INTRODUCTION

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are an estimated 20 million people who derive their livelihood from the hazardous and dirty work of recycling trash in city streets and dumps. In doing so, they produce both an environmental and an economic benefit, helping to reduce trash and litter while making recyclable materials available to industry.

Despite its importance, recycling work is accorded neither social nor economic recognition. While informal recycling is accorded social recognition, the work of waste pickers, as recognized by cooperatives – from fifteen national movements formed around the world, remains highly fragmented. Recycling markets, both in Latin America and the Caribbean, are often shared across the private and public sectors and among municipal and national governments. Simultaneously, important lessons and inspiring successes are emerging from various country contexts. As a result, multi-stakeholder, multi-national approaches like the Regional Initiative for the Economic and Social Inclusion of Recyclers offer an opportunity to support meaningful and lasting change.

1.2 KEY INTERVENTIONS

In 2010, Coca-Cola and the Multilateral Investment Development Bank, and The Coca-Cola Company introduced the Economic and Social Inclusion of the Recycling Workforce as a Platform for Dialogue and Action Among Different Stakeholders, including governments, the business sector, and recyclers’ organizations.

The underlying strategy is for this collaboration to promote greater recognition of recyclers in both national and sub-national waste management systems. To this end, the Regional Initiative for the Economic and Social Inclusion of Recyclers (Red LACRE), or Latin American Recyclers’ Network, which brings together national and regional waste management organizations in nine countries, has launched a strategic collaboration on this important issue.

1.1 INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS STORIES

Several of the Regional Initiative’s work is ongoing, and its founding partners are actively seeking to invite new organizations to join the effort. The examples below illustrate how regional initiatives and projects impact the initiatives seek to do. By the end of 2013, the Initiative anticipates that at least sixty municipalities have signed selective collection contracts with recyclers’ organizations. The same number of municipalities will have approved taxes for recycling, improving the recycling rate of urban areas, and providing legal protection and economic benefit, helping to increase household incomes. The Initiative also has implemented supply chain policies that include buying materials from recyclers’ organizations. Two years after the start of the process, partners aim to formally and at least 20 percent in the average incomes of recyclers and expects that recyclers will be formally recognized in at least 120 municipalities throughout the region.

1.3 GOVERNANCE

The partners of the Regional Initiative work closely with the Red LACRE’s network of Recyclers (Red LACRE, or Latin American Recyclers’ Network), which brings together national and regional waste management organizations in nine countries. The network creates a platform for dialogue and action among different stakeholders, the Initiative being responsible for a public service throughout Latin America. The network’s multi-sector fora—such as the Multilateral Investment Development Bank, and The Coca-Cola Company—are key allies— including government officials, and significant stakeholders. The network’s multi-sector fora—such as the Multilateral Investment Development Bank, and The Coca-Cola Company—are key allies— including government officials, and significant stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Recycling markets, both in Latin America and around the world, remain highly fragmented. Responsibilities are often shared across the private and public sectors and among municipal and national governments. Simultaneously, important lessons and inspiring successes are emerging from various country contexts. As a result, a multi-stakeholder, multi-national approaches like the Regional Initiative for the Economic and Social Inclusion of Recyclers offer an opportunity to support meaningful and lasting change.

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A regional initiative to promote collaboration and change

In collaboration with MIT

The Network helps create and strengthen national waste picker associations and facilitates information sharing among waste pickers.

LATIN AMERICA

WASTE PICKERS AS SERVICE PROVIDERS

A regional initiative to promote collaboration and change

SOURCES

1 - 4 Jorge Velázquez
5 Tatiana Cardeal

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