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## INTEGRATING THE INFORMAL SECTOR

### Project: Corinto/El Realejo (Nicaragua) – Cologne (Germany) Reorganising waste management

As part of a reorganisation of municipal waste management, a sorting plant for the collection of recyclable materials was built. Besides contributing to climate and environmental policy, the project also had a developmental impact, as informal collectors of recyclable materials were integrated into the operation of the sorting plant. Until then, they had collected recyclables from the local landfill under adverse working and living conditions.

Active participation by the informal waste pickers took place early on at workshops and in consultations during the design phase. The waste pickers were organised in a newly founded cooperative. They attended training courses on the separation and marketing of recyclables. Since the plant was commissioned, the cooperative has been using the newly installed sorting facility. Self-managed, the cooperative works inde-

pendently and in close cooperation with the municipality. It is able to use the sorting facility free of charge and market the recyclables, while the municipality benefits from the reduced amount of waste.

With the help of the new sorting technology, the work processes are now more effective and efficient. The income of the waste pickers has increased significantly. A portion of the revenue is channelled into a savings system from which the members can be supported in crisis situations. Improved occupational health and safety is also having a positive effect on hygiene and health. Children from waste pickers' families can increasingly take advantage of educational opportunities. Their parents also gain social status and are better able to articulate their interests.

## Success factors

- The activities built on existing experiences and competences as well as on (an) existing informal value creation (chain).
- An improvement in working conditions, income and the health and education of those affected enabled positive developmental effects.
- Undesired negative effects were avoided. These can occur if informal value creation already exists but is not considered and integrated into the project design.

## Practical advice

1. In waste management contexts, it is not unlikely that an informal sector will exist. Through dialogue with your project partners and on-site project visits, determine whether an informal sector exists in your specific case, and whether people benefit from waste or earn their living from it.
2. Discuss within your project partnership whether the informal sector is relevant and should be considered in the project.
3. Involve people from the informal sector in the conceptualisation of the project or in its concrete design. In this way you can address needs, integrate experiences and create acceptance and ownership.
4. Formalise informal activities, for example through a cooperative or a private-sector form of organisation, or through municipal employment.
5. Conduct training on the recyclables process and how to use and maintain machinery, and build capacity in waste sorting and marketing.

### ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL gGmbH Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen

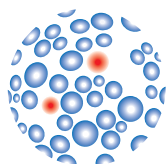
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 40 · 53113 Bonn  
Postfach 12 05 25 · 53047 Bonn  
Telefon +49 228 20 717-0

info@engagement-global.de  
www.engagement-global.de

### Contact

Project team Municipal Climate Partnerships  
climatepartnerships.skew@engagement-global.de

For more information and details of your personal contact go to  
<https://skew.engagement-global.de/municipal-climate-partnerships.html>



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