**

In Colombia, *Decree 1381 of 2024* required the city of **Medellín** to conduct, update, and publish an annual census of informal waste workers. Working in collaboration with informal waste worker organisations, the city registered close to 5,000 workers and uploaded the data to a digital tracking platform to allow ongoing maintenance and analysis.

The census project is hosted on the Kobotoolbox platform and involved two steps for respondents:

**Account creation:** Informal waste worker organisations were first required to select a username and password to access the online platform. This ensured secure and individualised access for each participating organisation.

**Data entry and survey:** After logging in, organisations proceeded to enter respondents' information and were guided through a semi-structured survey to collect comprehensive data.

The resulting data was systematically analysed, forming the basis for understanding the profile and needs of informal waste workers in the city. Access to this detailed information about its informal workers allows the city to develop targeted projects that meaningfully address their needs.

**Tip**

**Challenges that might arise in registration**

The registration process can present challenges. For example:

- Migrants' or other informal waste workers' lack of formal documentation might result in their exclusion from city-run processes. Cities can investigate the option of allowing migrants to use documents from their own countries, or lobby the national government for assistance.
- Cities might be unable to register undocumented migrants due to local or national laws. This is a complex issue and can be sensitive and polarising for cities, as it means confronting the management of migration regimes alongside informal waste

worker integration goals. Local partnerships can help – the city can collaborate with local migration/immigration entities and embassies to secure documentation for migrants, or approach an NGO or community-based organisation to assist.

- The lack of permanent addresses or contact details for some informal waste workers can require that city officials establish a proxy data system for registration.
- Many informal waste workers distrust city government, making it difficult to engage directly. Involving informal waste worker leadership in the registration process can help mitigate this problem.
- While registration may automatically enhance recognition of informal waste workers at the city level, city leaders and workers themselves must understand that it may take some time for public perceptions to fully evolve.



Credit: WIEGO

## Step 4: Promote economic integration and entrepreneurship programmes

It is challenging for cities to create and deliver economic benefits for informal waste workers. But there are avenues for employment or contracting possibilities, and cities can create enabling policy environments.

*“...cities can employ informal waste workers through special public employment programmes, and offer service procurement opportunities...”*

In terms of direct job creation, cities can employ informal waste workers through special public employment programmes, and offer service procurement opportunities to informal waste worker businesses. This can either be offered directly through open tenders – where informal waste worker businesses would bid in an open, transparent process – or indirectly, through intermediaries like NGOs or special purpose vehicles that can contract informal waste workers directly.<sup>78</sup>

Other activities cities can consider to promote economic integration include:

- Conducting research and dialogue on how informal waste workers can collaborate on city contracts and be involved in other kinds of contracting.
- Ensuring financial aspects of support, such as fair compensation to informal waste workers, are operationalised.
- Promoting entrepreneurship by addressing barriers for micro and small enterprises and enabling access to infrastructure.
- Deepening linkages between informal waste workers and industry and the so-called informal and formal economies in the waste and circular economy.
- Enabling informal waste workers to move along the value chain to aspects of the waste and circular economy beyond collection. In particular, this action would positively impact women informal waste workers, who predominantly occupy the end of the plastics value chain where the least economic value accrues.
- Providing skills training to informal waste workers for enhanced materials recovery and valorisation.

**Case study** Integration into a collective market system in Buenos Aires

In **Buenos Aires**, Argentina, 2,000 informal waste workers from the Amanecer de los Cartoneros cooperative were integrated into the collective market system. Through this process, informal waste workers were provided with access to:

- designated collection points;
- delivery of materials to centralised trucks;
- packaging and sorting at processing plants; and
- direct sales to factories, increasing prices by up to 40% per kilogram.<sup>79</sup>

Click [here](#) to learn more about this process.

**Case study** Entrepreneurship programmes in Dar es Salaam

**Dar es Salaam** is co-developing organic waste entrepreneurship with informal waste workers, enabling them to convert organic waste into compost or animal feed. This initiative builds informal waste workers' skills, creates new income opportunities, and strengthens value chain linkages. It also reduces the amount of waste that is sent to dumpsites or burned, thereby cutting methane emissions, improving air quality, and lowering flood risks.<sup>80</sup>

**Step 5: Promote social protection**

*"...in many cases cities would need to specifically lobby regional and national government departments to include informal waste workers as a target group for social protection benefits."*

Social integration involves promoting safeguards, social insurance, and protection measures. However, social protection mechanisms often exist at the regional or national level, or are supported by civil society or the private sector. While cities can invest in or facilitate access to these mechanisms – for example by issuing ID cards where these are necessary to access social protection – in many cases cities would need to specifically lobby regional and national government departments to include informal waste workers as a target group for social protection benefits.

Cities can establish what social protections are available for informal waste workers. For example, they can:

- Work with regional and national governments and CSOs to improve informal workers' access to basic services, such as healthcare and childcare, pension schemes, workers' compensation and social security, or retirement savings programmes.
- Work with national and international informal-sector-focused organisations, to develop informal waste worker cooperatives and improve access to basic services and guaranteed financial support where cooperatives are established.
- Explore innovative partnerships and mechanisms by thinking beyond traditional social protection and insurance, and leveraging cities' unique position to bridge gaps between national systems, private services, and the community.

There are some categories, such as early childhood development and primary healthcare, where cities may have existing mandates and can directly develop or enable informal waste workers' access to these services. For example:

- City public health departments can partner with a local hospital or NGO to establish scheduled, rotating mobile clinics located directly at or near sorting centres or established collection routes. These clinics could provide vaccinations, basic primary care, wound care, and specialised occupational health and safety screenings. During the clinic visit, social workers could also use the informal waste worker cooperative's membership data to enrol workers

in the national social health insurance scheme on-site, eliminating the need for workers to take time off to visit a bureaucratic office.

- Cities can issue childcare vouchers to registered informal waste workers. The city’s social services department (or equivalent) could partner with CBOs and informal waste worker associations to explore opportunities to subsidise the provision of safe, regulated childcare during work hours and to offer basic early childhood education to the children of informal waste workers.
- Cities can establish an incentive programme to support access to education. For example, cities could consider partnering with the national ministry of education, local school boards, and informal waste worker associations or cooperatives to create a performance-based educational subsidy linked to cooperatives’ verified recycling or organic waste treatment volume. For every ton of recyclables collected above a baseline, the cooperatives would earn educational credits or vouchers for its members’ families, to cover costs that prevent school attendance, such as school uniforms, compulsory textbooks, transportation fees, or tutoring.
- Cities can prioritise informal waste workers for public housing or rental or services subsidies.
- Cities can provide informal waste workers with access to information about social protection mechanisms through outreach programmes and via participatory processes, enabling them to access services that are not within the city’s mandate.

**Case study** **Childcare for informal waste workers in Buenos Aires**

In the early 2000s, informal waste workers in **Buenos Aires** worked under very difficult conditions – often bringing their children to sorting sites because there was nowhere safe to leave them. Women informal waste workers, in particular, had to keep their children with them late into the night, from 5 p.m. until midnight. To address this, in 2009, the **Movimento dos Trabalhadores Excluídos** partnered with informal waste workers to create the **Children’s Leisure and**

**Learning Centres** – the first childcare facilities designed for informal waste workers’ families. These centres provide free, safe childcare, improving both working conditions and family wellbeing. Today, more than 870 families benefit from nurturing care that reduces child labour, enables women to work longer and safer hours, and promotes gender equality.<sup>81</sup>

**Case study** **Accessing social protection in Accra**

In 2024 the **Accra Metropolitan Assembly**, with support from C40, registered 205 informal waste workers under the aYo Ghana Health Insurance Scheme for one year. For the duration of the scheme, registered informal waste workers will have access to a wide range of healthcare services – including medical consultations, diagnostic tests, medications, and emergency care – without bearing any financial burden.<sup>82</sup>

**Stakeholders** – including city officials, informal waste workers, and ecosystem experts – had highlighted social insurance as a key mechanism to strengthen resilience within the informal waste sector during the city’s needs assessment. This programme aimed to support workers during socioeconomic shocks or climate impacts such as extreme heat and flooding, while also demonstrating to development partners the potential of social insurance to help informal waste workers manage the effects of climate change.<sup>83</sup>

**Step 6: Consider EPR as part of integration**

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) refers to the philosophy that product manufacturers should take responsibility for their products throughout their life cycle. However, EPR measures can unintentionally disrupt waste management systems and negatively affect informal waste workers by increasing competition for valuable recyclables, creating barriers to formal inclusion, and potentially displacing existing informal collection networks. EPR processes are often not inclusive of informal waste workers.<sup>84</sup>

Cities can lobby for legislation to make integrating informal waste workers mandatory within relevant EPR processes. Under such legislation, producers of packaging and other recyclable products would be required to take responsibility not only for the environmental management of their waste but also for the workers who recover it. It would require producers to formally engage informal waste workers – often through cooperatives – for collection, sorting, and transport of recyclables; and providing fair remuneration, protective equipment, and social protections. This approach both recognises the essential contribution of informal waste workers and secures their livelihoods, while increasing waste diversion, organic waste treatment, and recycling rates and reducing municipal waste management costs.

Other steps cities can consider include training for informal waste workers and officials on inclusive EPR practices, and involving producer responsibility organisations and other industry bodies in working groups and integration processes. (See [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#).)

