

Gender and Waste: a multi-landscape topic

UNEP Webinar on Gender and Waste
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Gender is not about women (huh?)

Gender is about **power relations** in a specific (socio-technical) landscape, such as waste, water, politics, culture, industry, the military, energy, or...

Gender is not about behaviour change or individual behaviour at all, it's about **how a social system identifies, protects, or treats specific categories** of women, children, men, minorities, refugees, immigrants, elderly persons

Gender studies identify two key concepts which are helpful for this webinar: (1) **Condition** (as **object**) and (2) **Position** (as **subject**).

Position is the critical concept for Gender and Waste. But most "women in waste" initiatives restrict their focus to condition. Key questions are:

1. What **roles** are available / imposed upon women, men, & others (WM&O)
2. To what extent does the waste system **respond to the needs** of WM&O?
3. Whose **preferences** determine the shape and performance of the system?

Gender roles in ISWM Service Chains

Role	Women	Men	Children	Servants
Service User (eg household)	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Major
Pays for service in household	Primary	Not usually	Not usually	Sometimes
Service Provider (collector)	Secondary	Primary	Seldom	Primary
Street Sweeper	Primary	Latin America	No	Supplementary
Manages inside the house	Primary	No	Sometimes	Secondary
Sets out/takes waste out to street	Secondary if no servants	Primary if no servants	Often (especially w/ Purdah)	Primary where present
Decides what to separate (and sell)	Primary	Seldom	Sometimes	Supplementary
Litters/ dumps illegally / burns	Seldom	Primary	Sometimes	Secondary
Saves/sells recyclables/reusables	Primary	Secondary	Sometimes	Often
Litters/ illegally dumps	Seldom	Often	Sometimes (more often boys)	Sometimes

Gender roles in ISWM Value chains

Role	Women	Men	Children / youth	Families
Dump picker	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Street and Container Picker	Sometimes/ accompanied	Yes	Sometimes/ accompanied	No
Itinerant Waste Buyer (IWB)	Seldom	Yes	Accompanied	Yes
Sorts recyclables at home post-collection	Yes	Seldom	Yes	Yes
First buyer/kabadi/	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Mid-level trader/processor	Seldom	Yes	Seldom	Seldom
Food waste collector (S. America/ Asia)	Yes	Yes	No info	(Zaballeen)
Tech sector/ e-waste dismantler	Seldom	Yes	Male school leavers	No
Tech sector/ repair & retail IT equipment	Seldom	Yes	Male school leavers	No
Micro foundry/aluminum smelting	No	Yes	School leavers	No Info

Woman Street Picker sells to Man buying at Co-operative first buyer, Colombia 2015



Woman in IWB family enterprise sorts plastics that her husband has bought from households where most of the sellers are women

Gender-based support to IWBs in Banyuwangi

- Hypothesis: informal collection is a family activity
- Validation through field work at their homes
- Interview men, who buy and sell,
- Then talk to women, who clean, sort, and store
- Understand that plastic is not traded because it is dirty, light, voluminous, requires storage
- Develop support packages for storage (women's domain) and transport (men's domain)

Thank-you for your attention!

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