

Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives: Development of Evidence Based Guidelines to Integrate Waste Pickers into South African Municipal Waste Management Systems

Final Technical Report: Johannesburg Case Study

SAMSON, M., TIMM, S., CHIDZUNGU, T., DLADLA, N., KADYAMADARE, G., MAEMA, K., MAHLASE, M., MOKOBANE, A., MOLEFE, K., NDLOVU, L., NTULI, Z., PHAKOE, K., PHOLOTO, L., SEKHWELA, M., AND SHOGOLE, M.

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Prepared for

Department of Science and Innovation
Directorate Environmental Services
and Technologies
Private Bag X894, Pretoria,
South Africa, 0001

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
Waste RDI Roadmap Implementation Unit
PO Box 395, Pretoria,
South Africa, 0001

Prepared by
University of the Witwatersrand
1 Jan Smuts Avenue
Johannesburg
South Africa, 2001

Authors

Samson, M., Timm, S., Chidzungu, T., Dladla, N., Kadyamadare, G., Maeka, K., Mahlase, M.,
Mokobane, A., Molefe, K., Ndlovu, L., Ntuli, Z., Phakoe, K., Pholoto, L., Sekhwela, M.,
and Shogole, M.

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Executive Summary

This Technical Report analyses reclaimer integration in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, located in South Africa's Gauteng province. It is one of two case studies conducted as part of the 'Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives' research project funded by the Department of Science and Innovation's Waste, Research, Development and Innovation Roadmap.

Methodology

The Johannesburg research was conducted between January 2016 and August 2019 by a multi-disciplinary team from the University of the Witwatersrand. It employed a range of qualitative methods to analyse how reclaimers, municipal officials, and residents experienced integration. As people who salvage, prepare, and sell recyclables in Johannesburg are referred to as 'reclaimers', this is the name used in this report.

Policies and plans

The City's Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD) is responsible for Johannesburg's waste management policy, and the Pikitup waste management utility owned by the City is tasked with implementation. In reality, both developed policy and implemented reclaimer projects, which were not always aligned.

The first policy to support reclaimers was the Reclaimer Empowerment Plan adopted by Council in 2011 and implemented through EISD's Reclaimer Empowerment Programme. Importantly, the programme recognised that reclaimers were integral to waste minimisation, reduced waste to landfill, and saved the municipality money.

Although Pikitup plans and strategies recognised that reclaimers played a role in recycling, this dwindled in significance over time. When Pikitup was established in 2001, recycling was not in its mandate. However, in keeping with the growing national prioritisation of recycling, in 2009 Pikitup conducted its first separation at source (S@S) pilot project. In 2012 Pikitup introduced S@S as a flagship programme and adopted "Extracting Value from Waste" as its new business model.

Research commissioned by Pikitup that was published in 2004 reported that the city's recycling rate was comparable to some European countries due to reclaimers' system to extract recyclables from the waste stream. However, Pikitup sought to "create a recycling economy in the city" and designed its S@S programme as if reclaimers' system did not exist. In addition, instead of partnering with reclaimers who were already collecting recyclables, Pikitup contracted private companies to provide S@S services in middle and high-income areas, and community cooperatives in low-income areas. While Pikitup business plans included commitments to integrating reclaimers, this was defined as "the incorporation of reclaimers into the value chain of Separation at Source", and responsibility for integration was increasingly outsourced to the contracted companies and cooperatives.

In 2018, the then Member of the Mayoral Council (MMC) announced that S@S would become mandatory and that reclaimers would benefit from this as they could collect the separated recyclables. However, this was neither elaborated nor operationalised. Pikitup's business plans were clear that S@S was separate from, and took priority over integration, and included ambiguous commitments to reclaimers that were not necessarily implemented.

Approach to integration

As in many municipalities in South Africa and across the world, Pikitup's and EISD's approaches to reclaimers, integration, and empowerment were implicitly grounded in a charity model of

integration that assumed that: officials knew best how to integrate and empower reclaimers; it was not necessary to include reclaimers in decision-making; integration and empowerment of reclaimers would be done for them by other people; reclaimers could be empowered and integrated without disturbing existing power relations or priorities; and reclaimers should be compliant, appreciative participants in programmes designed for them.

EISD and Pikitup reclaimer programmes

Pikitup and EISD implemented three broad types of programmes for reclaimers. They both encouraged and supported reclaimers to form cooperatives, which were deemed the only modality through which reclaimers could be integrated and receive funding and support. Pikitup implemented several projects to integrate small numbers of reclaimers into the official S@S system. These required reclaimers to form cooperatives which were then supported to provide S@S services, but did not pay the cooperatives for this service. EISD focused on ‘empowerment’ rather than integration. It sought to uplift reclaimers by providing them with training, personal protective equipment (PPE), and trolleys; registering them; and producing a video to change public perceptions of reclaimers. EISD consulted reclaimers through several needs analysis workshops and the Joburg Reclaimer Forum, but did not include them in decision-making. The Empowerment Plan included the development of Reclaimer Guidelines, however this was not completed.

Experiences of officials

Officials working with reclaimers were placed in a difficult position. Reclaimer integration and empowerment received highly inadequate budgets. Work with reclaimers barely featured in officials’ key performance indicators (KPIs) and they were given insufficient direction, time, and support for this work. As policy was ambiguous, officials were forced to rely on their own ‘practical norms’ and pre-existing knowledge. However, reclaimer integration fell quite far outside their areas of expertise. Officials were frustrated as they felt blamed for problems that arose from inadequate budgets, S@S contracts that they did not fully control, and decisions that they were not authorised to make. They also requested guidance from national government, particularly on issues such as inclusion of non-South Africans and legally compliant forms of integration.

Experiences of reclaimers

Waste picking only exists because some people are so relatively wealthy that they throw away valuable materials, and others are so poor that they support themselves by collecting and selling these items. Due to the articulations of race and class in South Africa, virtually all reclaimers in the city were (and still are) African, as were the reclaimers who participated in the research. The fact that they worked with waste deepened the discrimination that they faced from people across the social spectrum, including African residents, officials, and politicians.