Link

Involving informal waste workers in EPR programmes supports data collection and material traceability as informal waste workers often have experience with waste characterisation and brand audits. Informal waste worker groups can play a key role as partners in gathering and managing this information.<sup>85</sup>

**Tip**

**Key recommendations for integrating informal waste workers into EPR systems:**

- map stakeholders early;
- mandate transparency for payments and materials;
- safeguard existing stakeholders and their livelihoods;
- establish a governance mechanism that oversees government, the private sector, and informal waste workers; and
- design robust reporting requirements to heighten accountability.<sup>86</sup>

**Case study** **EPR policy for including informal waste workers in Chile**

In Chile, *Ley No. 20.920, Ministry of Environment 92016* represents a good example of inclusive EPR legislation, establishing a waste management framework that recognises informal waste workers and promotes their inclusion in EPR systems.<sup>87</sup>

Informal waste workers who are listed on the national register are eligible to participate in the waste management system, with the objective of achieving the targets established by the relevant decree. To register, informal waste workers must obtain certification through the National System of Certification of Labour Competences. This ensures that informal waste workers possess the necessary skills and qualifications to contribute fully and effectively within the system.

Systems operators are required to prepare an inclusion plan detailing the mechanisms and tools that will be employed to support informal waste workers through training, financing, and other measures that facilitate their inclusion in the waste management system.<sup>88</sup>

**Case study** **Involvement of *catadores* in materials collection in Brazil**

In Brazil a reverse logistics programme, mandated by *Law 12.305/2010*, requires industries that produce packaging to invest in the collection and return of post-consumer materials, with a strong emphasis on involving *catadores*. Under this programme, *catador* cooperatives handle sorting, compressing, baling, and selling recovered recyclables to the recycling industry, and in some cases provide selective collection services.

In return, industries support the cooperatives through the provision of cargo vehicles, equipment, improvements to sorting warehouses, training, and environmental education for cooperative members. Where cooperatives already have adequate management and production capacity, industries may provide payment per ton of recovered material to ensure fair compensation and continued participation in the recycling value chain.<sup>89</sup>

**Case study** **Legislating for waste management plans in South Africa**

South Africa has historical precedent for both voluntary and mandatory EPR programmes. *The National Environmental Management: Waste Act 59 of 2008* requires industry to obtain government approval for their waste management plans. EPR regulations were gazetted in 2020 and revised in May 2021.<sup>90</sup> They require industry producer responsibility organisations to pay a service fee to informal waste workers registered on the South Africa Waste Picker Registration System and to support informal waste worker integration programmes.

**Step 7: Include informal waste worker social plans in projects for decommissioning landfills**

Cities face a paradox: decommissioning landfills and open dumps is vital for climate action, environmental protection, and public health. However, because informal waste workers are deeply integrated into existing disposal systems, poorly planned closures can cause major livelihood losses and deepen existing inequalities.

A just transition – built on recognition of their role, meaningful participation, social protection, and clear pathways into safer and better-paid positions within new waste systems – is essential to ensure that decommissioning delivers both environmental benefits and social justice. This requires that cities develop social plans for informal waste workers affected by decommissioning – and that these are integral to the project from the design phase. Cities must also ensure that programmes that follow from landfill closure – such as incineration or separation at source – include informal waste workers so that they retain access to waste and or/roles in the future management of waste.<sup>91</sup>

An integrated just transition approach to landfill management involves:

- Mapping the lifespans of urban landfill sites. This can help cities plan for social programmes that support informal waste workers who may be affected by closures.

- Partnering with informal waste workers, academics, and researchers in studies and assessments that lead to planning for landfill decommissioning. Informal waste workers must be part of the research processes that inform such plans.
- Assessing the number of informal waste workers affected, their income levels, and the extent of their dependency on landfill work.
- Estimating the value of their environmental services (diverted tonnages, avoided disposal costs, emissions reductions) to inform fair compensation and ongoing remuneration.
- Engaging with informal waste workers in the design of strategies and plans around landfill closure, including plans to protect informal waste workers from losing their livelihoods.
- Sequencing closures to align with the rollout of alternative livelihood options, rather than closing first and planning later.

**Case study** **Closure of landfill site in Brasilia**

In **Brasilia**, the 2018 closure of the Estrutural dump posed significant challenges for informal waste workers. Recognising this, the government established a working group to support informal waste workers in transitioning to other facilities. The group also helped informal waste workers form organisations, which was necessary to work as service providers for the government. This case study has been documented and offers guidance for other cities (see [here](#)).

A monitoring committee, comprising WIEGO and respected Brazilian sanitation institutions, was created to ensure that environmental remediation and social protections advanced together. Multiple participatory platforms were set up, enabling informal waste workers to shape key decisions related to the closure and future waste management arrangements. Through extensive participatory planning and monitoring, informal waste workers were able to maintain their livelihoods while gaining access to safe working spaces and health programmes, particularly for women. This approach not only protected informal waste workers' livelihoods but also generated environmental benefits.<sup>92</sup>

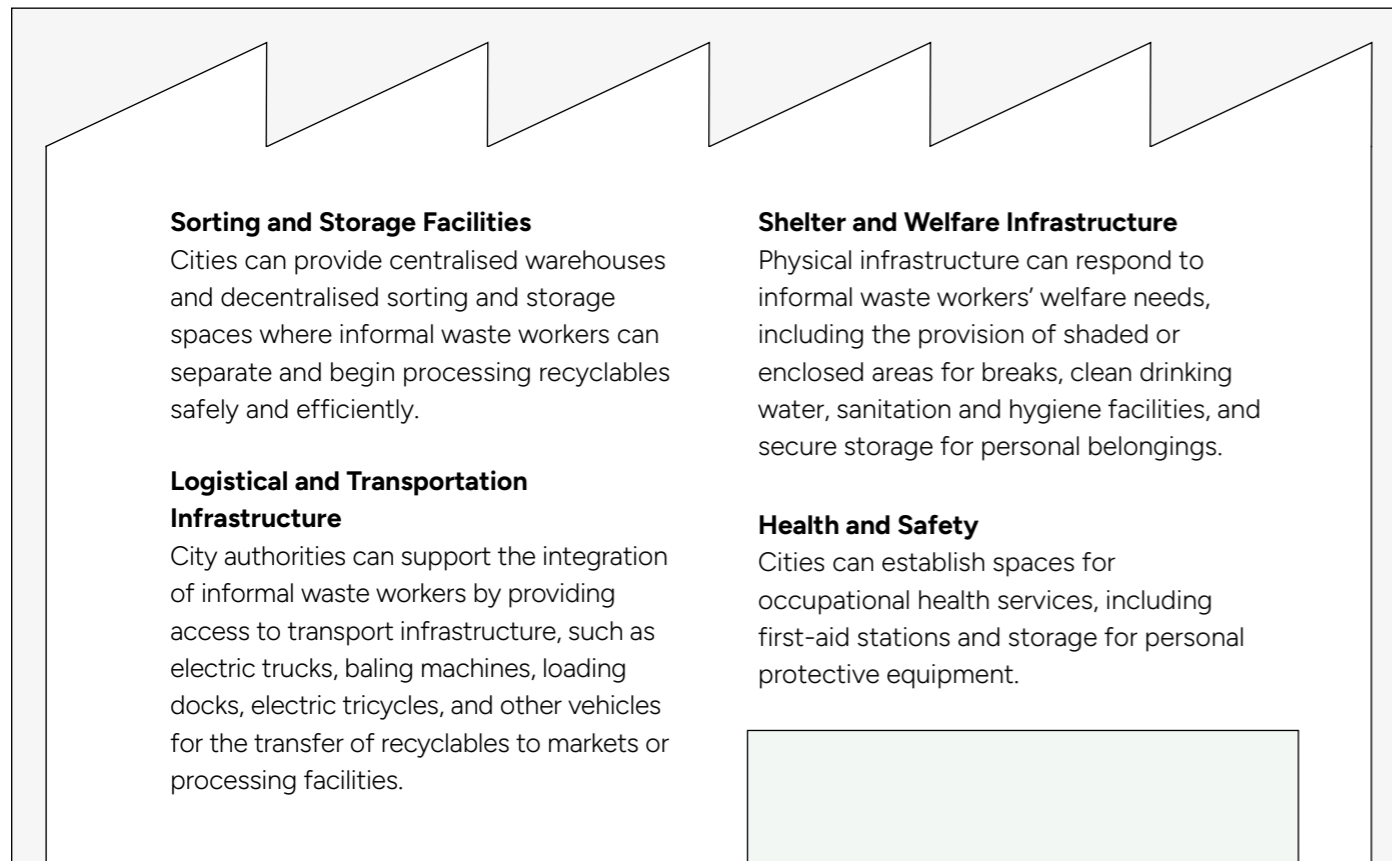
**Focus**

**Roadmap for decommissioning landfills**

The International Solid Waste Association has developed a roadmap for closing waste dumpsites, which includes addressing the needs of informal waste workers and ensuring plans for their inclusion and livelihoods are in place. Find out more [here](#).

