



## Leaving no one behind

How a global instrument to end plastic pollution can enable a just transition for the people informally collecting and recovering waste

### Key findings and messages from the report



**The people informally collecting and recovering solid waste significantly contribute to decreasing plastic pollution by improving municipal solid waste management.** An estimated 60 million tonnes of plastic per year from municipal solid waste pollute the environment, including water bodies, due to a lack of collection services and mismanagement of solid waste. This number would be even higher without the informal waste and recovery sector, which collects, segregates, processes, and recycles plastic and other discarded materials globally: the informal sector enables up to 90% of recycling in some countries. Utilizing and enhancing existing skills, networks, and recovery capacities in the informal sector is urgently needed to reduce plastic pollution.

**60 million tonnes** of plastic per year from municipal solid waste, including open burning, pollute the environment.



**The negotiations towards a global instrument to end plastic pollution offer opportunities to facilitate a just transition for the informal waste and recovery sector.** A just transition means that transition to sustainable production and consumption of plastic is designed in a manner that is as fair, inclusive, and equitable as possible to the informal sector, generating and preserving decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. It demands the active and meaningful participation of the informal waste and recovery sector throughout the negotiation and implementation process of an instrument to end plastic pollution. These outcomes will directly affect livelihoods in the informal sector – intentionally or not. The informal waste and recovery sector should be regarded as a knowledge provider for innovation and practices that can feed into policy processes.

Informal waste and recovery sector enables up to **90%** of recycling in some countries.



**Recognizing and including informal actors in policies and practice requires active stakeholder involvement in developing, implementing, and monitoring human-rights-centered outcomes.** There is no one-size-fits-all solution to a just transition, as circumstances and people involved in the process vary. Still, possible actions include integrating informal waste and recovery sector workers in formal waste management systems through participatory processes, supporting the formation of workers' organizations and unions, and providing training that enables informal sector workers to acquire new skills or shift

to alternative jobs. Furthermore, national governments can support local governments in implementing national policies and pursuing locally adapted and participatory approaches to integrate the informal waste and recycling sector.

Number of waste-pickers working at disposal sites: **1,500 in Dakar, Senegal; 600 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; 1,820 in Lagos, Nigeria; and 2,000 in Nairobi.**



**Financial resources are needed to enable a just transition of the informal sector and for people, communities, and environments disproportionately affected by plastic pollution.**

This includes facilitating the establishment of waste management infrastructure and regulatory capacities and monitoring and ensuring that their development does not conflict with the interests of people and groups in vulnerable and marginalized situations. Financial resources may be dedicated to enabling formal integration processes, implementing relevant infrastructure and equipment for occupational safety and environmentally sound waste management, and ensuring fair remuneration for work. Financial resources may also support establishing and strengthening workers' cooperatives, associations, and unions to protect livelihoods. Financing can be secured through different means, at different levels, for example, directly through a global instrument to end plastic pollution, through participatory global or national extended producer responsibility schemes, through international financial institutions and funds, and from within municipal solid waste management systems.

**USD 40 billion** was needed to finance solid waste management in 2014, according to World Bank data.



**A just transition of the informal waste and recovery sector needs to be tracked following pre-defined and co-developed indicators, definitions, and methodologies.** Currently, there is a lack of data and a limited understanding of the informal sector's scale and activities worldwide.