Johannesburg’s reclaimers had endured years of dehumanisation, stigmatisation, exploitation, and harassment by the general public, police, business, and local and national government. The charity approach dismissed their knowledge, expertise, and pivotal role in the city’s recycling economy. The exclusion of reclaimers from decision-making about their own integration perpetuated their infantilisation. This was exacerbated by some officials’ deeply patronising language and unwillingness to engage reclaimers’ concerns or ideas. The charity model helps to explain how it was possible that while officials felt they were working to support reclaimers, reclaimers felt deeply disrespected and undermined, chose to not participate in official programmes, and argued for fundamental changes to Pikitup’s and EISD’s approaches and programmes.

Participants in the reclaimer empowerment programme derived immediate benefits. However, reclaimers raised concerns regarding the quality, relevance, appropriateness, sustainability, and limited reach of projects to provide reclaimers with training, trolleys, and PPE. The overwhelming majority of reclaimers did not register as they did not trust the municipality or see any benefits. Reclaimers highlighted that the Joburg Reclaimer Forum included buyers, was not representative, participants did not receive mandates, and was not a decision-making body.

Cooperatives formed by reclaimers received inadequate incubation and struggled to survive on income derived solely from the sale of recyclables. There was no route to integration for the majority of reclaimers who did not want to join cooperatives. Projects to integrate reclaimers into S@S collapsed, and the remaining pilot resulted in participants earning lower incomes, losing control over their working hours and sale of materials, and confronting new, time-consuming problems related to managing the cooperatives. The majority returned to the landfill.

Pikitup's S@S programme implanted companies and non-reclaimer cooperatives in areas where reclaimers already worked. As a result, Pikitup's form of S@S worsened reclaimers' working conditions, access to materials, incomes, living conditions, relationships with residents, social status, and integration into the recycling value chain.

The research identified deep gender inequalities between reclaimers that were exacerbated by Pikitup's S@S programme. As plans and programmes did not include non-South Africans, they could not reach a significant proportion of the city's reclaimers, encountered unanticipated challenges, and undermined their own success. The increasing extraction of materials through S@S meant that the source of landfill reclaimers' livelihoods was drying up. Developing ways to include landfill reclaimers in S@S and support them to find other work required far greater attention.

Reclaimers actively contested the official approaches to integration, empowerment, and S@S. Street reclaimers developed creative strategies to retain access to some recyclables when S@S was introduced. In a significant development, during the research period a diverse group of reclaimers from landfills and streets across the city organised to form the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) to demand an end to forms of S@S that dispossessed them, halt the signing of new S@S contracts, and advance their own vision for the city's recycling system and their role in it. In addition to engaging Pikitup and the City, ARO also proactively collaborated with resident associations and a range of other partners to design and pilot its own S@S service provided by reclaimers. Through these initiatives, ARO sought to improve reclaimers' incomes and working conditions, gain experience, and generate data to support refinement and expansion of this approach.

ARO developed relations with officials, but also encountered resistance as it fundamentally disrupted Pikitup and the City's established ways of relating to reclaimers, understanding integration, and designing programmes. Yet, as a result of ARO's mobilisation, some shifts were made beyond the charity approach. Following an ARO march, the then Pikitup Managing Director agreed to establish a task team with reclaimers to develop a framework for reclaimer integration and a joint registration campaign. The registration campaign was a tremendous success until EISD and Pikitup reneged on an agreement to include non-South Africans. The tenacity of the charity model was evident when the City gave all credit for the success of the campaign to Pikitup and EISD without mentioning the crucial role played by reclaimers. However, the experience demonstrated that EISD, Pikitup, and reclaimers can work together to define and implement integration, particularly if the process is driven by senior management.

Experiences of residents

Residents are often seen as passive recipients of official reclaimer integration and S@S programmes who simply decide whether or not to participate. However, residents were actively involved in forging S@S and integration on the ground as they made (conscious and unconscious) political decisions about what to do with their recyclables. Residents living in areas where Pikitup had implemented S@S fell into five categories: wasters (who did not see the value in recycling), agnostics (who did not care who collected their recyclables), enforcers (who actively prevented reclaimers from accessing recyclables), community integrators (who gave their materials to reclaimers); and competitors (who supplemented their own income by selling recyclables). Some community integrators collaborated with ARO to develop resident-reclaimer S@S programmes.

Key findings and lessons

The Johannesburg case study yields several important insights regarding reclaimer integration. Key amongst these is that S@S and reclaimer integration are inextricably linked. Official S@S systems must build on what exists and include reclaimer integration at their core. If they do not, S@S becomes a systemic 'dis-integration' programme that dispossesses reclaimers and overwhelms projects to empower and integrate them. In addition, this form of S@S results in the generation of inaccurate data (as materials collected by reclaimers are not included), and municipal over-expenditure (as contracted companies are paid their full fees even when reclaimers have collected the materials). Integrated S@S programmes will create a stronger, more effective S@S system.

Integration must be institutionalised through adoption of coherent, detailed policy, and inclusion in officials' KPIs. Officials require support through the provision of sufficient time, budgets, training, and guidance. New staff with expertise in areas relevant to working with reclaimers must be appointed to work on integration and S@S. As senior officials and politicians have the power to either block or promote change, it is essential that they understand integration and its relationship to S@S, and participate in decision-making processes.

The most fundamental component of integration is the rejection of the charity model and the forging of a new approach rooted in respect for reclaimers, their key role in the recycling system, and their knowledge and expertise. Integration requires a decision-making body in which reclaimers' visions for integration are prioritised, and reclaimers and officials negotiate an approach to integrated recycling and S@S appropriate for Johannesburg. Reclaimer organising is a crucial component of integration that must be valued and supported. Political leadership and officials should welcome and facilitate engagement with reclaimer organisations.

This shift will encounter numerous challenges. However, Johannesburg has a strong foundation to make significant progress. Reclaimer integration is already included in policy and commitments have been made to develop a guideline for reclaimers and a framework for reclaimer integration. Pikitup and EISD have officials who work with reclaimers, and reclaimers have a democratic organisation. The two groups have established relations and, despite differences and tensions, agreed on and implemented a successful campaign. As with the development of an official recycling system, it is important for integration initiatives to build from existing strengths. Reinstating the joint registration campaign, collectively moving forward to finalise the guideline and framework documents, and committing to an agreed process to design and implement meaningful integration could be simple ways for Johannesburg to move forward and lead the way for reclaimer integration in South Africa.