**Step 8: Determine and provide physical infrastructure needs**

Cities can take the lead in providing for – or enabling the provision of – space and infrastructure to support informal waste worker integration and improve working conditions. Some examples of this are shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9.** Providing space and infrastructure to support informal waste workers

**Case study**

**Recycling facility serves informal waste worker needs in Durban**

The **Durban** Palmer Street Recycling facility in South Africa was created to support informal waste workers through the combined efforts of an NGO (Asiye e Tafuleni) and the city government. Established on land donated by the city, the recycling facility provides a high-quality environment, giving informal waste workers access to services (toilets, electricity, water), basic storage facilities, and space for waste transport vehicles.<sup>93</sup>

**Case study**

**Sorting centres provide weather protection in Belo Horizonte**

**Belo Horizonte** has established cooperatively managed sorting centres equipped with basic material handling tools, weighing scales, and covered storage areas, which enable informal waste workers to operate year-round, protected from rain and extreme sun.<sup>94</sup>

**Case study**

**Equipment enhances working conditions and efficiency in Fortaleza**

**Fortaleza's "Re-Ciclo"** project supports informal waste workers by formalising their work, improving working conditions, and increasing the city's recycling rates. It also includes the provision of official uniforms and electric tricycles. The initiative has been successful, increasing informal waste workers' incomes and improving community recognition.<sup>95</sup>

## Programme 2

### Climate adaptation and resilience

#### Step 1: Incorporate climate adaptation measures in informal waste worker programmes

*"Informal waste workers' vulnerability to the climate crisis [includes] direct risks from extreme weather events... indirect health impacts... infrastructure disruption... and socioeconomic consequences..."*

This step requires an analysis of current and anticipated climate threats, such as extreme heat, floods, or droughts. Specifically, it requires identifying actions that can address the challenges climate change poses to informal waste workers. Informal waste workers' vulnerability to the climate crisis is multifaceted, including direct risks from extreme weather events (e.g. heat, floods); indirect health impacts (e.g. air pollution, disease); infrastructure disruption (e.g. damaged facilities); and socioeconomic consequences (e.g. livelihood disruption, job displacement). Cities can conduct a climate-focussed vulnerability assessment to map factors around local informal waste workers' exposure to hazards, the extent of their sensitivity to those hazards, and their capacity to adapt. This mapping helps in designing targeted policies for climate-resilient development and adaptation.

Cities can also take steps to align sustainable waste management, social and economic inclusion, and informal waste worker integration efforts with city-level climate adaptation goals and interventions included in the Climate Action Plan. As cities develop or review their Climate Action Plans, they can take proactive steps to build better climate resilience measures by:

- consulting all stakeholders, including informal waste workers, to assess risks and vulnerabilities;
- implementing policies to protect workers during extreme heat, floods, and other climate-related events;
- enacting local legislation and advocating for stronger protections at national and subnational levels;<sup>96</sup> and
- considering what physical and social infrastructure – such as climate protected workspaces – could support informal waste workers in climate-related extreme weather events.

#### Case study **Fortaleza's prize winning Re-Ciclo project**

**Fortaleza's** Re-Ciclo project, awarded the WRI Ross Prize for Accelerating Momentum for Climate-Ready Communities in 2023/2024, transformed waste management in the city. Historically, Fortaleza had low recycling rates (only 6%) and had no recycling programme, so most waste went to landfills. Before 2021, informal waste workers collected recyclables using hand-drawn carts and faced exclusion and multiple occupational hazards due to a lack of proper equipment and support.

Developed by the Fortaleza Innovation Laboratory (LABIFOR) in consultation with the city's informal waste workers, Re-Ciclo introduced a door-to-door recycling programme using electric tricycles. These electric tricycles allow informal waste workers to transport up to 150 kilograms at one time and travel greater distances.<sup>97</sup> Recycling was professionalised, with the city collaborating directly with informal waste workers instead of private providers. A network of eco-points serve as collection hubs, managed by informal waste worker associations that handle salaries, personal protective equipment, data collection, and tricycle operations. Residents register online, and Re-Ciclo workers collect separated recyclables directly from their homes.

The programme has had a major impact: better waste management and a structured collection system help reduce the amount of waste reaching the landfill site. Informal waste worker earnings increased by 500% due to fixed wages and higher recyclable sales, and city recycling rates improved. Recycling rates in Fortaleza have increased by 541%.<sup>98</sup> With 85% of the city's informal waste workers being women, the programme also brought broader community benefits, including positive effects for children.<sup>99</sup>

Below are some examples of specific climate adaptation measures cities can consider implementing to enhance climate resilience among informal waste workers and their communities:

- Improving awareness and extreme weather early warning systems through systematic monitoring, and providing training to informal waste workers in response procedures – including emergency measures – as well as self-care and collective-care skills.

- Investing in climate-sensitive workplace infrastructure by improving drainage, flood-resistant storage, ventilation, and recycling equipment, with input from informal waste workers.
- Strengthening access to climate-sensitive social protection and services with safety nets like emergency cash and food, integrated with early warning systems.
- Providing informal waste workers with accessible information on climate change and adaptation strategies, through co-produced content and training. Civil society organisations can be good partners to supply this information, while cooperatives and other informal waste worker networks can play a key role in facilitating access to information for informal waste workers.
- Providing informal waste workers with appropriate personal protective equipment, including lightweight, breathable uniforms, hats, and sunglasses.
- Providing cooling centres and water access and expanding access to public spaces with air conditioning, drinking water, and restrooms to help protect workers during extreme heat.
- Establishing a monitoring system for climate-change impacts on informal waste workers, involving multiple stakeholders to map and assess adaptations. Consider partnering with research institutions to analyse data, identify trends, and propose evidence-based solutions.

**Case study**

**Including informal waste workers in the development of Climate Action Plans in Bengaluru**

In **Bengaluru**, India, the city’s Climate Action Plan includes measures to integrate and support informal waste workers as part of a just and inclusive climate strategy. Bengaluru’s climate action plan actively included informal waste workers through a multi-pronged approach. The city began with extensive stakeholder engagement, mapping all actors in the waste value chain and using participatory workshops and interviews to incorporate the lived experiences of marginalised informal waste workers. It implemented capacity-building and training programmes for both city officials and waste workers, covering inclusive climate action, equitable waste management,

and worker welfare. The plan focused on supportive infrastructure, exploring storage, sorting, and collection facilities to reduce the physical burden on informal waste workers.

A clear monitoring and evaluation framework tracks health, wellbeing, compliance with labour standards, and provision of protective equipment. Bengaluru also worked on formalising the roles and recognition of informal waste workers within municipal systems, ensuring their inclusion in ward-level planning and decision-making forums. Finally, a structured social dialogue process with frontline workers co-created solutions to improve working conditions, service delivery, and ensure informal waste workers’ voices guide reforms.<sup>100</sup>

**Case study**

**Cities commit to building climate resilience in Brazil**

In Brazil, the Belo Horizonte Municipal Waste and Citizenship Forum (FMLC) and the state government committed to taking action to build climate resilience after a study showed that 90% of Brazilian informal waste workers experienced the impact of climate-related extreme weather.<sup>101</sup>

To find out more about this initiative, click [here](#).

**Case study**

**Collecting climate vulnerability data at sorting centres in Brazil**

In Belo Horizonte, WIEGO is geo-referencing sorting centres using city climate vulnerability data to map risks such as heat and flooding to informal waste worker work infrastructure.

By doing this, they are building a data-driven case for targeted adaptation investments. Across Brazil, WIEGO and its industry partner ABIPHEC monitor extreme weather events in six cities and collect data on weather impacts on work infrastructure, equipment, and income. This information guides city adaptation committees, such as Belo Horizonte’s, ensuring that policy reflects workers’ lived experiences.<sup>102</sup>

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

**TOOL: Checklist for inclusion of informal waste workers' concerns in climate resilience strategies**

- What existing climate resilience measures are in place in the city?
- Has the city mapped the specific vulnerabilities of informal waste workers to climate change?
- How are informal waste workers explicitly included in the existing climate resilience measures?
- Have informal waste workers been consulted in the development/ review of Climate Action Plans?
- How can we strengthen inclusion of informal waste worker integration in local government climate resilience measures?
- How can we access climate finance and how do we link it with informal waste worker work?

**Programme 3**

Ensure gender equity and the inclusion of marginalised groups

**Step 1**

Recognise the challenges facing women informal waste workers

**Step 2**

Recognise the challenges of internal and cross-border migrants

**Step 3**

Strengthen the integration of migrant informal waste workers

In many cities, women and migrant informal waste workers suffer greater stigmatisation. In some countries, a large proportion of informal waste workers come from historically marginalised racial or caste groups, while others are local or transnational migrants, which further compounds their stigmatisation and social exclusion. Issues and challenges that informal waste

**Link**

workers face because of their gender, ethnicity, race, caste, and/ or migrant status should be specifically addressed as part of the integration process. ([See Action 2: Step 4: Design stakeholder engagement strategies.](#))

In addition, research from across the Global South shows that women informal waste workers often face more challenges than their male counterparts. They tend to earn less, have poorer working conditions, and are treated more unfairly. Studies from Latin America show that women often do different types of recycling work – such as sorting or cleaning – and also carry the main responsibility for childcare and household tasks.

Within cooperatives, women are sometimes given lower-status roles or excluded from decision-making. Cities should therefore recognise these gendered inequalities and take active steps to support women informal waste workers through fair pay, leadership opportunities, and programmes that help balance care and work responsibilities.

**Focus**

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is essential to understanding the vulnerabilities of informal waste workers. Migrant women informal waste workers experience the challenges faced by all women informal waste workers – such as gender-based discrimination, exposure to unsafe working conditions, and limited access to social protection – *in addition to* the barriers associated with migration, including insecure legal status, limited access to services, and heightened risk of harassment.

Similarly, women informal waste workers who belong to racially marginalised or lower-caste groups face compounded forms of exclusion, where gender intersects with race, ethnicity, or caste to further restrict their opportunities and protections.

Cities must recognise that these overlapping identities intensify disadvantage. Urban policies and programmes should therefore be designed to actively alleviate these multiple, intersecting burdens by ensuring equal access, targeted support, and inclusive decision-making for all informal waste workers.

