

PATHWAY TO THE MODERNIZATION OF RECYCLING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

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Abstract

Three peculiar challenges to recycling in developing countries has been addressed using participatory action research approach, namely: the lack of reliable data on recycling activities for planning purposes, the continuous refusal to include the informal waste sector in inclusive decision-making, and lack of quantification of the socio-economic contribution of waste pickers to their municipal solid waste management system. A team of researchers has collaborated with system managers to engage the informal waste sector in the greater Accra region of Ghana to address these gaps in a sustainable manner. The strategy deployed has been to work in a participatory and evidenced-based frame to assure and respect concerns, open up and empower each other to understand the benefits of working together, and find for ourselves the practical routes by which recycling data and recycling can be modernized. Stakeholders have participated in a comprehensive audit of recycling activities to develop a baseline, and have used local resources and ideas to recommend steps to sustain reliable data flows, improve inclusive governance and develop an action plan towards the modernization of gender-sensitive value-chain recycling and the integration of the informal waste sector . The methodological processes and research outcomes suggest that participatory engagement strategies are necessary to break the vicious circle of chronic data gaps in recycling and substitute virtuous circles of reliable data for planning and modernization purposes.

Keywords: Recycling Data, Informal Waste Sector, Participatory Processes, Modernization, Developing Countries.