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Acronyms

ABI	Amalgamated Beverage Industries
ANC	African National Congress
ARO	African Reclaimers Organisation
CoJ	City of Johannesburg
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DA	Democratic Alliance
EISD	Environment and Infrastructure Services Department
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IJRC	Interim Johannesburg Reclaimers Committee
IndWMP	Industry Waste Management Plan
IWMP	Integrated Waste Management Plan
KPA	key performance area
KPI	key performance indicator
LED	local economic development
MMC	Member of the Mayoral Council
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PETCO	PET Recycling Company
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
RAG	Recycling Action Group
SAWPA	South African Waste Pickers Association
S@S	separation at source
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

1 Introduction

Waste pickers play a crucial role in South Africa’s waste management system and recycling economy. They currently salvage the vast majority of post-consumer materials that are extracted from the waste stream and re-valued through the recycling value chain (Godfrey et al., 2016). Without them, landfills would close at an accelerated rate and the recycling industry would lose a reliable source of input materials. Although historically waste pickers have been scorned and treated as nuisances and criminals, increasingly the South African government, industry, and residents are recognising and valuing waste pickers’ contributions.

This shift coincides with a global policy trend towards ‘waste picker integration’. Waste picker integration is advocated by international financial institutions, donor agencies, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and waste picker organisations. Despite (or perhaps because of) this wide support, there is no commonly agreed definition of integration.¹ However, at a minimum, most literature concurs that integration includes: respecting and valuing waste pickers, their knowledge, and their contributions; ending stigmatisation of waste pickers; ensuring waste pickers are fully involved in decisions about waste picker integration and recycling; increasing and securing waste pickers’ access to materials; and improving waste pickers’ incomes and working conditions.

In recent years, as all four levels of government in South Africa have placed growing importance on the idea of waste picker integration, a number of municipalities have undertaken initiatives to engage and work with waste pickers. These initiatives have been developed in relative isolation, without guidance and support from each other or higher levels of government. In addition, they have not been analysed systematically in order to generate insights and lessons to inform waste picker integration in South Africa and elsewhere.

In order to address this gap, the University of the Witwatersrand conducted a research project on ‘Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives: Development of Evidence Based Guidelines to Integrate Waste Pickers into South African Municipal Waste Management Systems’. Led by Dr. Melanie Samson, the research project was funded by the Department of Science and Innovation’s Waste Research Development Innovation Roadmap, with supplementary funding from the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries.

‘Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives’ aimed to facilitate the sustainable integration of waste pickers into municipal waste management systems by conducting in-depth, multi-disciplinary analysis of existing integration experiences and extracting lessons to inform future initiatives.² The research was conducted in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality and the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality by a multi-disciplinary research team. This Technical Report presents the findings of the research conducted in Johannesburg.

¹ There is a large and growing body of literature on waste picker integration. For more discussion of waste picker integration some texts to consult include: Chikarmane (2012); Dias (2011); Godfrey et al. (2016); Kashyap and Visvanathan (2014); Mareello and Helwege (2014); Scheinberg (2012); and Velis et al. (2012).

² The research also informed the development of the Department of Environmental Affairs’ Guideline on Waste Picker Integration for South Africa which was facilitated by the project leader.

1.1 Research questions

The ‘Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives’ research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What approaches are South African municipalities currently using to formally integrate waste pickers into municipal waste management systems?
2. What are the main successes and failures of these integration initiatives?
3. What social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural factors facilitate successful integration? How can these be strengthened?
4. What social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural factors inhibit successful integration? How can these be addressed and overcome?
5. What guidelines would assist municipalities in developing context-specific approaches to successfully integrating waste pickers into their municipal waste management system?

2 Methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

Most research on waste picker integration focusses on the experiences of waste pickers. However, waste picker integration involves and affects numerous parties. ‘Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives’ therefore investigated and critically analysed how waste pickers, residents, and municipal officials experienced integration in order to develop a holistic understanding of waste picker integration in each municipality.

Johannesburg and Metsimaholo were selected as case studies as they represent two very different cases. While Johannesburg is a large metropolitan municipality, Metsimaholo is a relatively small local municipality. In addition, when the fieldwork commenced, the municipality led integration initiatives in Johannesburg, whereas in Metsimaholo waste pickers played a key role in proposing, negotiating, and implementing the form of integration.

The research employed an innovative collaborative multi-disciplinary case study method. In each municipality post-graduate students focused on the experiences of either residents, reclaimers, or municipal officials.³ Three master’s students conducted research in Metsimaholo, and four master’s students and nine honours students conducted research in Johannesburg.⁴ The primary investigator, postdoctoral fellow, and researcher conducted research in both sites. Independent researchers contributed to the Metsimaholo research. The seven master’s students were pursuing degrees in geography, environmental science, anthropology, and urban studies. Each master’s student brought her own disciplinary lens and shared methods that others incorporated into their research, strengthening their studies as a result. The research conducted in each municipality was combined to develop holistic reports on reclaimer integration in the municipality.

³ The two students studying the experiences of local government officials (Jokudu Guya and Nomathemba Dladla) were co-supervised by Professor Claire Bénit-Gbaffou and participated in her “Practices of the State in Urban Governance” research programme. Dr. Rogers Orock co-supervised Manape Shogole’s degree in anthropology. All other students were supervised by the primary investigator, Dr. Melanie Samson.

⁴ All members of the project team who contributed to the research in Johannesburg are included as co-authors of this report. The student reports are cited throughout and their reference details are provided in Section 11.1. All unattributed quotes were recorded by the primary investigator.

2.2 Research Site

2.2.1 The founding and transformation of Johannesburg

Johannesburg's history is bound together with the history of gold and the centrality of mining and the minerals-energy complex to South Africa's economy. Prior to colonization, Africans had mined gold in the area the currently comprises Johannesburg. In 1886, when white prospectors 'discovered' a rich seam of gold, this heralded both the start of the gold rush and the official establishment of the town of Johannesburg (Callinicos, 1980: 8).