## Step 1: Recognise the challenges facing women informal waste workers

This step requires an analysis of the challenges and demands expressed by women informal waste workers.<sup>103</sup>

It is essential that women are proactively given a voice in the process. Experiences will differ according to local contexts, but challenges could include: limited access to materials, lack of access to ablution facilities, disproportionate burden of care responsibilities and limited access to affordable childcare facilities, male-biased technology and PPE, greater risk of violence (including gender-based violence), and exclusion from leadership in informal waste worker organisations, among others.<sup>104</sup>

Link

Link

This analysis should form part of the data collection and needs assessments undertaken in [Action 1, Step 3: Build a database](#) and [Action 2, Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment](#). Cities can increase the visibility of women informal waste workers and their specific challenges by hosting dedicated focus groups with women informal waste workers; they can also offer platforms for these women to speak about their work, grievances, and solutions within stakeholder forums and other engagements and negotiations that cities host around integration.

Cities can take concrete, practical steps to ensure women are included and benefit from integration efforts:

Link

- **Conduct gender-disaggregated data collection and participatory research:** When undertaking stakeholder mapping and needs assessment of informal waste workers (see [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#)), differentiate between genders to understand the specific nature of women’s informal waste work – who is working, where, and in what roles; what are their incomes; how do they use their time; what risks do they face and what safety measures do they take.
- **Develop targeted training and leadership programmes:** Provide training in cooperative management, financial skills, health and safety, and advocacy. Schedule sessions and choose locations that accommodate women’s care responsibilities.

- **Remove barriers to participation:** Offer childcare services (on-site or nearby), flexible meeting times, and transport assistance so women can safely attend training, meetings, and work longer hours if needed.
- **Ensure fair access to infrastructure and markets:** Give priority to women-led groups when allocating sorting spaces, storage areas, protective equipment, and access to recycling, organic waste treatment, and other waste treatment and waste revaluation facilities to help them improve income and material quality.
- **Use contracts to promote gender equity:** Include social and gender-sensitive clauses in waste collection, organic waste treatment, recycling, and other waste treatment and waste revaluation contracts, to favour women-led cooperatives or require fair employment practices.
- **Address gender hierarchies within cooperatives:** Support governance reforms, leadership quotas, and mentorship programmes that ensure women share equally in decision-making and resource control.
- **Integrate gender into monitoring and budgeting:** Track progress through gender-sensitive indicators such as income gaps, leadership representation, time use, and safety. Allocate dedicated funds for women-focused measures like childcare, training, and PPE. (See [Action 6: Mobilising resources](#) and [Action 7: Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning](#).)
- **Partner with women’s organisations and unions:** Work with women’s groups, labour unions, and feminist researchers to co-design programmes and ensure accountability in gender inclusion.

Link

Link

### Case study **Discussing gender issues in Minas Gerais**

The WIEGO (2015) [Women Waste Pickers Toolkit](#) presents the findings from four workshops held with women informal waste workers in **Mina Gerais**. The toolkit highlights some of the specific problems encountered by women informal waste workers and suggests approaches to address gender issues.

**Case study** Supporting women informal waste workers in Addis Ababa

In **Addis Ababa**, a gender-focused waste sector needs assessment, conducted with C40 support, highlighted the importance of social security and insurance programmes in enhancing socioeconomic resilience – particularly for women informal waste workers, who often face additional gender-based exclusion.<sup>105</sup>

**Case study** Supporting marginalised groups in Accra

During social engagement processes between the city and informal waste workers in **Accra**, unique challenges faced by informal waste workers, particularly migrants and women, also came to light. To support migrants, the city facilitated access to financial aid, healthcare, and childcare. For women, efforts focused on helping those in lower-value chains to negotiate better contracts and to form cooperatives to sell recycled materials and increase their income. The city also began addressing barriers to caregiving services and improving gender-inclusive sanitation facilities to meet women’s needs.<sup>106</sup>

**Step 2: Recognise the challenges of internal and cross-border migrants**

Migrant informal waste workers often face unique and compounded challenges due to their status. These include:

- **Legal and social exclusion:** Many internal and cross-border migrants lack official documentation, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This lack of recognition often leads to exclusion from social services and legal protections.
- **Discrimination and stigmatisation:** Both internal and cross-border migrants in the informal waste workforce frequently encounter societal stigma and discrimination, which can hinder their access to resources and opportunities.
- **Economic vulnerability:** Both internal and cross-border migrants also often work under the most precarious conditions, earning lower wages.

Recognising these challenges is the first step towards developing inclusive policies that address the specific needs of migrant informal waste workers.

**Case study** Migrant informal waste workers in Bengaluru

In **Bengaluru**, India, a significant proportion (77%) of informal waste workers identified as migrants fall within the age range of 18 to 40 years. Furthermore, 72% of these migrant informal waste workers are men, in contrast to only 41% of the non-migrant informal waste workforce. Sanitation access is another area where disparities are evident: among migrant informal waste workers, 60% do not have access to toilets, compared to only 10% among non-migrant informal waste workers.<sup>107</sup>

Building a comprehensive understanding of migrant informal waste workers – and ensuring their inclusion within integration processes – involves similar actions to those aimed at women informal waste workers. These include:

- **Data collection and research:** Conducting focused surveys and studies to gather data on the demographics, working conditions, and needs of migrant informal waste workers. This will provide crucial data for informed decision-making and policy development. Cities could also ensure that general data-seeking activities, especially at the city level, incorporate disaggregated enquiries into migration dynamics among informal waste workers.
- **Engagement with migrant communities:** Collaborating with migrant organisations and community leaders to understand their perspectives and challenges to ensure that policies are relevant and effective.
- **Capacity building:** Providing training and resources to both migrant informal waste workers and city officials to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. This can include workshops on rights, safety standards, and waste management practices.

### Step 3: Strengthen the integration of migrant informal waste workers

To effectively integrate both internal and cross-border migrant informal waste workers, the stakeholder working group (SWG) should incorporate relevant actions in the city's integration plan. These could include:

- **Legal recognition and documentation:** Facilitating the registration of migrant informal waste workers and providing official identification cards to grant them legal recognition and access to services.
- **Access to social protection:** Ensuring that migrant informal waste workers have access to the health care, social security, and other welfare programmes rightfully available to them – either at national or subnational levels.
- **Social cohesion programmes:** Establishing initiatives that promote social inclusion and cohesion between migrant and local communities, reducing discrimination and fostering mutual respect. (See [Action 4: Developing informal waste worker support programmes: Programme 1: Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment and recycling value chains.](#))

Link

#### Case study Inclusion of migrants in Bengaluru and Dar es Salaam

In **Bengaluru**, informal waste worker organisations and NGOs leverage the federal programme to ensure that internal migrant informal waste workers from other states receive access to federal social protection programmes, including schooling.

With backing from the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees, the city of **Dar es Salaam** has enabled migrants and refugees to access green jobs in the waste sector. The city trained 239 internal migrants and refugees as waste collectors and sorters, supported the creation of five sustainable waste processing cooperatives, and fostered connections among these cooperatives and with private companies.<sup>108</sup>

#### Case study Thinking creatively in Accra

The **Accra Metropolitan Assembly** enabled cross-border migrant informal waste workers to acquire driving licences for motorised scooters, which they use to collect materials.

One of the requirements of the licensing process is a computer-based test; however, most of the migrant informal waste workers do not have the necessary education or skills to take this test. City officials negotiated with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority to waive the computer-based testing and to concentrate instead on practical testing of informal waste workers' driving ability.

Through this process over 200 migrant waste workers obtained licences; this was doubly empowering as without licences they had faced a lot of harassment from police.<sup>109</sup>

#### Programme 4

##### Redress caste and racial injustices

###### Step 1

Strengthen understanding of the impact of caste and race

###### Step 2

Design integration measures to redress caste-based and racial injustices

Across many cities in the Global South, social hierarchies – especially those based on caste in South Asia and on race/ethnicity in parts of Latin America and Africa – strongly shape the context of who engages in informal waste work, how they work, and what opportunities are available to them. These entrenched axes of inequality influence access to safe collection sites, bargaining power with brokers, social recognition, and the possibility of moving into safer or better-paid work.<sup>110</sup>

## Step 1: Strengthen understanding of the impact of caste and race

This step involves cities building a comprehensive understanding of the impact of caste and race through:

— **Data collection and research:** Conducting focused surveys and studies to gather data on the demographics, working conditions, and specific needs of informal waste workers impacted by discrimination based on their caste and race. This data is crucial for informed decision-making and policy development and links to the stakeholder mapping outlined in [Action 2, Step 2: Build a stakeholder map and conduct a needs assessment](#).

Link

— **Engagement with communities:** Collaborating with organisations and community leaders to understand their perspectives and challenges. This engagement ensures that policies are relevant and effective.

— **Capacity building:** Providing training and resources to affected informal waste workers and city officials to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. This can include workshops on rights, safety standards, and waste management practices.

— **Legal recognition and documentation:** Facilitating the registration of informal waste workers and providing official identification cards to grant them legal recognition and access to services.

— **Access to social protection:** Ensuring that informal waste workers have access to the health care, social security, and other welfare programmes rightfully available to them – either at national or subnational levels.

— **Social cohesion programmes:** Establishing initiatives that promote social inclusion and cohesion between informal waste workers, reducing discrimination and fostering mutual respect. (See [Action 4: Developing informal waste worker support programmes: Programme 1: Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment and recycling value chains](#).)

Link

### Tip

While changing deep-rooted inequalities around caste will take time, one of the most effective immediate measures is to issue official ID cards to informal waste workers.<sup>111</sup> ID cards provide visibility and by-pass traditional local power structures, giving all informal waste workers an equal claim to waste picking.

