



“Understanding of Circular Economy Among the Grass-root Level Workers and Strategies to Engage Them in Municipal Waste Reduction and Segregation”

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A. Citizen Engagement in Circular Economy Transition



Photo: Normal routine of household waste handling
[Location: Banepa, Nepal, Year 2023]

Context

- ❖ **Citizens** are an integral part of the waste management value chain.
- ❖ There is **lack of coordinated strategy** for citizen involvement in waste management (Izdebska, 2020).
- ❖ Full **awareness of the circular economy** for citizens is one of the significant challenges (ADBI, 2022).
- ❖ Need of action on **increasing education and engagement of citizen participation** at source segregation & recycling (ADBI, 2022).
- ❖ To close the **‘Quantity Gap’**

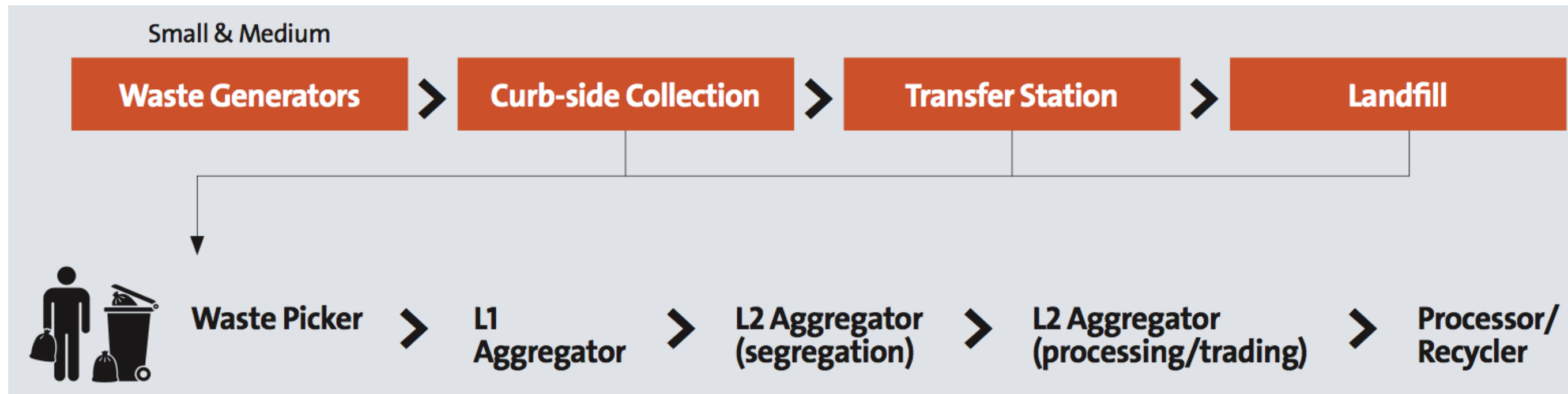
B. Grass-root & Informal Workers in Circular Economy Transition

Who takes the charge in ground?

- ❖ Like the **'First responders'** during an emergency !
- ❖ Who touch, hold and move the used products
- ❖ Further process them to recycle/ recovery/ landfill as appropriate
- ❖ 70% of waste going to landfills can be reduced by leveraging the informal ecosystem of urban recyclers (Hande, 2019)

2 billion workers : informal economy (Global)

4.4 million workers: informal economy (Nepal)



Source: Kathmandu Post, 2023 & Ford Foundation 2021.

Photo: Siddharth Hande
(Reinventing Plastics
Special Sissue 2019)

C. Approach to Findings

What is the understanding of Circular Economy among the Grass-root & Informal Workers ?



