

Gender and Informal Sector Integration in Waste Management:

Case studies from Cambodia, Ethiopia and Indonesia

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Outline

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- Practical Actions



Purpose of the Report



- **Highlight why gender matters in waste management** (rising global waste generation, expansion of informal sector, structural inequalities and global agreements).
- **Expose systemic gaps** (unpaid care work, institutional bias, lack of gender-disaggregated data, and health and safety risks) **in waste governance**.
- **Provide evidence-based analysis** (Indonesia, Cambodia, and Ethiopia) **to illustrate real-world gender dynamics across the waste value chain**.
- **Showcase women as agents of change** (local innovations—cooperatives, community recycling systems, circular initiatives).
- **Offer actionable recommendations to build gender-responsive waste systems** (policy reforms, inclusive institutional arrangements, stronger social protection) **and just-transition to a circular economy planning**.

Methodology and Outline of the Report

- The study applies a **mixed-methods, combining quantitative, qualitative, and participatory tools** (desk review, focus group discussions, regional policy dialogues and experts review)



Country Analysis

Dimension	Indonesia	Cambodia	Ethiopia
Division of Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women: household waste, informal sorting. Men: recycling business, transport & landfill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women: sweeping, household waste. Men: collection & technical roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women: household waste, informal picking. Men: municipal operations.
Informal Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured; women active in waste banks, limited access to high-value materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High female presence at dumpsites; vulnerable & stigmatized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread female informal work; poorly documented.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few women in technical/decision roles; some admin positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited female leadership; mostly admin/sweeping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal female participation in planning/leadership.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender mainstreaming in national plans; weak link to waste policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender absent in waste policy; NDC mentions women but unenforced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong national gender policy; no local integration.
Promising Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste banks, Zero Waste Cities, PKK groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COMPED, Koh Trong Waste Bank, UPWD systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's cooperatives emerging; informal networks.
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of training/certification; risk of exclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear of income loss; care burdens; poor workplace conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of documentation, equipment, training.
Social Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste seen as "dirty"; women tied to domestic roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical jobs seen as male; stigma for waste pickers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural norms reinforce male dominance in public roles.
Data Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Waste Management Information System (SIPSN) potential for sex-disaggregated data; not implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited gender data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No routine gender data; informal sector invisible.

Country Analysis

Country	EPR Status	Gender Integration	Informal Sector	Opportunities
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advanced roadmap (Reg. 75/2019); focus on packaging/plastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No gender provisions; low awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Largely excluded; some local cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen women-led cooperatives & Waste BanksInclude SMEs in PROsGender indicators & data systems
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">EPR under development; focus on packaging/plastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No gender provisions; low awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Central in recycling; no formal engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Build inclusive systems from design phasePilot with women waste worker groupsGender impact assessments & data
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Early-stage EPR for plastics & e-waste;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender not considered in policy or consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High informal participation (women); unrecognized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Map informal roles in planningPromote inclusive formalizationSupport women entrepreneurs

Key Enablers for Gender-Responsive Waste Systems



Enablers for Gender-Responsive Transformation



Policy Coherence

When gender is integrated into sectoral policies (e.g., Indonesia's RPJMN and Presidential Regulation 97/2017), entry points for reform become clearer



Community-Based Models

Decentralized, women-led initiatives (e.g., waste banks: composting schemes) enable local participation and ownership



Capacity Building and Training

Targeted technical training and leadership development for women help bridge skills gaps and challenge gender stereotypes



Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Programs involving civil society, women's groups, and informal workers (e.g., UPWD, YPBBI) show stronger gender outcomes



Inclusive Infrastructure and Tools

Gender-sensitive equipment, sanitation facilities, and childcare reduce barriers to entry and improve retention



Gender as a Driver of Sustainability

Women adopt sustainable behaviors, prioritize environmental health, and lead community mobilization efforts

From Vision to Practice: A Practical Guide for Policymakers to Plan Gender-Inclusive Circular Waste Systems

