

Harmonized Responsible Sourcing Framework for Recycled Plastics

Themes

We identified five thematic areas for responsible sourcing:



Economic Empowerment

All waste sector workers, including waste pickers, have the right to a standard of living that is adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families, including adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing, and access to medical care when necessary.



Health and Safety

All waste-related work should take place in a safe and healthy working environment in which risks are identified and reduced in order to prevent accidents, injuries, and illnesses.



Autonomy and Inclusion

All waste sector workers, including waste pickers, should be treated equally, with respect and dignity, and without any form of discrimination, and there should be no restrictions on the freedom of a worker.



Collective Representation

All waste sector workers, including waste pickers, have the right to freedom of association, to form and/or join trade unions, and to bargain collectively.¹



Gender Equality

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, aimed at ensuring equal participation of all waste sector workers and waste pickers, including both women and men in civil, political, economic, social, and cultural life, without discrimination.

¹ International Labour Organization. (2022). ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work [online]. Available from: <https://www.ilo.org/ilo-declaration-fundamental-principles-and-rights-work> [accessed April 22, 2024].



Indicators

The indicators articulate objectives for what responsible sourcing seeks to achieve in the recycled plastics value chain,² and should be used by value chain participants to track and assess progress against these objectives. “Given the diversity and localized nature of plastics recycling value chains – and how the informal waste sector is positioned within those value chains – effective approaches will need to be informed by, and tailored to, local contexts.”³ At the same time, local approaches should be guided by global alignment on principles and indicators and engagement with actors throughout these value chains. Indicators apply both to formal waste sector workers employed by participants in the recycled plastics value chain, as well as informal waste sector workers, including waste pickers.

Drawing from the reviewed frameworks and inputs from the working group that was established as part of the participatory process, we identified key indicators for each thematic area and grouped them into two categories, minimum and advanced indicators.


- **Minimum indicators** serve as the foundational goals necessary for a responsible value chain. These are the essential benchmarks that all participants in the value chain should strive to achieve within a three- to five-year timeframe. They are designed to safeguard the rights and safety of waste workers in the plastics recycling sector. Achieving these indicators is the first step towards creating a responsible supply chain. In specific contexts, a subset of minimum indicators is likely to be prioritized based on the working conditions and material concerns of the workers.
- **Advanced indicators** demonstrate positive outcomes for people beyond the minimum indicators that all value chain stakeholders should seek to meet in order to continuously improve human rights for informal waste sector workers over a five- to ten-year period and beyond. Advanced indicators focus on achieving outcomes that contribute to long-term robust, transparent, and inclusive value chains that meet human rights standards for all workers.

² Shift. (2021). Indicator Design Tool [online]. Available from: https://shiftproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Indicator-Design-Tool_Shift.pdf [accessed April 10, 2024].

³ The Fair Circularity Principles, Principle 7.



List of Indicators

	Minimum Indicators	Advanced Indicators
 1. Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1. Working hours comply with local laws and regulations for workers in formal settings.1.2. Wages are accurately calculated and recorded.1.3. Information is collected on the price paid to informal waste workers, including waste pickers, and their working hours.1.4. Wages and living income are assessed against wages.1.5. Employed workers are paid in accordance with the local minimum wage standards.1.6. Fair and transparent weighing and pricing methods are in place.1.7. All workers are paid consistently, directly, and on time.1.8. A system is in place and enforced for age verification.1.9. If child labor exists, efforts are being taken to address the root causes, prioritizing any children who are engaged in hazardous work.1.10. All workers have access to social and financial services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.11. Adequate and effective compensation policies and practices are in place.1.12. Employed workers are paid the living wage for their location.1.13. Measures are in place to ensure that informal workers are able to earn a living income.1.14. All workers are able to negotiate on prices and wages.1.15. Working hours are monitored to ensure local and international compliance.1.16. All workers have access to job-related education and training.1.17. Informal waste workers and waste pickers have access to facilities to sort, store, and aggregate materials.1.18. Effective processes are in place to follow up on children removed from working in the waste sector.1.19. School-age children of workers are enrolled in school.



