The 2008 1st World Conference of Recyclers, held in Bogotá, Colombia, was the first step to creating a Global Network of Solid Waste Recyclers. The aim of the network is to enhance the visibility of recyclers; to raise awareness of their environmental service and their contribution to the formal economy. The network ensures the active and effective participation of recyclers in all aspects that impact their work, life conditions, and social position.
"Organised recycling programmes provide an opportunity to enhance public environmental awareness with the recyclers performing the role of environmental agents" - Jutta Gutberlet, PSWM Project Director.

**BACKGROUND**

*Participatory Sustainable Waste Management* is a partnership project between the University of Victoria in Canada and the University of São Paulo in Brazil. This partnership emerged out of a long history of previous research and community outreach collaborations between the core participants of the project. The project has been receiving funding from the *Canadian International Development Agency* (CIDA) since 2005, and has evolved into a key reference for knowledge generation and mobilisation on inclusive waste management.

**THEMES**

Social inclusion
Solidarity economy
Income generation
Participation and empowerment
Collective action
Environmental and social equality
Public policy
Sustainability and health

**ABOUT the PSWM project**

**an effective anti-poverty strategy**
Through capacity development, the PSWM project helps Brazilian recycling co-operatives become more RESILIENT. Increased ORGANISATION stimulates COLLECTIVE ACTION towards more effective and safe collection, processing, and commercialisation of recyclable materials. By creating spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange, the project contributes to increased AWARENESS among governments and communities about waste co-management issues and the reduction of waste.
Participatory management

EMPOWERMENT is a key strategy for overcoming inequities and AGENCY is a crucial element for asserting the power of collective goals based on AUTONOMY and SELF-DETERMINATION (AUTOGESTÃO). Participation means active engagement in decision-making processes and ownership in local development. TRANSPARENCY throughout project planning, implementation, funding, and evaluation is fundamental to participatory project management.

Partners
- Potential new partners
- Universities
- NGOs
- Social movements
- SENAC
- FUNDACENTRO
- MNC (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores)

Administration
- Project Management Council
- Universidade de São Paulo
- University of Victoria
- Potential new administration

Photo: participatory project management © Jutta Gutberlet
Participatory approaches to development promote SOCIAL JUSTICE and produce empowering outcomes, such as increased community capacities and broader STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION in decision-making. These approaches provide a platform to reduce and circumvent power relations typical of development research, and provide a voice for marginalised populations by facilitating their involvement in programs. Through this process of POWER REDISTRIBUTION, opportunities emerge to build participants’ capacity to transform their lives. Participatory approaches provide a means to facilitate EMPOWERMENT and COLLECTIVE ACTION, which can result in significant development outcomes including improved quality of life, the protection of resources, reduced social and economic exclusion, and enhanced equality.

“The project gives us hope, motivation, power. That’s why we are always after capacity building; because we are much more instructed and prepared to continue the struggle” - Zilda, CRUFFI recycling co-operative, São Paulo.
Decentralised systems of collecting and processing food waste for use as fertilizer on local agricultural land save landfill space, reduce environmental hazards, and RE-CYCLE VALUABLE NUTRIENTS AND LABOUR. This model is particularly powerful in urban areas, where access to fresh fruit and vegetables is often difficult and costly, and where food waste must be transported long distances before final disposal in overcrowded and unsanitary landfills. A pilot study carried out under the PSWM project revealed that the collection and processing of food waste presents opportunities for the DIVERSIFICATION of existing waste-based livelihoods, as well as opportunities for INCOME GENERATION amongst urban farmers. Integrated and inclusive organic waste management lays the ground on which to forge NEW MODELS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING.
Participatory Video (PV) is a powerful tool for exploring and communicating socio-economic and environmental concerns. PV enables people to create and shape their own films. Participants are involved in all stages of the production, and through a range of techniques groups identify and analyze issues concerning their neighborhood and livelihoods. This DYNAMIC PROCEDURE helps participants to take action to solve their own problems, and provides a powerful means to COMMUNICATE NEEDS and ideas to decision-makers. PV is an excellent tool for ENGAGING AND MOBILISING marginalised populations, and for helping them to propose their own forms of sustainable development based on local assets and capacities.
Most informal recyclers and co-ops still sell their materials to intermediaries who determine the market prices. For the recyclers to engage directly with the recycling industry they need to be able to sell large quantities of material. Micro-credit is key in helping these groups to **UNLOCK BOTTLENECKS** and delays during collective commercialisation. The PSWM project initiated a working capital fund managed by 8 women in the metropolitan region of São Paulo. The fund provides small loans, which allow groups to survive until payment from industry arrives. This eliminates the need to sell to intermediaries and **MAINTAINS INCOME WITHIN THE NETWORK**. The experience has helped to empower the women involved by opening up the opportunity for **APPRENTICESHIP AND PERSONAL GROWTH**.

**Stimulates higher incomes among the participants of recycling groups.**

**Strengthen the bonds of cooperation among participants.**

**Helps to build the solidarity economy.**

**Improves the autonomy of the groups.**
Collective commercialisation involves the organisation and networking of cooperatives and community associations, which enables them to sell their products in large quantities, deal directly with industry, and generate higher incomes. Collective commercialisation **ENHANCES THE CAPACITY** among social enterprises to participate and **SUCCEED IN THE MARKET PLACE**. It also facilitates the formation of strong social relations for a stronger **GROUP IDENTITY**. Dialogue with and support from government agents, industry, and the wider community are also crucial elements in this process. Within the PSWM project, the *Rede Gerando Renda* (Network Generating Income) initiative facilitates collective commercialisation by carrying out capacity building initiatives among recycling cooperatives in the São Paulo region.

“Lots of cooperatives don’t survive one year because it is very difficult to gather material, but we are not alone and together we are stronger to work as a network, in a group... to learn about the reality of others was just so relevant” - Francesca, FENIX recycling co-operative, São Paulo.
Digital inclusion is a form of **SOCIAL INCLUSION** that aims to ensure disadvantaged individuals or groups have access to and the skills to use Information Communication Technology (ICT). ICT has become an important aspect of contemporary society; computers are widely used in the public and private sectors. The Internet is a valuable channel for **LEARNING AND COMMUNICATING** through a wide range of online services. The PSWM project directly contributes to social inclusion, and digital inclusion is recognised as an important aspect. The project developed an online system for collective commercialisation, and provided training for the system and other fundamental aspects of computer and Internet use. In the future more recyclers in Brazil will be able to **MANAGE THEIR RESOURCES** through an on-line database that facilitates collective commercialisation.

"It was important for me to participate in the computer workshop because now I am able to contribute to the growth of my cooperative and also to our network of cooperatives" - Maria Isabel, Cooperlimpa, Diadema.
Knowledge mobilisation provides a bridge between programmes, such as PSWM, and the relevant stakeholders in the community, such as recycling co-operatives. The goal is to promote social inclusion and poverty eradication and to REDUCE STIGMATISATION among recyclers and their families. It is through knowledge mobilisation that governments and the wider community become more educated about resource recovery.
Support the
GLOBAL NETWORK
of informal and organized recyclers
visit:
pswm.uvic.ca

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