

Important but ignored? The role of the informal sector in a future international agreement on plastic pollution

The urgent need for concerted international action on plastic pollution has in recent years gained extensive support worldwide. More than 100 countries, representing all global regions, including developed and developing countries, are now calling for a global agreement. The second session of UNEA5 in February 2022 may become a key venue for such a decision.

Concurrently with these developments the informal recycling sector has received limited attention in discussions around solutions to tackle plastic waste and associated pollution. Estimates suggest that 58% of all recyclable plastic waste globally is collected and handled informally. Despite its significance, knowledge gaps exist on the informal sector's scale, collection capacity, network structures, as well as socio-economic conditions of its workers. **An improved knowledge base on these aspects is important for the development of a forthcoming agreement on plastic pollution, particularly in developing country contexts, where waste collection and recycling heavily rely on informal structures.**

An expected goal of a new global agreement would be the long-term elimination of plastic waste discharge to the environment, through a life-cycle approach that covers all activities from plastic production to disposal. **A holistic understanding of the informal recycling sector and its characteristics across and within national contexts will enhance the potential to design effective instruments that safeguards informal workers and their livelihoods and to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

In this context, we aim to host an international knowledge exchange webinar to engage with experts on international agreements, international organization representatives, civil society organizations, such as waste picker associations, private sector actors, and academics to address key questions for a forthcoming international agreement to become inclusive of the informal recycling sector, including:

- (1) **The potential for incorporating the informal sector in a global agreement**
- (2) **Experiences with designing frameworks and policy tools that are inclusive of the informal sector**
- (3) **Data and methodologies to incorporate the informal sector in a circular economy**

The webinar is jointly organized by the India-Norway Cooperation Project to Reduce Plastic and Chemical Pollution in India (INOPOP) and the newly established International Knowledge Hub Against Plastic Pollution (IKHAPP). We build on relevant studies and ongoing experiences to situate the informal sector within contemporary policy developments and debates.

Agenda	
Date: December 2, 2021 2:00 pm CET (90 minutes)	
Introduction and agenda: Moderated by Dr. Hans Adam (NIVA)	5 min
IKHAPP launch: Dr. Luca Nizzetto (NIVA)	5 min
Inaugural speaker: Bård Vegar (NORAD) (TBC)	5-10 min
Presentations	
What could a 'global agreement on plastic pollution and marine litter' look like? Why is it important? Ingeborg Mork-Knutsen – Senior Adviser – Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment	10 min
Past experiences from developing international frameworks without jeopardizing livelihoods Marianne Bailey – Programme Management Officer – Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury	10 min
Synergies between the informal sector and EPR: Experiences from India Kabir Arora – Coordinator – Alliance of Indian Wastepickers	10 min
The importance of data within an ecosystem approach: Beyond waste pickers, and data needs Siddharth Hande – Founder/CEO – Kabadiwalla Connect	10 min
What is the role of the informal sector in a circular plastic economy? Methodology and knowledge generation Dr. Costas Velis – Lecturer – University of Leeds	10 min
Moderated Discussion	15 min
Summarizing key points and round-up	5 min