During apartheid, the area that now comprises Johannesburg was governed by multiple racially segregated local authorities. These were first ostensibly de-racialised with the formation of the Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council (JTMC) in 1995, which devolved significant powers to four Local Metropolitan Councils. Today's unified Johannesburg Metropolitan Council was created in 2000 (City of Johannesburg Council, 2001).

The newly established metropolitan municipality soon underwent a radical transformation as part of the 'iGoli 2002' municipal restructuring programme that sought to establish a "business approach" (Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 1999a: 6) to the running of the municipality. A minimal number of functions were identified as being core and were maintained in-house. Activities deemed to be non-core (such as the gasworks) were sold to the private sector. Other council activities were transformed into municipal business entities that although wholly owned by the municipality were registered as private companies.⁵ It was within this context that on January 1, 2001 the existing waste management departments of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and Midrand were dissolved to form the waste management utility Pikitup which was tasked with fulfilling the council's constitutional obligations related to waste management (City of Johannesburg Council, 2001; Pikitup, 2001).

In 2019, Johannesburg still lies at the heart of the country's economy, but now as its financial capital. Over a quarter of the people employed in Johannesburg work in the finance sector, which is the largest employer in the city. The city's status as South Africa's economic powerhouse is confirmed by its production of 15% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (City of Johannesburg, 2019: 15).

2.2.2 Socio-economic characteristics

Johannesburg's 2019-2020 Integrated Development Plan (City of Johannesburg, 2019) provides a comprehensive overview of the city's socio-economic statistics. Johannesburg is South Africa's largest metropolitan municipality and is a rapidly growing urban centre. According to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), in 2018 just over 5 million people lived in Johannesburg, which was double the number of people resident in the city in 1996. While a great deal of focus is placed on cross-border migrants, most of this migration was from other parts of South Africa, with 30% of the population born in other provinces compared to 10% born in other countries (City of Johannesburg, 2019: 13-14).

Despite the city's economic strengths, levels of poverty and unemployment remain high. In 2018 the city had a 31.5% unemployment rate (expanded definition). Almost half of the population lived in poverty and a quarter of the city's inhabitants had either inadequate or grossly inadequate access to food. Johannesburg is consistently listed as one of the most unequal cities in the world. Although

⁵ The Zoo and City Parks were registered as non-profit companies.

the City reports that income inequality has decreased in recent years, Johannesburg is still highly unequal (City of Johannesburg, 2019: 15 -17).

This profound inequality underpins the informal system to collect recyclables in the city. As Beall (1997) argues, reclaiming only exists as some people can afford to throw away valuable recyclables, and others are so poor that they will collect them to generate an income. Due to the strong articulations of race and class in South Africa, the overwhelming majority of Johannesburg’s reclaimers were (and still are) African.

2.2.3 Fieldwork sites

Fieldwork for this research report was conducted in residential areas with a range of socio-economic characteristics, on landfills, in public streets, and at cooperatives and buyback centres. Fieldwork was also conducted at Pikitup Head Office, Pikitup depots, and City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality offices. Areas of the city where research was undertaken included: Alexandra, Auckland Park, Bekezela, Braamfischerville Phases 1 and 2 (Soweto), Franklin Roosevelt Park, Johannesburg inner city, Marie Louise Landfill, Melville, Newlands, Orange Farm Extension 1 and 2, Robinson Deep Landfill, Zondi (Soweto), and numerous areas where reclaimers who were being accompanied collected recyclables (including the suburbs of Brixton, Emmarentia, Fairlands, Mayfair, Northcliffe, and Westdene).

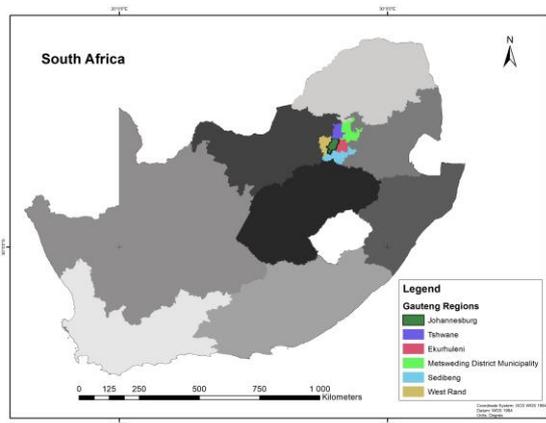


Figure 1: Location of Johannesburg (map by Liberty Mlambo)

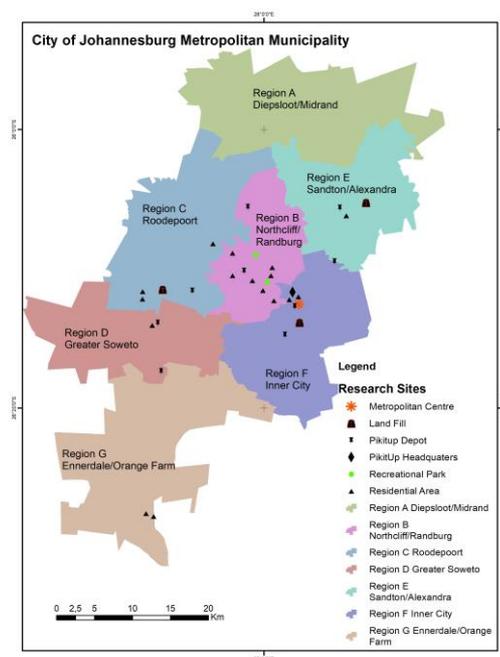


Figure 2: Research Sites (map by Liberty Mlambo)

2.3 Research Methods

The Johannesburg research employed a range of qualitative methods. These included: unstructured and semi-structured interviews, timeline interviews, focus group discussions, ethnography, participant observation, non-participant observation, reflexive diaries, and participatory mapping. Two hundred and ninety-one semi-structured interviews and 10 focus groups/collective interviews with reclaimers, residents, and officials were conducted. All identities have been anonymized. Ethnography included: working as a reclaimer; accompanying reclaimers as they worked; and shadowing officials from the municipality’s Environment and Infrastructure Services Department

(EISD). Participant observation included: participating in and observing meetings between reclaimers and officials from Pikitup and EISD; facilitating workshops that included participants from EISD, Pikitup, and reclaimer organisations; participation in Joburg Reclaimer Forum meetings; observation of Task Team meetings; participating in meetings of the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO); and observing protests and mobilisations by ARO.