## Step 2: Design integration measures to redress caste-based and racial injustices

Evidence points to several practical measures that can reduce the caste-/race-based penalty on informal waste workers' livelihoods, including formal recognition (e.g. ID cards and city registration); inclusion in city procurement and payment schemes; support for cooperatives and unions (which improve bargaining power); health and safety provisions; and anti-discrimination enforcement, together with skills and education programmes. These measures work best when combined – legal recognition without market access or PPE without price stabilisation, for example, produce limited gains.<sup>112</sup>



Women informal workers sorting plastic at informal recycling hub in Accra

Action 5

# Developing an informal waste worker integration plan

This action involves cities developing a comprehensive informal waste worker integration plan that maps out the specific tasks required.

It includes undertaking participatory approaches to the planning, design, implementation, and ongoing monitoring/review of the city’s operational strategy for integrating informal waste workers.

**Step 1**

Develop an informal waste worker integration plan

**Step 2**

Institutionalise informal waste worker integration

**Step 3**

Develop an implementation strategy

**Step 4**

Develop a strategy for scaling up integration

**Step 5**

Develop accountability mechanisms

## Step 1: Develop an informal waste worker integration plan

*“This foundational phase will also facilitate learnings and improved decision-making before the initiative is expanded into a city-wide strategy.”*

Cities should start their informal waste worker integration process with a pilot project. By implementing the approach on a limited scale, whether in a targeted geographic area – such as informal settlements or under-served neighbourhoods that are not covered by formal waste collection, but where informal waste workers are active – or by focusing on specific thematic sectors like plastics, organic waste, market waste, or door-to-door services, cities can build experience and gather valuable insights. This foundational phase will also facilitate learnings and improved decision-making before the initiative is expanded into a city-wide strategy.

### Components of an informal waste worker integration plan

The plan should include:

- overall aims, objectives, and principles;
- specific targets and milestones;
- a list of intended outputs;
- an analysis of existing and planned organic waste treatment and recycling systems, including a clear understanding of any challenges and negative effects that programmes might cause for informal waste workers;
- actions planned to mitigate, rectify, or redress any negative effects caused by existing municipal waste management, waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling, and other waste treatment and revaluation programmes;
- details of planned new municipal waste management, recycling and informal-waste-worker-specific programmes;
- proposals for alignment with existing city plans and policies, or for the introduction of new plans and policies that promote integration;
- capacity-building plans and strategies;

- stakeholder engagement strategies;
- operational action plans;
- a clear budget;
- clear timelines and allocation of roles and responsibilities;
- lines of responsibility and accountability for implementation; and
- monitoring and evaluation procedures and commitments.

**Focus**

**Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa**

The Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa<sup>113</sup> recommends that working group members come together to develop an informal waste worker integration plan that includes:

- programmes to divert recyclable and reusable materials away from landfill sites and actively build the recycling economy;
- steps to ensure informal waste workers are included in all decisions that impact them;
- plans for a holistic approach to integration that includes informal waste workers’ needs, such as access to health, education, and housing;
- plans for integrating informal waste workers and their separation-at-source system into the formal waste management system;
- steps to ensure that the livelihoods and working conditions of informal waste workers are improved and not harmed; and
- the collection and use of reliable data to support evidence-based decision making.<sup>114</sup>

**Step 2: Institutionalise informal waste worker integration**

The informal waste worker integration plan should be officially adopted by the city so it is recognised, funded, and implemented with accountability.

City officials can:

- identify which policies and programmes need updating to support informal waste worker integration;
- amend approved policies and programmes to align with the integration plan and its objectives where required;
- include informal waste worker integration in strategic documents such as city plans, waste management plans, climate action plans, and spatial development frameworks;
- make informal waste worker integration plan deliverables part of departmental responsibilities;
- ensure that new and core plans prioritise integration, with clear actions, targets, timelines, and budgets; and
- formally integrate the plan into the city’s strategic planning and annual budget preparation process, gaining approvals from both the city administration and elected officials.

**Step 3: Develop an implementation plan**

An implementation plan breaks the integration plan into clear, discrete operational tasks.

Considerations to keep in mind at this stage should include ensuring that:

- each task is assigned to a lead city department, with supporting departments playing an active and important role in the implementation;
- tasks are further divided into sub-tasks, with timelines for completion;

- the implementation plan is agreed upon by all partners and formally approved by the city, forming the basis for ongoing reporting and accountability;
- success criteria are developed to measure progress on tasks and achievement of the implementation plan's goals;
- reporting protocols and intervals are established; and
- a permanent informal waste worker integration committee oversees implementation, while a dedicated city internal task team holds formal responsibility (see [Action 2, Step 5: Establish a permanent informal waste worker integration committee \(IWWIC\)](#); [Action 1, Step 2: Establish an internal integration task team \(ITT\)](#).)

Link

Link

### Resource

The Inclusive Climate Action (ICA) Implementation Guide, available [here](#), is a valuable resource. It outlines a practical framework for integrating equity and inclusion into the implementation of climate projects, including a range of city case studies showcasing the implementation of inclusive climate action projects across the Global South.



Credit: Adobe

## Step 4: Develop a strategy for scaling up integration

If the initial integration plan included a pilot phase or was based on a limited geographical and/or thematic area, a scaling-up strategy can also be developed.

Aspects to consider and assess include:

- Which areas should be included in the scaling up?
- What new partnerships should be formed, or which existing partners should assist in the scaling up?
- What additional funding is required?
- What additional approvals are required? Approvals may be required at the city, regional, or national levels for scaling up and expansion projects, especially where cross-regional or transboundary projects are involved.
- What physical and social infrastructure is necessary to scale up the programme?
- What lessons have been learnt from the pilot and how can these be used to strengthen the scaling-up process?
- What timelines are realistic for the next phase of the integration process?

### Case study

#### Area-based interventions in Fortaleza

In **Fortaleza**, the Re-Ciclo programme was initially established as an area-based initiative focused on specific neighbourhoods. Plans are being made to scale the programme up to other parts of the city, but this requires additional physical and social infrastructure and new budgets.<sup>115</sup>

### Step 5: Develop accountability mechanisms

Successful and sustainable integration of informal waste workers is supported by clear systems that promote transparency, shared responsibility, and continuous feedback among all partners.

Examples of accountability measures include regular reporting, biannual and milestone-based reviews, and public report-back meetings, among others. These ensure that the integration plan's commitments are met, resources are used effectively, progress is tracked and communicated openly, and a working template is created for potential replication or expansion.

The following checklist is designed to help city officials and their informal waste worker partners to evaluate the efficacy of their accountability mechanisms.

#### TOOL: Checklist for accountability

Indicate Yes or No for each question and add comments as needed.

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
1	Have city departments and partner organisations been allocated clear roles and responsibilities with measurable indicators?			
2	Have you developed transparent systems for reporting on progress?			
3	Have you ensured that informal waste workers and city officials participate actively in monitoring to ensure mutual accountability?			
4	Have you established independent oversight and evaluation mechanisms that include external stakeholders such as NGOs, academics, or others?			
5	Have you created instruments or processes to deal with feedback and grievances? Do you have channels, hotlines, help desks, or open forums?			
6	Have you developed performance-linked budgeting and incentives, such as departmental evaluations and specific recognition for departments that have established effective partnerships?			
7	Have you convened a yearly public review meeting with all stakeholders to discuss progress, share lessons, and update targets?			

### Action 6

## Mobilising resources

This action involves cities mobilising resources for informal waste worker integration by determining how to fund and support integration efforts.

#### Step 1

Determine how to resource and fund integration of informal waste workers

#### Step 2

Assess the availability of finance

### Step 1: Determine how to resource and fund integration of informal waste workers

The resourcing and funding of informal waste worker integration will involve accessing a combination of the city's own resources, donor funds, EPR funds, and climate finance, as well as cost recovery from the savings enabled through integration.

Funding is required for multiple tasks throughout the integration process. These include:

- **The integration process itself:** Funding secured from the city, government departments, donors, and private businesses (through EPR funding) to initiate and resource the integration process (including data management, capacity building, social protection, and so on).
- **Integration plan:** Funding and resources for the development of the integration plan and for components of specific integration programmes, such as issuing contracts for collection, sorting, recycling, or organic waste treatment managed by informal waste worker cooperatives.
- **Physical infrastructure and equipment:** Funding for the development of municipal waste infrastructure.

- **Ongoing costs:** Compensation for informal waste workers, insurance, continuous stakeholder and informal waste worker engagement activities and dialogues, etc.
- **Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.**

## Step 2: Assess the availability of finance

### Public finance

**City:** Accessing city budgets can be the most sustainable source of funding for both the overall integration plan and specific programmes. It is important to ensure that funding is allocated in continuous budgetary cycles.

Link

The sustainability of the implementation process will also benefit from active institutionalisation (see [Action 5, Step 2: Institutionalise informal waste worker integration](#)). Embedding the strategy in this way will help ensure funding and momentum is sustained across potential changes in political leadership and/or city priorities.

**National government:** Other levels of government can resource parts of the integration plan through national social protection schemes and other programmes. There might be additional opportunities for funding available through the Ministries of Environment, Planning and Urban Development.

Cities may also be able to access direct and/or indirect funding through international development partnerships for specific components of the integration plan, such as migration, gender, green jobs, and so on.

