

ORGANISING WASTE PICKERS IN LAGOS NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS



By

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INTRODUCTION

Waste picking is an urban phenomenon

Waste to wealth has emerged as a means of self-employment among many youths in Nigeria, especially those with no formal education

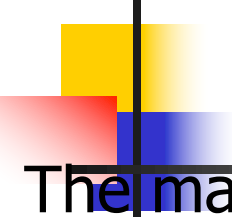
- Recycling has become acceptable as a sustainable option on waste management hierarchy (Agarwal et al., 2005; Bolaane 2006)
- It provides an avenue for the identification, recovery and exploitation of waste as a resource, & contributes towards environmental management and livelihood (Sicular, 1992; The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, 2007, Masocha, 2006; Langenhoven and Dyssel, 2007)

INTRODUCTION CONTINUES



- Waste pickers (Scavengers as they are derogatively called in Nigeria) and other groups of informal recyclers see waste as a source of income and livelihood
- The general public in Nigeria see it as an aesthetic problem and see the people engaged in resource recovery as a social nuisance (Oguntoyinbo, 2012).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

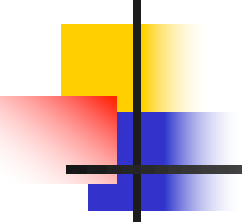


The main purpose of the study is to examine the prospects and problems of organizing waste pickers in Lagos, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are:

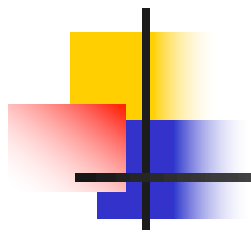
- To explain the nature and characteristics of waste pickers in Lagos, Nigeria.
- To identify the prospects of organising waste pickers in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- To discuss the problems associated with organising waste pickers in Lagos State, Nigeria

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- What are the natures and characteristics of waste pickers in Nigeria?
 - What are the prospects of organizing waste pickers in Lagos Nigeria?
 - What are the problems of organizing waste pickers in Nigeria?


Methodology

- It adopts qualitative method of data collection from respondents at purposively selected dumping sites from three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos, Nigeria.
- The dumping sites represent urban, semi-urban and rural (specifically at *Olushosun* in Kosofe LGA ; *Igando* in Alimosho LGA; and *Eru-Elepe*, in Epe LGA).
- One Focus Group Discussion was conducted in each of the sites, consisting of 10, 12, 9 discussants respectively
- Interviews were conducted with Secretary General of Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria (FIWON); an official of Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA); two members of Public Sector Participation (PSP); and three Waste Picker, one from each of the selected sites.
- Data were content-analysed.



FINDINGS

Socio-demographic findings

- 
- Age range between 19 and 47
 - Low levels of formal education.
 - Waste picking in Nigeria not a gendered occupation.
 - Male waste pickers tend to predominate.
 - Single male pickers make up the largest proportion of the population.
 - Majority from Northern Nigeria (Hausa/Fulani stock)

Nature & Characteristics of Waste Pickers in Lagos State, Nigeria

- **Categories:** Pickers; Sorters; and Dealers.
- **Specialisation:** Crab metals (usually men and *Hausa);
 - Pets and plastic bottles (women, *Yoruba mostly).
- Nomadic in nature, visit dump sites; check waste baskets boxes and drums for useful wastes.
- Some of the pickers are not trained on any other trade for survival. No special skill.
- Waste pickers work in clusters, especially in dumping sites.
- They tend to organise locally in the dump sites where they work, but such organisation lacks credibility and recognition.
- Shabbily dressed; often with sleepers – dusty feet and dirty clothings
- Convey goods via cart, wheel-barrow, on shoulder or head portage.

Prospects of Organising Waste Pickers in Lagos, Nigeria

- It will enhance cohesion among waste pickers.
- Improvement on their mode of operation
- It will enhance dignity of labour
- It will engender societal respects
- Common voice against unfair treatment by government agencies
- It will reduce unemployment as many youth will join.
- Common voice against obnoxious policies against them
- Training on occupational health and safety of members
- It will encourage sound and effective social interaction.
- Possible welfare scheme for members

Problems of organising waste pickers in Lagos Nigeria

- Low esteem/discrimination from the public
- Dispersal and nomadic nature of their work
- Language barrier
- Low level of education
- Prohibition of their activities by the state government
- Irregular work system
- Low income
- Harassments and extortion from law-enforcement agencies. Eg. The Police.
- Institutionalised extortion through unnecessary levies



Problems continue

Bribery to avoid arrest

- Harassment by LAWMA staff
- Stress
- Lack of initiator(s)
- Lack of sacrifices: Leaving jobs for meetings
- Time management
- PSP and the clamming down on waste pickers

Conclusion, suggestions and recommendations

- Waste pickers' rights as human rights
- ~~The right of association, enshrined in Nigeria constitution and other labour laws should be extended to waste pickers.~~
- Orientation and re-orientation of waste pickers
- Mobilising waste pickers in clusters and dumpsites.
- Involvement of FIWON in mobilisation of waste pickers.
- Involvement of NGOs in capacity building for advocacy and training
- Inclusive policy through proper action plans for them.

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