2.4 Limitations

The research team encountered a small number of limitations when conducting the research and writing this technical report. First, due to the nature of postgraduate study, the master's and honours students faced limitations on the time they could dedicate to fieldwork and completion of their research reports. Second, as the research sites were chosen to be appropriate for each student's study, this affected the geographical spread of the research. Nevertheless, the fieldwork stretched from Alexandra in the north to Orange Farm in the south, and included informal settlements; historical townships; low, middle, and high income areas; predominantly white, Indian, coloured and African areas; and landfills and streets.

3 Municipal policy on recycling and reclaimer integration

3.1 Policy on recycling

The 1996 Constitution allocates responsibility for waste collection, disposal, and cleansing services to municipalities (Republic of South Africa, 1996). When Pikitup was formed in 2001, recycling was not part of its mandate. However, in the same year, the Polokwane Declaration (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2001) fleshed out earlier commitments to waste minimisation and the waste hierarchy. Subsequently, the 2008 Waste Act (Republic of South Africa, 2009) made municipalities responsible for the development of local standards for the avoidance, minimisation, re-use, recycling, and recovery of waste.

Within the context of these national developments, Pikitup implemented its first recycling pilot project in 2009. Over the course of the next decade, Pikitup adopted a series of policies and programmes that placed increasing priority on recycling. In 2012, then Mayor Parks Tau called for the establishment of a recycling economy in the city, which was then included in the Johannesburg 2013/16 Integrated Development Plan as a key deliverable for the achievement of the City's top-ten goal of creating a green economy (City of Johannesburg, 2013: 56). The call to "establish" a recycling economy erased the facts that a 2004 research report commissioned by Pikitup had found that Johannesburg's recycling rate was comparable to some European countries due to reclaimers' work (DSM, 2004), and that there was already a strong recycling economy in the city that stretched from reclaimers to large corporates and was deeply integrated into the global recycling value chain.

The 2012-2016 Pikitup Roadmap (Nair, 2012) instituted a paradigm shift away from collecting and disposing waste to a new business model called "Extracting Value from Waste". It also prioritised separation at source (the selective collection of separated recyclable materials) as one of Pikitup's two Flagship Programs. Pikitup's 2013 Separation at Source Policy (Pikitup, 2013) enshrined establishing a recycling economy as its primary goal. The 2015/16 Business Plan cemented this transformation by introducing a new corporate goal of ensuring the "realisation of value throughout the waste value chain" (Pikitup, 2015a).

Starting with the 2011 Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP), Pikitup plans and strategies included intentions to roll out separation at source (S@S) across the city. Most recently, in June

2018 the then Member of the Mayoral Council (MMC) for Environment and Infrastructure Services Department, Nico de Jager, announced that S@S would be mandatory as of July 1, 2018.

3.2 Policy on reclaimers and reclaimer integration

Reclaimers, reclaimer empowerment, and reclaimer integration featured in a number of Pikitup and EISD strategies and plans. Although the approach to reclaimers and reclaimer integration was inconsistent and often contradictory (even within the same document), it is possible to discern significant shifts over time.

3.2.1 The early years

Reclaimers were not mentioned in Pikitup's earliest business plans or annual reports. When they appeared in the 2007/8 Annual Report it was noted that "[r]eclaimers play a role in diverting dry recyclable waste from landfills" (Pikitup, 2008: 34). However, rather than supporting reclaimers to expand this role, this report and the two subsequent annual reports focused primarily on the challenges related to reclaimers working on landfills and how to control them and reduce their numbers. The 2011/12 Annual Report noted progress in this regard, citing the development and approval of a "Procedure for the Control and Management of Reclaimers at the Pikitup Landfill Sites" as one of the year highlights (Pikitup, 2012: 30).

3.2.2 The Reclaimer Empowerment Plan (2010 – 2011)

The first major intervention to support reclaimers was the development of the Reclaimer Empowerment Programme by the EISD in 2010. The programme was officially launched by Council in 2011 through the adoption of a Reclaimer Empowerment Plan.⁶ According to a paper by EISD and Pikitup officials who played leading roles in the Empowerment Programme, it arose out of recognition that reclaimers were "one of the biggest player [sic] in the recovery and recycling of waste" and the acknowledgement that:

Waste Pickers form the integral part of waste minimization. They reduce waste going to landfill site by separating at source and diverting it from being landfilled. By taking part in the separation at source they contribute in reducing municipal expenses [related to] collection and transportation of refuse, that would otherwise have cost local government to collect, transported and disposed waste (Baker, Memela and Rampete, 2016: 172).

On this basis, EISD believed that it was necessary to form a "sustainable partnership" with reclaimers (Baker, Memela and Rampete, 2016: 172). In a 2014 report to Council, EISD elaborated that the plan would empower reclaimers through five key interventions that sought to:

- "capacitate the Reclaimers on economic development issues;
- educate Reclaimers on waste management issues and risks associated with environmental and health hazards;
- educate the public about the role played by the Reclaimers in waste management;
- increase Reclaimer productivity and efficiency in waste recovery to assist the City to minimise waste to landfill;
- develop Waste Reclaimers to entrepreneurs and to form co-operatives" (EISD, 2014: 1).

⁶ Official reports submitted by EISD to Council (EISD 2013, 2014) refer to a 'Reclaimer Empowerment Plan', while the 2016 article (Baker, Memela and Rampete, 2016) uses the terminology of waste pickers to refer to the same initiatives, possibly because it was presented to a national audience.

