

## Employment Creation Model in Sri Lanka

### Promoting Green Jobs and Livelihoods in Municipal Solid Waste Management

#### Background and Justification

Management of solid waste represents one of the key environmental and social challenges in Sri Lanka today. Existing formal and informal employment within the waste management sector is marked by a widespread deficit of Decent Work. A lack of respect for the dignity of individuals (mainly women) involved in this sector is a major concern. Other obstacles include low levels of remuneration and poor working conditions, coupled with an absence of standardized training and opportunities for skills development. Despite these challenges, the sector offers potential to improve working conditions and match decent work with green jobs. Through an organized and occupational safety and health - conscious rehabilitation of the present ad-hoc systems of collection and (re)processing of waste, opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction are achievable. In particular, plastics recycling and composting have been identified as promising sectors for green jobs generation on the basis of their marketability and thus their potential for upgrading and expansion.



#### National Frameworks

Addressing the issue of solid waste management is a priority of the Sri Lankan government, under the mandates of both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Local Government. Sri Lanka also has in place a Decent Work Country Program to improve livelihoods and opportunities for its people. During the National Green Jobs Conference, held in Colombo, in January 2011, the ILO tripartite constituents highlighted the need for changes to the solid waste management sector and made that a priority. A national solid waste management (SWM) programme titled 'Pilisaruru' has been launched by the government with the aim to ensure that recovery of waste materials is conducted in an environmentally sound manner.

The main focus for intervention is the Western Province, which is estimated to generate approximately 60% of the 7,000 metric tons of solid waste per day in Sri Lanka. Though local authorities are primarily responsible for solid waste management, it is overseen by the Waste Management Authority (WMA), a statutory body created by the Western Provincial Council with responsibility for the collection, transportation, treatment and final disposal of solid waste.

#### Solid Waste Management Employment Creation Model

There are important green-job-creation opportunities in Sri Lanka's recycling industry. However sub-standard working conditions, productivity gaps and low incomes as well as the informal nature of the work remain key challenges to be addressed. To transform waste recycling into work which is truly deemed to be 'green jobs' is the main aim of the employment model for the Western Province of Sri Lanka. The model achieves its objective to improve working conditions by supporting innovative partnerships, developing curricula for skills, entrepreneurship, and financial training. The model promotes productive work and facilitates the progressive formalization of jobs among the most vulnerable categories of informal workers and women involved in waste collection and processing.

#### Value chain development and market access

In its promotion of green jobs, this employment model links a conventional market-focused approach to value-chain development, with a view to assessing the environmental and social outcomes generated by the segregation and handling of waste. The main aim of this exercise is to evaluate areas where employment can be made more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Interventions, though focused at pilot sites, are also being conducted at provincial and national level across Sri Lanka's plastics recycling and composting value chains.

Ensuring there is a market for greener products has been confirmed through market analysis of the demand for the plastic pellets and compost produced under the employment model. Exploring positive incentives for increased source separation – and pointing out existing negatives – has proved a valuable practice (e.g. introducing point systems, cash reward incentives or in-kind payment, exemption of waste tax etc. for both producers and buyers). Improved community-level collection and separation / processing initiatives have been conducted through study tours and sharing of experiences of good practices.

#### Improving working conditions

Integration of OSH standards into the National **Competency Standards** for the position of Municipal Solid Waste Operation Assistant is being scheduled under the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. The project has worked to create specifications and contextualization of **occupational safety and health (OSH)** for the formal and informal sectors in Sri Lanka with manuals being made available in English, Sinhala and Tamil. Meanwhile, awareness raising and training of 300 **trainers on OSH** through the **OSH trainers' network** in the SWM sector has been established. Some 4,000 workers across seven zones in the Western Province benefit from the trainings.

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## Formalization and Gender

Sustainable improvements in Decent Work within the waste management sector require a range of measures related to the organization and regularization of employment. This has begun with regularization of temporary contract employees by WMA and local authorities. Registration and mapping of workers in the informal sector with municipal authorities aimed at improving the framework to legitimize their activities has also been conducted.

In order to ensure that workers and employers have a voice, the employment model advocates modes of collective organization to address Decent Work deficits such as facilitating dialogue and negotiation with waste producers, local authorities and the private sector. Activities also focus on the regularization of temporary contract employees of WMA and local authorities, including registration and mapping of workers in the informal sector with a view towards improving the framework in which to legitimize their activities.