Minimum Indicators

Advanced Indicators



2. Health and Safety

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1. All workers and waste pickers have access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).2.2. All workers and waste pickers are trained on safe work practices, including fire and hazardous material safety and communication, natural hazards and disasters, and foreseeable emergencies.2.3. All workers have access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and changing facilities at the workplace.2.4. First-aid equipment, as well as emergency and medical services, if necessary, is available to all workers, and practices are in place to prevent and treat worker injury and illness.2.5. Work-related injuries, illnesses, and safety incidents (including those related to physical, psychological, or sexual violence and harassment) are recorded and resolved.2.6. Worker exposure to harmful environmental conditions (e.g., extreme temperature and weather, air, and water pollution) is monitored and assessed.2.7. Locations where work takes place comply with applicable health and safety regulations, including building safety, emergency preparedness, and managing hazardous and waste materials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.8. All workers and waste pickers use appropriate personal protective equipment.2.9. If provided by employers, worker accommodations are safe, well-maintained, and appropriate for the number of residents.2.10. All workers have accident insurance that covers medical treatment for work-related injuries and illnesses.2.11. All workers have access to healthcare.2.12. Active steps are taken, as a result of tracking and resolutions of injuries, to reduce and prevent worker accidents and injuries. |
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Minimum Indicators

Advanced Indicators



3. Autonomy and Inclusion

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.1. All workers enter into employment freely, and deposits or fees in exchange for employment are prohibited.3.2. Informal waste workers are free to choose when and where they work.3.3. No forced labor is used, whether in the form of trafficked labor, indentured labor, bonded labor, or other forms including mental and physical coercion, and slavery, nor under any other threat of penalty.3.4. All workers can report forced labor and are protected from retaliation for doing so.3.5. All value chain actors, including waste pickers, are free to choose to whom they sell the materials they collect.3.6. All workers are recognized, have access to identification cards, and retain possession of their original identification paperwork.3.7. Informal waste sector workers are aware of the available opportunities and their rights in the process of formalization. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.8. Intervention processes are in place to protect and assist reported victims of forced labor.3.9. There are pathways for informal waste pickers to work formally if they choose, including access to social or labor protections and being recognized in contracts.3.10. Steps are being taken to address social stigma experienced by informal waste sector workers and waste pickers. |
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Minimum Indicators

Advanced Indicators



4. Collective Representation

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| <p>4.1. All workers are aware of and can freely exercise their right to form or join a union of their choice, to seek representation and collectively bargain, and do so without fear of intimidation or harassment.</p> <p>4.2. Where local law sets restrictions on the rights of waste workers to join trade unions, alternative forms of worker representation are recognized.</p> <p>4.3. Mechanisms are in place for employed workers to report an issue or complaint at work.</p> <p>4.4. Information is collected on whether informal waste sector workers and waste pickers belong to a trade union, waste picker organization, or association.</p> <p>4.5. Steps are taken to make informal waste sector workers and waste pickers aware of their rights as workers, including to organize and bargain collectively.</p> | <p>4.6. All workers, including waste pickers, have access to, and the opportunity to belong to, a trade union, waste picker organization, or association.</p> <p>4.7. Informal waste sector workers, including waste pickers, are recognized by local government or formal waste management structures.</p> <p>4.8. Confidential mechanisms are in place for informal waste sector workers to report an issue or complaint about their working conditions, and they are aware of how to access them.</p> <p>4.9. Outcomes of filed grievances, including remedy, are monitored, addressed, and reported.</p> |
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Minimum Indicators

Advanced Indicators



5. Gender Equality

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| <p>5.1. Systems are in place to identify and prevent physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal harassment, abuse, or other forms of intimidation.</p> <p>5.2. Workplace and hiring policies prohibit gender-based discrimination and all forms of sexual harassment.</p> <p>5.3. Periodic training is conducted to prevent gender-based discrimination, harassment, or abuse.</p> <p>5.4. Confidential mechanisms are in place for employed workers to report instances of gender-based discrimination, harassment, or abuse.</p> <p>5.5. Parental leave following the birth of a child is extended to employed workers in accordance with local law.</p> <p>5.6. Gender-disaggregated data is collected related to workforce participation and equal pay.</p> <p>5.7. Steps are taken to ensure that the perspectives of women are heard and incorporated into projects and interventions.</p> | <p>5.8. Processes are in place to protect and assist reported victims of gender-based discrimination, harassment, or abuse.</p> <p>5.9. Measures are taken to ensure equal pay and equality of opportunity for women waste sector workers.</p> <p>5.10. Steps are taken to ensure that women and men have equal access to waste material.</p> <p>5.11. Confidential mechanisms are in place for informal waste sector workers to report instances of gender-based discrimination, harassment, or abuse.</p> <p>5.12. Any projects or interventions by value chain participants to improve the lives of informal waste pickers identify the approximate percentage of women waste pickers present and address their needs.</p> |
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