## Case study Formal recognition of informal waste workers in Belo Horizonte

**Belo Horizonte**, Brazil, formalised partnerships with informal waste worker cooperatives like ASMARE with funding structured through city and cooperative channels. The steps taken for accessing funding included:

- **Formal recognition:** Cooperatives were legally registered and recognised by the city’s Superintendence of Urban Cleansing (SLU), allowing them to participate in official waste collection programmes.
- **Negotiated agreements:** Cooperatives signed service contracts with the city, outlining roles, responsibilities, and operational budgets.
- **Infrastructure funding:** The city allocated funds for sorting centres, tools, and protective equipment, disbursed through the SLU and monitored via cooperative financial reports.
- **Multi-departmental support:** Social welfare departments contributed to funding for training, health insurance, and social protection, leveraging municipal and state-level budgets.
- **Direct financing:** A recycling bonus from the Minas Gerais state government (passed into law in 2012) is provided to informal waste workers based on the quantity and kind of recyclables collected and sold. Payments are made every three months from the State Treasury, and have had an important impact on the income of cooperative members.<sup>116</sup>

This structured approach ensured sustainable financing for the integration process, while recognising the social and environmental contributions of informal waste workers.<sup>117</sup>

**Case study** Formal recognition of informal waste workers in Pune

In **Pune**, India, the city’s integration of informal waste workers through the SWaCH cooperative demonstrates an effective combination of city, cooperative, and national funding. Steps included:

- Union mobilisation: The trade union KKPKP organised informal waste workers into a cooperative to formalise their operations.
- City contracting: Pune Municipal Corporation signed contracts with SWaCH to provide door-to-door collection services, with service fees forming a primary funding source.
- Supplementary national support: The NAMASTE scheme provided formal recognition, enabling access to social security benefits and government subsidies.
- Cost savings reinvestment: City savings from reduced conventional waste collection costs were redirected to support cooperative operations and training programmes.

This hybrid funding model enabled informal waste workers to operate sustainably while generating public savings.<sup>118</sup>

**Private sector finance**

**EPR funding** may be available directly to informal waste workers. This could be in the form of assistance with PPE requirements, the provision of physical infrastructure, payment of service fees, or direct cash support for recyclables collected by informal waste workers.

Producers’ corporate social responsibility budgets can also be used to directly support capacity building and other social services for informal waste workers.

Producer responsibility organisations (PROs) can provide compensation for informal waste workers in the form of fees for their collection services as well as the environmental benefit they provide, and can also use their influence in lobbying and advocacy for informal waste worker integration.<sup>119</sup>

**Case study** Payment of a service fee to informal waste workers

In South Africa, EPR regulations require industry PROs to pay a service fee to informal waste workers. In 2025, the infrastructure to make these payments electronically, based on the quantity of recyclables sold at participating buyback centres, was finalised, and payments are now commencing. The South African example highlights the importance of PROs allocating sufficient priority, resources, and capacity to implement payment schemes, and the necessity of partnering with informal waste worker organisations to create and roll out effective systems.<sup>120</sup>

**Global climate funding**

Cities can coordinate with national governments to access climate-related funds, both to help initiate informal waste worker integration processes and to support in their implementation. This requires waste and climate proposals to be written so that zero-waste systems, informal waste worker organisations, and just transition measures are central design features and funded components – not add-ons – of climate-financed urban waste projects. A 2024 publication by Cities Alliance analysed data from 22 climate funds, finding that only 3.5% of overall funds totalling US\$1.2 billion is going towards climate projects that assist vulnerable communities.<sup>121</sup>

The amount of available climate finance in general, while on the rise, remains severely insufficient and largely unfit for urban responses. Regions across the Global South, where informal work is most prevalent, see a huge funding vacuum for climate projects, with the largest gap being in adaptation and just transition actions.<sup>122</sup>

C40 research has also found that out of 63 global, national, regional, and private sources of finance and funding for climate action, only 16 were dedicated to just transition measures, and only three funds can be directly accessed by cities. This evidence demonstrates the critical importance and urgency of localising just transition finance in a way that meets cities’ needs to deliver local just transitions at scale, including the integration of informal waste workers.<sup>123</sup>

*“Regions across the Global South, where informal work is most prevalent, see a huge funding vacuum for climate projects...”*

C40's issue brief on [Informality and Green Transitions](#) explicitly urges that informal workers be integrated “by design” into just-transition, social protection, and other climate finance instruments, while its guidance on inclusive waste management and policy tools for informal waste workers stresses the need to use climate and urban finance to secure livelihoods and improve conditions for waste pickers as cities decarbonise.<sup>124</sup>

Even though options in general are still scarce and access is not always easy, one successful example of direct access seed funding is the C40 Cities [Inclusive Climate Action \(ICA\) Fund](#).<sup>125</sup> This funded **Dar es Salaam's** delivery of a pilot project to enhance organic waste management practices through worker engagement and capacity building. Further information on the C40 ICA Fund can be found [here](#). Inclusive municipal solid waste systems have also found financial support through the Mayors Migration Council's [Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees](#).

**Case study** Funding via climate-related awards in Fortaleza

**Fortaleza's** original funding for the Re-Ciclo initiative came through the TUMI Award in 2019, and it received further prize money from the World Resources Institute (WRI) Award. Support was also received from the private sector. As a result of this growing recognition, the project subsequently received direct funding from the city itself.<sup>126</sup>

**Case study** Global fund supports inclusivity in Accra

**Accra** has been a recipient of the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees for the institutional, social, and economic inclusion of migrants in the informal waste sector. In addition, Accra received C40-GIZ Cities Finance Facility support for the development of an integrated community-based waste management model.<sup>127</sup>

**Case study** International climate funds can support integration of informal waste workers

Several international climate funds can support the integration of informal waste workers into municipal waste systems if projects are deliberately designed to include them as core partners. The Green Climate Fund has supported urban waste projects, including flagship programmes in Southern Africa and Brazil, which could channel resources into informal waste-worker-led collection, sorting, and just-transition measures.<sup>128</sup>

Meanwhile, the Global Environment Facility has combined grants with World Bank financing to support integrated waste projects and landfill upgrades, a model that could explicitly fund informal waste worker cooperatives and improve working conditions while achieving methane reduction.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly, multilateral development bank initiatives, such as the World Bank's urban waste portfolio and the EBRD's Green Cities Facility, can embed indicators of informal waste worker inclusion alongside emissions reduction outcomes.<sup>130</sup> At the regional level, the DBSA Green Fund in South Africa finances climate-aligned municipal waste projects, including material recovery facilities.<sup>131</sup>



The launch of Dar es Salaam's Inclusive Climate Action Fund pilot project in 2023

Credit: Mazingira Plus

Action 7

# Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL)

This action involves cities establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems for informal waste worker integration, ensuring that these are embedded as ongoing activities across all other actions.

**Step 1**

Agree on the performance monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning process

**Step 2**

Develop frameworks and data tools for participatory monitoring and evaluation

**Step 3**

Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on waste management, including waste diverted from landfill sites

**Step 4**

Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on informal waste workers' quality of life

**Step 5**

Revise and update the informal waste worker integration plan

**Step 6**

Institutionalise the revised informal waste worker integration plan

## Step 1: Agree on the performance monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning process

The stakeholder working group (SWG) is responsible for reviewing the integration plan and the informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC) for its implementation (see [Action 2, Step 5: Establish a permanent informal waste worker integration committee](#)). This involves making sure that integration plans align with existing frameworks – such as the city's waste management plan, climate action plan, resilience strategies, and medium-term development plans – while maintaining sufficient internal technical capacity for ongoing implementation. Monitoring and evaluation also requires a dedicated budget.

Link

This task is particularly important, because it enables continuous assessment of the integration process and the use of data to improve performance over time. Robust monitoring systems help make visible the benefits generated for different city strategies and stakeholders – such as improved waste-collection coverage – and support stronger and broader political and public buy-in. For example, demonstrating measurable impacts and clear evidence of improved system efficiency makes it easier to access city budgets and for wider departments to support integration.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are most effective when they are participatory – that is, when stakeholders – especially those who are directly affected by a project or policy – actively participate in designing, implementing, and interpreting the evaluation. Rather than being passive subjects of assessment, participants contribute to defining evaluation questions, collecting and analysing data, and shaping conclusions and recommendations.

**Tip**

Baseline data will be needed for the various indicators and must be acquired at the beginning of relevant project components. This can be obtained as part of the needs assessment processes conducted in: [Action 1: Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers](#) and [Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders](#).

Link

Link

**TOOL: Checklist for developing a participatory monitoring and evaluation programme**

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
1	Have you developed all the required indicators to assess performance?			
2	Have you determined what methods should be used? And at what stages will the data be collected?			
3	Have you determined how data will be collected?			
4	Have you determined who will collect data?			
5	Have you determined how frequently evaluations should take place?			
6	Have you determined what monitoring systems should be put in place for daily/weekly/monthly/other monitoring?			
7	Have you determined what methods will be used to hold stakeholders accountable?			

**Tip**

**Regular reporting is key to ensuring accountability. Minimum requirements should include:**

- reporting to informal waste worker integration committee meetings;
- internal city reporting (if an approved programme exists on the city budget); and
- measuring programme performance on a quarterly basis to inform reporting.<sup>132</sup>

**Case study**

**Real-time data in Bengaluru**

**Bengaluru** found that monitoring mechanisms that track progress across waste management systems and provide real-time data to inform decision-making can be particularly valuable to ensure solutions are designed equitably and inclusively. The outcomes of these processes directly informed the city’s targeted interventions to support formal and informal frontline workers and others involved in waste management.<sup>133</sup>

**Step 2: Develop frameworks and data tools for participatory monitoring and evaluation**

The city’s internal task team (ITT) can develop frameworks for participatory monitoring and evaluation by reviewing the environmental and socioeconomic benefits of integrating informal waste workers, including their contributions to sustainable waste management systems, collection coverage, waste diversion, recycling, organic waste treatment, and other waste treatment and waste revaluation rates, as well as climate impacts and effects on informal waste workers’ quality of life.