Photo: Ms. Shanti Tamang: President of Grass-root workers association speaking as a Panelist at the Regional Policy Dialogue for Circular Economy Transition



Observation & Grass-root Consultation

- Site visits in Kathmandu, Kavre, Nawalparasi districts
- Semi-structured questionnaire interview
- Focused Group Discussions



Stakeholders Consultation

- Municipality officials, Environment Ministry officials, experts



Workshop & Regional Policy Dialogue

- Knowledge sharing workshop with participation from grass-root workers' association
- Regional Policy Dialogue with panel discussion including the grass-root representative

D. Perception of C.E among grass-root & informal workers

- A new topic
- Is it waste re-use and recycling ?
- Will this create more job for us ?
- “Continuation of work in the waste sector due to financial need” (Laxmi Jairu)
- “Hope for no discrimination for waste workers with the new concept” (Rameshwor Thapa: 4th decade in the waste sector)



D. Perception of C.E among grass-root & informal workers



Bhavani Krishna Vaidya: Retired Health Professional

Household tale of Daily Waste Management

"Due to the municipality's practice of using a single vehicle for collecting all types of waste, waste segregation at the source seems impractical. The municipality sends trucks to collect household waste twice a week. I pay a monthly fee of NPR 250 to Paribartan Sewa, a private organization working with the municipality for waste collection services. Given the convenience of disposing of waste directly into the vehicle, many find it easier compared to the effort required for source segregation and composting."

Bhavani Krishna Vaidya, a retired health professional aged 68 and resident of Banepa municipality, shares his approach to household waste management. In his home, like many households in Nepal, the most significant type of waste produced is kitchen/organic waste. Currently, waste segregation is not practiced because he doesn't see it as necessary. Additionally, there is no one in the house available to invest time in waste segregation, composting, and utilization. As a result, he finds it much easier to dispose of all waste together in the same collection vehicle (truck), simplifying the management of household waste.

Laxmi Jaiu: Waste Collector & Segregator

Experience from a Waste Collector/ Waste Worker

Laxmi Jaiu is a 39-year-old single mother with two sons, and she works as a waste collector and segregator at the Panauti Municipality dumping site and collection center. She has been doing this important work in waste management for the past 6 years. Her main responsibility is to separate different types of waste at the dumping site and then take it to the collection center. She focuses on segregating items like plastics, PVC pipes, PET water bottles, aluminum alloy beer cans, and metals. During her work, she often comes across organic waste like meat and maize, which she kindly feeds to dogs and birds.

Despite facing challenges with her mental health and high blood pressure, Laxmi takes pride in her work because it provides a livelihood for herself and her children. Her two young sons also help her with this scavenging work, and they are considering joining the same profession because they need the income after their father's passing. Unfortunately, they faced discrimination and prejudice at school due to their work, which made them leave their studies. However, this only made them more determined to continue in this line of work.



Rameshwar: Collection Center Owner

Ongoing 4th decade of work in waste collection and segregation

"In our societies, there exists a culture of categorizing and evaluating professions, and unfortunately, waste pickers have long been subjected to disrespect and dishonor. Even when our children are clean and dressed neatly, people still make derogatory comments, using derogatory terms like 'Kbaley' to refer to those who collect garbage from the streets, carrying large sacks on their shoulders to gather waste. This demeaning perception has persisted, leading to ongoing disrespect and discrimination. It has reached a point where even our children are denied proper treatment at hospitals simply because of our occupation."



Rameshwar, a father figure to 3-4 children, has been operating his collection center for 34 years. At any given time, around 15 staff members work at his center, and some of these staff have their children who stay there while their parents work. Rameshwar is deeply concerned about how hospital authorities would treat these children in case of any emergency or injuries.

Laxmi Poda: Municipality Sweeper

A female sweeper experiencing good behavior from citizen/public

"I have observed changes in how citizens interact with waste workers and manage their household waste. They now treat us with respect and responsibility. In the past, waste was casually discarded on streets, and our pleas to avoid littering were dismissed, with people claiming it was solely our duty to clean up. Thankfully, this has changed as individuals have grown more accountable for their waste. Nonetheless, the implementation of waste segregation remains a significant challenge, despite widespread awareness and education. Many continue to ignore the practice at its source."



E. Strategies to Engage Grass-root & Informal workers

Six key strategies are outlined:

1

Definition of Circular Economy in local context & language

2

Demonstrative examples of C.E transition to train the grass -root workers

3

Involve in the entire waste management chain

4

Association and access to financial instruments

5

Joint activity with households, community and local authority

6

Behavior Change and Incentivizing programs together



THANK YOU

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GOT QUESTIONS?

Reach out.



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