

# Waste Pickers: Cutting Methane Emissions through Organic Waste Management



INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WASTE PICKERS

Waste pickers integration towards methane reduction and building zero waste systems that work.

## THE PROBLEM:

### Methane Emissions from Waste



- Organic waste in landfills decomposes without oxygen, producing methane.
- Methane is over 80x more powerful than CO<sub>2</sub> in warming the planet over 20 years.
- The waste sector contributes nearly 20% of global anthropogenic methane emissions.

## THE SOLUTION:

### Preventing organic waste from entering landfills is critical for **climate action.**

### Waste Pickers: Essential but Often Invisible

- 15-20 million workers worldwide form the backbone of recycling
- Waste pickers collect, sort, and recover recyclable and organic materials.
- In many cities, they recover a significant share of waste that would otherwise be dumped or burned.
- Their knowledge of local waste systems is crucial for effective waste diversion.



### Why Waste Pickers are essential in organic waste systems?



#### ROLES WASTE PICKERS PLAY



#### WASTE SEGREGATION

Teach how to separate organic waste at the source.



#### COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Operate community-based collection programs.



#### PROCESSING

Manage composting, vermicomposting, or anaerobic digestion plants.



#### MANAGE ON-SITE PROCESSING UNITS

Set up and maintain composting and anaerobic digestion plants



#### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Help design systems that work in real communities.

INTEGRATION OF WASTE PICKERS AND INFORMAL WORKERS AS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL MUNICIPAL WASTE STRATEGIES.



WASTE PICKERS ARE KEY ACTORS IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY.

# ORGANIC WASTE SOLUTIONS WITH WASTE PICKERS AT THE FOREFRONT



Composting



Vermicomposting



Black soldier fly processing



Anaerobic digestion



Organic waste to animal feed



THESE SOLUTIONS KEEP ORGANIC WASTE OUT OF LANDFILLS, PREVENTING METHANE.

## CLIMATE + SOCIAL BENEFITS

### CLIMATE

Prevent methane emissions

Reduce landfill waste

Improve soil health through compost

### SOCIAL & ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Composting can create 4-15x more jobs than landfills or incineration.

Waste pickers gain safer jobs and stable income.

Cities build inclusive zero waste systems.

WASTE MANAGEMENT WITH WASTE PICKERS AT THE CENTER ENSURES NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.



## WHAT CITIES SHOULD DO

### POLICY ACTIONS

- ✓ Recognize waste pickers as official service providers.
- ✓ Guarantee rights, fair contracts, and secure access to waste.
- ✓ Fund gender-transformative programs & training.
- ✓ Simplify permits, reduce fees, and subsidize compost testing.
- ✓ Procure compost for public green spaces.
- ✓ Partner with waste pickers for city-level zero waste strategies.

## THE BIG IDEA



**ZERO WASTE SYSTEMS POWERED BY WASTE PICKERS CAN CUT METHANE EMISSIONS BY UP TO 95% WHILE CREATING GREEN JOBS**



**SUPPORTING WASTE PICKERS = CLIMATE ACTION + SOCIAL JUSTICE**