Each city’s monitoring and evaluation framework should reflect the locally specific impact indicators developed by the IWWIC.

**Tip**

Indicators beyond the impact on waste management systems or the informal waste workers themselves (see below) can also be measured.

Co-benefits like cleaner air or reduced flooding risk (through less clogging of drainage systems) can help increase recognition of informal waste work and increase public and political support.

**Case study** Data collection in Fortaleza

In **Fortaleza**, the Re-Ciclo project collects data to measure the following indicators:

- total amount of recyclables collected;
- collection routes and frequency;
- income generated for informal waste worker associations;
- number of neighbourhoods covered by the service; and
- number of users served.<sup>134</sup>

**Tip**

Stakeholders such as universities and research institutions can play a significant role in participatory monitoring and evaluation. By engaging these stakeholders, cities can benefit from their expertise, research capacity, and analytical skills. Their involvement contributes to more rigorous data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ultimately supporting evidence-based decision making.



Waste picker training in Dar es Salaam

**Step 3: Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on waste management, including waste diverted from landfill sites**

Specific data sources and indicators should be developed to evaluate the impact of integration on waste management. Cities can track improvements in waste system performance and the impact of integrating informal waste workers using specific operational and environmental indicators. Key metrics include:

Core waste indicators	Advantages	Challenges
<b>Recycling rate:</b> Percentage of collected materials that are recovered and recycled.	Provides <b>clear, quantifiable evidence</b> of system improvement and climate impact (e.g. reduced landfill disposal and methane emissions).	<b>Data availability and accuracy</b> may be limited when waste is collected through informal channels or without weight-based tracking systems.
<b>Collections coverage:</b> Number/proportion of households or neighbourhoods and commercial generators receiving regular waste collection services.	Allows tracking of increases in coverage, showing clear <b>improvements of the city's basic service delivery and inclusivity</b> , especially in informal or hard-to-reach settlements.	<b>Informal settlements, in particular, might lack official mapping or household-level registration</b> , making data collection more challenging.
<b>Segregated collection performance:</b> Proportion of waste streams (recyclables and organics) correctly separated and collected separately at source.	Enables <b>tracking of progress over time</b> and comparisons between districts, service providers, or different collection models.	Establishing a <b>consistent baseline</b> requires coordination across contractors, cooperatives, and transfer/processing facilities.
<b>Landfill diversion:</b> Volume or percentage of waste diverted from landfill or dumpsites.	Makes visible the <b>contribution</b> of informal waste workers to <b>overall system performance</b> .	

**Case study** Hasiru Dala emissions calculator

Hasiru Dala, worked with the GHG Calculator 2.0 tool to calculate the contributions of seven informal-waste-worker-run dry waste collection centres in **Bengaluru**. This tool calculates the contributions of informal waste workers to climate outcomes by estimating how many greenhouse gas emissions are prevented through their work. The methods utilised within the waste system to achieve this emissions reduction were: diversion of waste from landfill sites and dumps, recycling, manual sorting and transportation, and diversion from open burning.<sup>135</sup>

**Resource**

WIEGO have developed a calculator tool to estimate the greenhouse gas emissions that waste picker groups prevent, available [here](#).

**Step 4: Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on informal waste workers' quality of life**

Specific data and indicators should be developed to evaluate the impact of integration on informal waste workers' quality of life, including social and economic benefits and improved working conditions. These indicators should be developed in partnership with informal waste workers and other stakeholders, ensuring that the workers are involved in ways that are respectful of their time, and that they are remunerated for their contribution.

**TOOL: Evaluation checklist**

The informal waste worker integration committee can use this checklist to guide the evaluation process. Indicate Yes or No for each question and add comments as needed.

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
1	Is the intervention responding to the needs, policies, and priorities set?			
2	Does the intervention support the internal requirements of the city?			
3	Does the intervention support the needs of informal waste workers?			
4	Has the intervention achieved its objectives?			
5	Are resources being used well?			
6	Has the intervention been effective in improving informal waste workers' quality of life?			
7	Is the intervention sustainable?			
8	Are improvements required? What kind?			
9	Have you considered what feedback mechanisms should be put in place to improve ongoing measurement of the impact and progress of integration programmes?			

**Step 5: Revise and update the informal waste worker integration plan**

This involves revising the plan on the basis of data collected and lessons learnt, as well as any relevant changes in terms of resources and other conditions.

Revisions should include:

- lessons drawn from monitoring and evaluation activities;
- adding and highlighting any new needs and contexts;
- incorporating any new knowledge and information;
- updating programmes that are being extended or suspended;
- updating priorities if changed; and
- updating budgets.

**Step 6: Institutionalise the revised informal waste worker integration plan**

Once the evaluation process is complete and a revised integration plan has been approved by all stakeholders, the updated plan can be approved through the city administration and political processes.

This requires a formal revision of the integration plan and the realignment of plans and programmes impacted by changes. See: [Action 4, Step 4: Promote economic integration and entrepreneurship programmes](#).

**Link** →

**Focus**

**How to institutionalise the updated integration plan**

After formally revising the integration plan:

- align any other plans or programmes that are impacted by the changes;
- include revised actions, targets, and budgets in relevant programmes;
- formally adopt the revised integration plan; and
- re-align budgets.<sup>136</sup>

**Timeline checklist for informal waste worker integration working groups**

Developing an integration plan requires an intensive pre-planning period. Informal waste worker integration can take a long time to implement, and it is therefore important to assess progress on an ongoing basis.

The timeline for integration should be developed to align with internal city plans and deliverables and can be used to measure performance. The most appropriate timeframe will vary and depend on the city context.

**TOOL: Timeline checklist**

You can find a downloadable version of the tool [here](#).

Timeline: Task	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Short-term (6–12 months): Tasks completed in the first 6–12 months of integration</p> <p><b>Action 1: Preparing the city for effective integration of informal waste workers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit the city to integration</li> <li>• Establish an internal integration task team (ITT)</li> <li>• Build a database</li> <li>• Strengthen the city’s understanding of integration</li> <li>• Analyse internal city policies</li> <li>• Set clear budgets, assign roles, and establish targets</li> <li>• Assess the city’s readiness to act</li> </ul>			
<p>Short–medium term (1–2 years):</p> <p><b>Action 2: Partnering with informal waste workers and other stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with informal waste worker organisations</li> <li>• Build a stakeholder map</li> <li>• Establish a stakeholder working group (SWG)</li> <li>• Design stakeholder engagement strategies</li> <li>• Complete the stakeholder participation checklist</li> </ul>			
<p>Medium-term (1–2 years):</p> <p><b>Action 3: Undertaking education and capacity building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of informal waste workers, stakeholders, and city leadership</li> <li>• Develop campaigns for public awareness-raising</li> </ul>			

<p>Medium-term (1–3 years):</p> <p><b>Action 4: Developing informal waste worker support programmes:</b></p> <p><b>Programme 1: Deepen and expand fair integration into municipal solid waste management systems, organic waste treatment, and recycling value chains</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise informal waste workers</li> <li>Promote legal protection of informal waste workers</li> <li>Register informal waste workers</li> <li>Promote economic integration and entrepreneurship programmes</li> <li>Promote social protection</li> <li>Consider EPR as part of integration</li> <li>Include informal waste worker social plans when decommissioning landfills</li> <li>Determine and provide physical infrastructure needs</li> </ul>			
<p>Medium-term (1–3 years):</p> <p><b>Programme 2: Climate adaptation and resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate climate adaptation and resilience</li> </ul>			
<p>Medium-term (1–3 years):</p> <p><b>Programme 3: Ensure gender equity and the inclusion of marginalised groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the challenges facing women informal waste workers</li> <li>Recognise the challenges of internal and cross-border migrants</li> <li>Strengthen the integration of migrant informal waste workers</li> </ul>			
<p>Medium-term (1–3 years):</p> <p><b>Programme 4: Redress caste and race injustices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the understanding of the impact of caste and racial injustices</li> <li>Design integration measures to redress caste and racial injustices</li> </ul>			

<p>Medium-term (1–3 years):</p> <p><b>Action 5: Develop an informal waste worker integration plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an informal waste worker integration plan</li> <li>Institutionalise informal waste worker integration</li> <li>Develop an implementation strategy</li> <li>Develop a strategy for scaling up integration</li> <li>Develop accountability mechanisms</li> </ul>			
<p>Ongoing (0–5 years):</p> <p><b>Action 6: Mobilising resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine how to resource and fund integration</li> <li>Assess the availability of funding</li> </ul>			
<p>Ongoing (1–5 years):</p> <p><b>Action 7: Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree on the performance monitoring and evaluation process</li> <li>Develop frameworks and data tools for participatory monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on waste management, including waste diverted from landfill sites</li> <li>Evaluate the impact of integration efforts on informal waste workers' quality of life</li> <li>Revise and update the informal waste worker integration plan</li> <li>Institutionalise the revised informal waste worker integration plan</li> </ul>			

# Appendix: Integration Plan template

Period: [20xx–20xx]

City: [Insert Name]

Preferred name of the project:

You can find a downloadable version of the template [here](#).

## Introduction

[Explain the purpose of the plan. For example: “This plan explains how informal waste workers and their organic waste treatment and recycling systems will be included in the formal waste management, waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling and other waste treatment and waste revaluation programmes of [CITY NAME].”]