3.2.3 The 2011 Integrated Waste Management Plan

The 2011 Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP) included reclaimers in several ways. The establishment of the Joburg Reclaimer Forum was cited as a key waste minimisation strategy (City of Johannesburg, 2011: vii). The plan also included commitments to establish a “Reclaimer Management System” to register all reclaimers, provide reclaimers with personal protective equipment, and conduct training on health and safety (City of Johannesburg, 2011: 37; 96).

Expansion of separation at source (S@S) across the entire city was a key objective of the IWMP. Analysis of the existing pilot S@S project employed hostile language, stating that “reclaimers invaded the area and took the recyclables before the collection vehicles arrived” and that “influx of reclaimers has been controlled by issuing identification cards to those already in the area” (City of Johannesburg, 2011: 34-35). However, rather than proposing measures to exclude reclaimers from future initiatives, the lesson drawn from the pilot was that “[t]here is a need to embrace and engage the existing informal recycling sector in new proposed formal recycling programmes and discourage the continual unfolding of informal recyclers” (Council of Johannesburg, 2011: viii). It also included a commitment to “[e]valuate and implement appropriate mechanisms to formalize informal salvaging at the working face of the landfill site” (Council of Johannesburg, 2011: 48).

3.2.4 The Pikitup Roadmap and Separation at Source Strategic Plan

Taking a step backwards, the 2012-2016 Pikitup Roadmap (Nair, 2012) made no mention of reclaimers, despite its focus on extracting value from waste and adoption of S@S as a flagship programme. However, the 2013-2016 Separation at Source Strategic Plan (Pikitup, 2013c) included “formalizing reclaimers” as a key principle of S@S, created a work stream on the incorporation of reclaimers into the S@S programme (Pikitup, 2013c: 23). The 2013/14 Business Plan also recognized reclaimers’ role in integrated waste management and committed to “formalize and structure this community” (Pikitup, 2013a; 4).

3.2.5 The rise of Jozi@Work (2014)

The position of reclaimers began to shift in 2014 after then Mayor Parks Tau announced the launch of the Jozi@Work programme. Jozi@Work aimed to divert 1 billion rand from existing municipal departments’ and municipal entities’ budgets to contract 1750 community level co-operatives and enterprises to provide services in nine municipal sectors, including waste management (Office of the Executive Mayor, 2014). Falling in synch with this new flagship mayoral programme, Pikitup’s 2014/15 Business Plan stated that the establishment and facilitation of cooperatives within the Jozi@Work framework would be at the centre of establishing a recycling economy in Johannesburg (Pikitup, 2014a: 5). While supporting reclaimers had never been part of Pikitup’s mandate, the 2014/15 plan expanded the company’s mandate to include employing the community to collect, sort, and transport all waste streams (Pikitup, 2014a: 56). The plan still included reclaimers, stating that they should be incorporated into the value chain (Pikitup, 2014a: 56). However, this would be within the Jozi@Work framework, primarily by encouraging reclaimers to create Jozi@Work cooperatives. As elaborated in section 6.3.2, reclaimers were not prioritised in the formation of Jozi@Work cooperatives and virtually no reclaimers participated in Jozi@Work.

3.2.6 The Pikitup Separation at Source Strategy (2015)

The 2015/6 – 2016/7 Pikitup Separation at Source Strategy (Pikitup, 2015b) is a prime example of how reclaimers were included in Pikitup plans and policies in ad hoc and inconsistent ways. For example, it did not mention reclaimers in the background, despite having key goals related to

building a recycling economy, expanding S@S, and strengthening partnerships with business and communities. Reclaimer integration was not included in the Strategy's objectives. Unlike Jozi@Work, reclaimer integration was not listed as a key theme, and reclaimers were not included in the theme "building partnerships with industry, communities and educational institutions" (Pikitup, 2015b: 7). Reclaimers were not included as stakeholders, and no lessons had been extracted regarding reclaimers and S@S, despite the articulation of important lessons related to cooperatives and households (Pikitup, 2015b: 11-12).

However, reclaimers were not completely absent from the strategy. It highlighted that integrating reclaimers was a key premise of the S@S model and included formalising reclaimers as one of eight principles of S@S (Pikitup, 2015b: 5). Formalisation at landfills would take the form of providing sorting facilities for reclaimers and "deploying" them to work at materials recovery facilities (MRFs). Formalization of street reclaimers would focus on the creating of spaces for them to sort and store their materials and store their trolleys overnight (Pikitup, 2015b: 46). The plan also included the provision of mobile buyback centres (Pikitup, 2015b: 47).

The plan included the first definition of reclaimer integration, as "the incorporation of reclaimers into the value chain of Separation at Source" (Pikitup 2015b, 10). The actions to include reclaimers were primarily drawn from EISD's Empowerment Programme, with the addition of facilitating relationships with end buyers (Pikitup, 2015b: 63). However, the plan noted that "[m]ost of the current integration happens through interface with the cooperatives i.e reclaimers selling material to cooperatives and cooperatives facilitating better working environments for reclaimers" (Pikitup, 2015b: 10). Rather than being integrated directly into S@S, integration was via other actors who received support from Pikitup.

3.2.7 The 2015/16 Business Plan and the rise of private companies

The 2015/16 Business Plan retained statements acknowledging the role of reclaimers. For the first time, reclaimers were included in the Business Plan's "Stakeholder Engagement Table". However, they were the only group listed in the lowest category of "minimal effort" (Pikitup, 2015a: 43). This low priority given to reclaimers was clear in the inconsistent ways that reclaimers featured in the plan, as well as how a reconceptualization of S@S pushed reclaimers even further to the margins.

The 2015/16 Business Plan stated that "[a] business analysis of opportunities will be done to form partnerships with recyclers and reclaimers in all areas, based on a sophisticated operations management plan" (Pikitup, 2015a: 31). However, this was repeated verbatim in the two subsequent plans, and seems to have not been done.

In a significant policy shift, the plan stated that Jozi@Work cooperatives would provide S@S services in low-income areas, but that private companies would lead the roll-out of S@S in middle and high income areas (Pikitup, 2015a: 46). The plan explained that private companies were being introduced as they could provide their own infrastructure and contribute their knowledge and experience (Pikitup, 2015a: 51). Several senior Pikitup and EISD officials noted in interviews that this change was implemented after lobbying by private waste management companies concerned that Jozi@Work was cutting them out of the market. Indeed, the Business Plan states that "[t]he private sector partners will be expected to enable Pikitup to fast track the programme in line with the adopted model while also not being seen as pushing the established private sector operators out of business" (Pikitup, 2015a: 51).

