The Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa

A brief history of waste picker integration policy in South Africa
Until recently, government at all levels in South Africa saw waste pickers as vagrants and criminals who undermined effective solid waste management in municipalities. As a result, municipalities focused on getting rid of waste pickers. Waste pickers were not included in national policy or legislation, and municipal waste management and development plans sought to remove them from landfills and the streets.

This started to change in 2008, when the National Environmental Management: Waste Act (https://www.gov.za/documents/national-environmental-management-waste-act) made it possible for municipalities and private companies to amend their landfill licenses to permit waste picking.


A number of activities were conducted to fulfil this commitment:

- **2012**: DEA workshop – stakeholders agreed importance of integration
- **2015**: DEA research and conference on waste pickers
- **2016**: South African Cities Network workshop for metros and waste picker organisations on integration
- **2016 - 2019**: DEA integration workshop with Latin American experts
- **2016 - 2019**: Wits University research on waste picker integration (for development of Guideline)
- **2016 - 2019**: Stakeholder process facilitated by Wits University to develop the Guideline
Development of the Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa

The full name of the Guideline is *The Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa: Building the recycling economy and improving livelihoods through integration of the informal sector.*

The Guideline was developed between 2016 and 2019 through a series of 6 participatory workshops facilitated by the University of the Witwatersand. At one of these workshops academics from across the country presented research findings to the Working Group to take into consideration when developing the Guideline. The draft Guideline was presented at a national workshop in April 2019. It was finalised in September 2019 and released in 2020.

- The Guideline provides information on waste pickers, the work that they do, the contributions they make, and the challenges they encounter.
- It also presents information on challenges faced by municipal officials, municipalities and industries.
- It shares examples of successful integration initiatives and integration ideas.
- and it suggests collaborative processes and actions to help municipalities, industry and waste pickers to work together to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and revise waste picker integration plans and programmes.

**NOTE**

The Guideline emphasises that because each municipality and sector is different, integration plans and programmes need to be locally specific. This means working with local stakeholders to collaboratively design, implement, and evaluate integration plans and programmes.
Defining waste picker integration
The Waste Picker Integration Guideline for South Africa defines waste picker integration in the following way:

Waste picker integration

- is the creation of a formally planned recycling system that values and improves the present role of waste pickers,

- builds on the strengths of their existing system for collecting and revaluing materials,

- includes waste pickers as key partners in its design, implementation, evaluation, revision, and

- includes the integration of waste pickers’ work, as well as the political, economic, social, legal and environmental integration of waste pickers.

www.wastepickerintegration.org
What does the Guideline cover?

1. Who waste pickers are and the contributions they make
2. The concept and importance of waste picker integration
3. Principles that underpin waste picker integration
4. Common challenges faced by waste pickers, municipalities and industry
5. Participatory process for identifying needs
6. How to ensure that Separation at Source programmes include waste pickers rather than take away their work
7. How to create an enabling environment
8. A seven-step collaborative process through which municipalities and waste pickers can work together to develop a Waste Picker Integration
9. A template for a Waste Picker Integration Plan
10. Some ideas on how to address key problems related to integration faced by municipalities, industry and waste pickers
11. Links to other resources.