*This section should describe how the plan was developed – who was involved and in what ways, the time period over which it was prepared, any challenges faced during the process, and areas that could be improved in future informal waste worker integration plans. It should also explain how informal waste workers and the NGOs that support them participated in developing the plan and the role of the informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC).*

### Comments on the box below

#### Focus

#### Aim

The aim of this integration plan is to ensure that waste, waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling and other waste treatment and waste revaluation policies and programmes in [CITY] recognise, value, and include informal waste workers and their systems, build on the strengths of informal waste workers’ systems, improve informal waste workers’ incomes and working conditions, boost waste diversion, waste treatment and recycling rates and reduce carbon emissions in [CITY].

## Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Meaningfully include informal waste workers in decisions affecting their work and lives.
- Integrate informal waste workers and their waste collection, organic waste treatment and recycling systems into official waste treatment programmes.
- Establish a permanent informal waste worker stakeholder working group (SWG) to oversee all aspects of planning and implementing actions towards integration, and to hold the city and other stakeholders accountable.
- Create local, affordable programmes that increase waste collection and treatment.
- Collect disaggregated data developed through needs assessments to understand impacts and make evidence-based decisions.
- Strengthen the city’s commitment to promote access to social protection, employment, and skills development, as well as basic services for informal waste workers.
- Reduce harm caused by current waste management, waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling, other waste treatment and waste revaluation and integration programmes.
- Allocate climate investments towards informal waste worker needs for green jobs and for harm reduction from impacts of climate change.
- Provide compensation and safeguards if negative effects for informal waste workers cannot be avoided.

## Principles

[Insert the principles agreed to by the SWG]

These principles guide the approach the city takes to all aspects of integration. They may for example include principles around recognition of informal waste workers, meaningful engagement, the commitment to evidence-based planning and policy development, and commitment to promoting social and economic protections for informal waste workers.

## Accountability and decision-making

### Responsible official

[Provide details of the official responsible for the plan. This person should hold a senior position and have the authority to make decisions.]

### Establishing a permanent informal waste worker integration committee (IWWIC)

[The plan should include the establishment of a permanent **IWWIC**. This committee will be constituted from representatives of departments on the ITT and from organisations represented in the SWG. Now that integration is being entrenched in the city, this permanent body will take responsibility for overseeing implementation and holding the city and other stakeholders to account. The **IWWIC** should include:

- representatives from all informal waste worker organisations at the relevant scale;
- representatives elected by independent informal waste workers; and
- representatives from all relevant city, district, company, or industry departments.

The plan should describe how the permanent IWWIC is structured and functions. It is recommended that this section be finalised later in the process, after key issues have been discussed and relationships built. This permanent IWWIC

should be guided by the principles and agreements regarding collaborative decision-making that guided the SWG to date]

### Decision-making process

[Explain how decisions about integrating informal waste workers will be made through the IWWIC and how they will be finalised.]

### Resolving disputes

[Explain how disagreements between stakeholders will be resolved.]

## Baseline information: Informal waste workers

Provide as much information as possible about informal waste workers, including:

Category	Details/notes	Source/method of collection
<b>Number of informal waste workers</b>	[Insert number]	[Survey, registry, NGO records, etc.]
<b>Gender</b>	[Insert % male/female/other]	[Survey, registry]
<b>Race/nationality</b>	[Insert details]	[Survey, registry]
<b>Areas of work</b>	[List neighbourhoods/zones]	[Mapping/survey]
<b>Materials collected</b>	[Plastic, paper, metal, etc.]	[Observation/survey]
<b>Where materials are sold</b>	[Buy-back centres, informal markets, etc.]	[Survey/interviews]
<b>Typical income</b>	[Insert range/average]	[Survey/interviews]
<b>Informal waste worker organisations</b>	[List informal waste worker organisations]	[Records/interviews]
<b>Existing support/NGO assistance</b>	[List NGOs, programmes]	[Records/interviews]

[Build indicators and baselines to measure and demonstrate the contribution of informal waste workers with respect to waste collection and treatment, local climate action, and additional co-benefits.]

[Clearly state the impacts of climate change on informal waste workers.]

**Tip**

Cities can develop a plan that includes data collection as an objective, and carry out this collection during the wider implementation phase. Data collection is time consuming, and development of the plan should not be delayed by this step.

**Tip**

Cities should be mindful of complying with national and international data protection ethics and regulations as they harvest data for integration programmes.

### Overview of existing and planned waste management systems

[Describe the formal and informal waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling and other waste treatment and waste revaluation systems and how they interact. Include all parts of the system, such as buy-back centres, composting sites, and sorting spaces including mechanical-biological treatment plants. A diagram/visual representation is recommended.]

#### Current commitments related to waste diversion, treatment, revaluation and informal waste workers

[Fill in a table showing current targets and commitments related to recycling, organic waste treatment, waste diversion, and other waste treatment and waste revaluation programmes and informal waste workers.]

Document	Commitments	Targets	Indicators	Timeframe	Responsibility

### Current negative effects of existing programmes/contracts

Existing programme/contract	Impact on informal waste workers	Challenge/Issue	Proposed mitigation/action
[Contract/programme]	[E.g., Reduced livelihoods]	[E.g., low pay]	[Solution]
[Contract/programme]	[E.g., Injury risk]	[E.g., unsafe working conditions]	[Solution]
[Contract/programme]	[E.g., Limited influence on policies]	[E.g., exclusion from decision-making]	[Solution]

### Addressing adverse effects

[Describe programmes to reduce harm and strengthen positive effects of current programmes. Include a written summary and/or a table]

Contract/programme	Adverse effect	Initiative/action	Target/indicator	Responsible party	Timeframe	Budget
[Title and date of programme]	[Effect]	[Action]	[Target]	[Dept/person]	[Start-end]	[Amount]
[Extending social benefits to informal waste workers]						
[Prioritising women informal waste workers in targeted contracts]						
[Capacity building of informal waste worker organisations]						
[Other]						

### New programmes/projects

[Describe planned programmes to integrate informal waste workers into new waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling and other waste treatment and waste revaluation initiatives, including work on climate projects, gender, race and caste. Include:]

Programme/project	Time-frame	Geo-graphic areas	Activities	Responsible party	How are informal waste workers included?	Targets/ indicators	Budget
<b>Recycling, organic waste treatment, and other waste treatment and waste revaluation programmes and contracts</b>							
<b>Informal-waste-worker-specific projects and programmes</b>							

### Building capacity and support

[Include details on how this will be done, including timeframes, targets, indicators, budgets, and responsibilities.]

Stakeholder	Capacity-building activity	Timeframe	Target/ indicator	Responsible party	Budget
[Officials]	[Training/workshops]	[Start–End]	[Number trained/skills developed]	[Dept/person]	[Amount]
[Elected representatives]	[Training/organisation support]	[Start–End]	[Number/outcome]	[Dept/person]	[Amount]
[Informal waste workers]	[Training/organisation support]	[Start–End]	[Number/outcome]	[Dept/organisations]	[Amount]
[Businesses/industry]	[Awareness/training]	[Start–End]	[Outcome]	[Dept/person]	[Amount]
[Residents]	[Awareness campaigns]	[Start–End]	[Outcome]	[Dept/person]	[Amount]

### Institutionalising informal waste worker integration

[Explain how integration will be embedded into official documents, byelaws, policies, and plans to make commitments permanent.]

For example:

- Spatial plans
- Economic plans
- Regulations
- Byelaws
- City key performance indicators
- Existing policies

### Implementation plan

[Provide a detailed plan for implementing all initiatives.]

Activity/task	Description	Start date	End date	Responsible party	Resources needed	Status/ notes
[Insert activity]	[Details]	[DD/MM/YY]	[DD/MM/YY]	[Dept/person]	[Budget, staff, equipment]	[Not started/ ongoing/ completed]
[Development of Infrastructure for sorting]						
[Development of Infrastructure for safe transportation]						
[Awareness-raising campaigns]						
[Other]						

### Monitoring, evaluation, and revision

[Drawing on work done on this in previous stages, explain how the plan will be monitored and evaluated using participatory processes, how findings will guide revisions, and how informal waste workers will be included in this process.]

Indicator	Method of measurement	Frequency	Responsible party	Data source	Notes/actions
[E.g., % of informal waste workers engaged]	[Survey/reports]	[Monthly/quarterly]	[Dept/person]	[Survey/registry]	[Actions if target not met]
[E.g., amount of recyclables diverted]	[Data collection]	[Monthly/quarterly]	[Dept/person]	[Reports/monitoring]	[Follow-up actions]
[E.g., income improvement for workers]	[Survey/interviews]	[Annual]	[Dept/person]	[Survey]	[Actions]

### Financial framework

#### Budget

[Provide a full budget for all official programmes and the plan, ensuring sufficient funds to support meaningful engagement by informal waste workers.]

[Identify potential funding from government (city, regional, national), private sector, donors, and EPR schemes. State who is responsible for raising funds.]

[An overview of headlines is provided below (cities will undertake more detailed financial exercises in practice):]

Budget item	Description	Amount	Funding source	Responsible party	One-off/ongoing cost	Notes
[Programme/project]	[Details]	[Amount]	[City/regional/national/private/donor/EPR/climate finance]	[Dept/person]		[Notes]
[Engagement/training]	[Workshops, platforms, support]	[Amount]	[Source]	[Person]		[Notes]
[Monitoring & evaluation]	[Data collection, reporting]	[Amount]	[Source]	[Person]		[Notes]
[Miscellaneous]	[Other costs]	[Amount]	[Source]	[Person]		[Notes]

### Appendices

[Include supporting documents, diagrams, and summary tables for all programmes, projects, and contracts related to waste diversion, organic waste treatment, recycling, other forms of waste treatment and waste revaluation and informal waste worker integration.]

## Endnotes

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