These same considerations were not given to how reclaimers could contribute their deep knowledge, nor to how reclaimers would be pushed out of the recycling system that they created. This was despite the fact that a 2014 update on the S@S programme had highlighted that the impact of S@S for reclaimers had been mainly negative (Pikitup, 2014b). The 2015/16 Business Plan simply asserted that “collaboration with the private sector does not move away from Pikitup’s model of supporting Co-operatives and integrating reclaimers to roll out recycling in line with fulfilling the job creation imperative” (Pikitup, 2015a:51). This assertion was still included in the 2018/19 Business Plan. In another development, the 2015/16 plan made the contracted companies responsible for integrating reclaimers, deepening the outsourcing this responsibility (Pikitup, 2015: 51a).

3.2.8 2016 – 2020

Local government elections held on August 2, 2016 resulted in a transfer of power from the African National Congress (ANC) to the Democratic Alliance and the election of the first non-ANC mayor of Johannesburg in the democratic era. Citing allegations of corruption and nepotism, the new administration cancelled Jozi@Work. However, it was replaced with a similar programme called the “Community Upliftment Programme”, and the provision of S@S services continued to be allocated to companies in middle and high income areas, and to community cooperatives in low income areas.

Reclaimers remained the only stakeholder included in the lowest category of “minimal effort” until they completely disappeared in the 2018/19 Business Plan (Pikitup, 2018: 36). The 2018/19 Business Plan deepened the exclusion of reclaimers in other ways. Co-production with communities remained a key priority for the goal of realising value through waste (Pikitup, 2018: 12), which continued to overlook the role played by reclaimers. “Uncertainty around integration” was cited as a threat (Pikitup, 2018: 17). The plan reiterated a commitment to formalising reclaimers and noted that the relationship with reclaimers was key to S@S (Pikitup, 2018: 29). However, Pikitup further distanced itself from relating to reclaimers, with only two specific commitments to reclaimers: 1) “organize reclaimers and small scale waste collectors to enable them to partner with private sector partners to support their infrastructure needs”, and 2) “facilitate training of waste pickers by relevant partners, and other industry associations” (Pikitup, 2018: 24). Deepening the trend of outsourcing reclaimer integration, the 2018/19 Business Plan therefore completely disarticulated reclaimers from the municipality in its roll-out of S@S.

4 Municipal reclaimer integration initiatives

Pikitup and EISD have implemented a number of projects to empower and integrate reclaimers. These include activities related to the Reclaimer Empowerment Plan, support for cooperatives, and direct integration of reclaimers into S@S service provision.

4.1 Reclaimer Empowerment Plan activities

Baker, Memela, and Rampete (2016) report that the objective of the Empowerment Programme was “to create an enabling environment for the informal private waste sector”. The programme was piloted in Region F of the municipality. As detailed below, it included a number of stepped activities.

4.1.1 Reclaimer video

In 2012 EISD produced a video on the daily lives of reclaimers that sought to capture reclaimers’ challenges and contributions. The video was shown to other departments in the municipality, a provincial forum, and industry (EISD, 2013: 3).

4.1.2 Needs analysis workshops

The first needs analysis workshop was conducted in 2011 (EISD, 2013: 3). Two further workshops were conducted in 2014 and were attended by reclaimers from three of the city's regions. EISD reported that the key issues raised by reclaimers included: provision of trolleys and/or bags from council, payment by buyback centres via bank deposits instead of cash, ill-treatment by some members of the public, receipt of identity cards, and changing Pikitup rubbish collection times to give street reclaimers more time to salvage materials (EISD, 2014: 3).

4.1.3 Reclaimer committee

The needs analysis workshop resulted in a decision to create the Joburg Reclaimer Committee (EISD, 2014: 3), which was established in 2011. Although it initially included only landfill reclaimers, it was later expanded to include street reclaimers as well. The committee met approximately once a month and included one representative from each of Johannesburg's seven regions and landfills.

4.1.4 Personal protective equipment

In 2016 it was reported that the City had provided 600 sets of protective clothing and equipment to reclaimers. These were issued to reclaimers who attended the needs assessments workshops and participated in the pilot project and other empowerment programme activities (Baker, Memela and Rampete, 2016: 175).

4.1.5 Provision of trolleys

Baker, Memela, and Rampete (2016:173-4) report that EISD consulted industry, academics, and reclaimers regarding the specifications for a new trolley for reclaimers. A number of manufacturers were approached, and PETCO sponsored fifty trolleys to be used in the Region F pilot.

4.9 Adoption of the name "Joburg Reclaimer" in the waste by-law

The name "reclaimer" had been used in Johannesburg for some time. Based on consultations with reclaimers, the reclaimer committee established by EISD submitted the official name "Joburg Reclaimers" as the title to be used in the waste management by-law. The committee argued that this name included all reclaimers in the city (unlike terms such as "trolley pushers" that only applied to street reclaimers). The committee also noted that:

the name Joburg will profile the reclaimers to both public and Industry of the area operation. By including the name in the by law, each and every Citizen of the City of Johannesburg will acknowledge their role at the same time their relationship with JMPD (EISD, 2013: 4).

The name reclaimer still applies to people collecting and revaluing recyclable and reusable materials in Johannesburg, and the main organisation of these workers in the city named itself the African Reclaimers Organisation.

4.1.6 Registration

Registration of reclaimers was a key priority for EISD. Baker, Memela, and Rampete (2016: 173) explain why this was the case:

The registration is a requirement of CoJ [City of Johannesburg] waste policy and by-laws for all service providers in the City. The Waste Pickers as waste service providers are also required to register with the CoJ waste information management system. Once the registration is received by the CoJ, a permit is issued to the applicant after an audit has been conducted. The permit gives the waste service provider a right to provide service in the City.