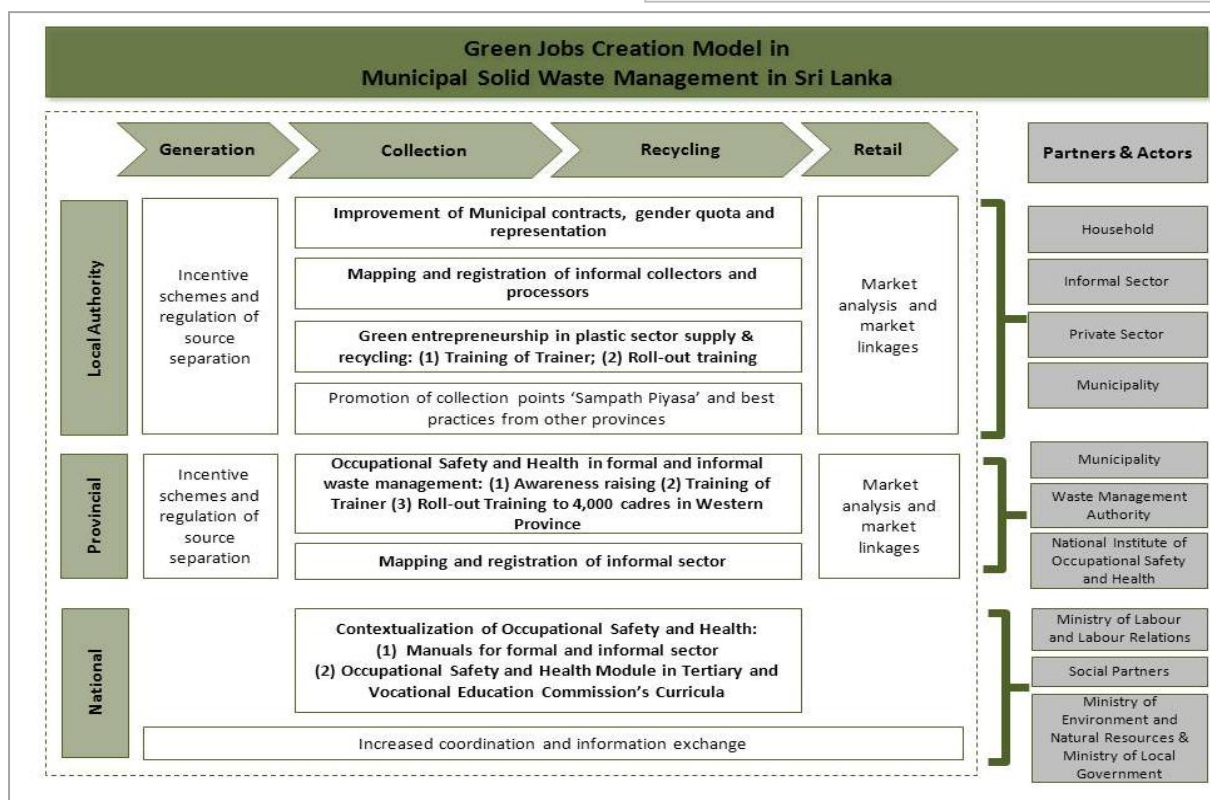
Three Zones have been selected by the Waste Management Authority for pilot activities. The focus is on standards-setting, curricula development and training on best-practice approaches to help waste management workers transform their jobs into green and decent work – especially for women in the sector.

## Partners and Structures

The project works in partnership with the ILO constituents (Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations (MoLLR) and social partners), and in close collaboration with the Western Province Waste Management Authority and the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The project also collaborates with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MoENR), the Central Environment Authority, the Ministry of Local Government and local government bodies.

## Way Forward

OSH will be integrated into the regulatory framework of the provincial waste management mechanisms to ensure minimum standards of operation for decent work. These interventions will be coordinated with efforts to improve social dialogue, provide strategic entry points for greening the whole municipal solid waste management sector at the national level. The plantation sector (tea and rubber) is strongly committed to replicate the ILO waste management Green Jobs and OSH model as a contribution to achieving a socially just greening of the entire sector. The composting of agricultural waste is an important first step in this regard, In addition to improved employment policies, Green Jobs will be mainstreamed into key policy areas that address decent work deficits such as those targeting youth employment and poverty alleviation.



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8 June 2012

For further information please contact:

Ms Shyama Salgado, National Project Coordinator  
ILO Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives  
202 and 204 Baudhaloka Mawatha  
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Tel: +94 11 259 2525  
Fax: +94 11 250 0865  
Email: [salgado@ilo.org](mailto:salgado@ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/colombo](http://www.ilo.org/colombo)