Once registered, each reclaimer was to receive an identity card that would have the reclaimer's photo and reference number, information on the type of waste collected, and the period during which the reclaimer would be authorised to collect materials. The cards would also include relevant conditions in the by-laws and EISD contact details (EISD, 2013: 2).

In 2014 EISD reported that 1 008 reclaimers had been registered, of which 592 were South Africans and 415 were non-South Africans (EISD, 2014: 2). In their 2016 publication, Baker, Memela, and Rampete (2016: 173) state that over 2000 reclaimers had been registered. However, in more recent meetings officials reported that they had registered fewer reclaimers. According to Baker, Memela, and Rampete, officials felt that negative treatment of reclaimers by other parts of the municipality made them distrustful of officials from EISD and Pikitup. They also reported that officials had not succeeded in registering street reclaimers as they could not "find" them (EISD official, 20/02/2017).

4.1.7 Training

In 2013, EISD partnered with the Department of Economic Development and industry to conduct training for reclaimers on business skills, the by-laws, recycling, and the industry (EISD, 2013: 4). The training was expanded in 2014 with funding from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EISD, 2014: 2). Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) funds were meant to be used to create work opportunities for the unemployed (National Department of Public Works, 2014: 17). However, in the absence of dedicated funding for work with reclaimers, EISD made creative use of the EPWP to ensure that the training could be rolled out. The funds were used to pay a service provider to provide the training, cover the cost of the workshops, and to pay stipends to reclaimers who attended.

4.1.8 Guidelines for reclaimers

In August 2014, EISD reported that a service provider had started to develop guidelines for reclaimers and that the guidelines would be completed by the end of September 2014 (EISD, 2014: 3). It appears that the Guidelines were not completed as they have not been made available and were not mentioned in subsequent documents or interviews with officials or reclaimers.

4.2 Support for cooperatives

Support for the formation of cooperatives was a key component of the Empowerment Programme. Pikitup and EISD partnered with industry organisations such as PETCO, Collect-a-Can, and ABI to conduct workshops with reclaimers to promote the cooperative model and provide direct support to the cooperatives. The buyback centres were each provided with space and infrastructure, a baling machine, scales, and a truck with a driver. In April 2019, EISD reported that one cooperative buyback centre had collapsed, but four were still functioning. According to EISD, one remaining cooperative included former reclaimers who had been supported to move up the value chain, while the others were comprised of community members who had not previously worked in the sector.

Although Jozi@Work was not part of the Empowerment Programme, it also facilitated the creation of cooperatives. A senior Pikitup official reported that Jozi@Work provided cooperatives with more extensive support through the contracting of a "capacity building agent" (Pikitup official, 29/06/2016). In addition, the Jozi@Work cooperatives had more secure incomes as they were paid a service fee to pick litter, sweep the streets, and collect litter recyclables. However, it was widely acknowledged that reclaimer integration via Jozi@Work had not been successful as few reclaimers participated in the programme (Pikitup official, 11/10/2016).

4.3 Integration of reclaimers into S@S

Pikitup undertook several initiatives specifically designed to integrate reclaimers into S@S. Pikitup and EISD officials were aware that the projects had encountered problems and listed many of these themselves. They suggested that the students involved in the “Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives” research project study some of these projects in order to gain greater insight into why that had been the case.

A pilot project to integrate landfill reclaimers into separation at source was conducted at Robinson Deep landfill. In order to participate, landfill reclaimers were required to join or create cooperatives. Four existing cooperatives merged into two, so that all interested reclaimers could participate. Pikitup also developed a project to integrate street reclaimers into a separation at source programme. The project was based out of Linbro Park, which was a closed landfill that was converted into a sorting facility in 2011. Seven cooperatives based at Linbro Park collected, sorted, and sold recyclable materials. The reclaimer cooperatives at both sites were each given designated collection areas, uniforms, and access to a truck and driver to assist with collection. The cooperatives were required to sell to one specific buyer at each site (Pholoto, 2016; Sekhwela, 2017).

5 Officials’ experiences of integration

Most research on reclaimer/waste picker integration focuses on reclaimers, and there is a dearth of research focusing on the municipal officials who play a central role in designing and implementing integration processes and initiatives. This section focuses on whether and how integration was embedded into EISD and Pikitup officials’ work, as well as how they experienced and understood integration.

5.1 Key performance indicators

Pikitup and EISD officials’ performance was measured against the achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) developed in relation to key performance areas (KPAs) for the municipality and their respective organisations. Nomathemba Dladla (2018) presents an overview of the KPAs and KPIs for EISD and Pikitup for the 2016/7 financial year. Dladla reports that reclaimers did not feature in any of Pikitup’s KPAs, KPIs, or targets. EISD had one KPA related to reclaimers - integration of reclaimers into the waste management system. The two associated KPIs related to the number of reclaimers empowered through the EPWP training programmes and the number of reclaimers provided with personal protective equipment (PPE). The evidence required in both cases was a signed service level agreement and a closure report. Dladla notes that this evidence simply proved that training had been offered by a contracted service provider and PPE had been distributed. Contrary to the focus of the KPA, no evidence was required to establish whether reclaimers had been empowered by the training.

5.2 Contradictory official positions, contradictory positions amongst officials

The absence (or almost complete absence) of KPAs and KPIs related to reclaimers had a number of implications for officials. Dedicating time to working with reclaimers took EISD and Pikitup officials away from meeting the key organisational KPAs and their KPIs. In addition, officials received insufficient guidance, support, and budget for programmes and projects with reclaimers. Combined with the often contradictory and underdeveloped statements and positions on reclaimers in official documents, this meant that the officials were left to draw on their own “practical norms” (de

Sardan, 2015) to flesh out strategies and approaches to working with reclaimers. As a result, space was created for significant differences to emerge in officials' understandings of whether and how reclaimers should be integrated into S@S, and the extent to which this should be prioritised.

Officials' positions ranged from concern that the negative effects experienced by reclaimers should be addressed, to assertions that "separation at source is a state-run programme and the reclaimers have little to do in this case", to declarations that "we are not going to be dictated to by reclaimers" (Dladla, 2018: 37). This range of positions was present in both EISD and Pikitup, indicating that a cohesive perspective had not emerged in either organisation. Although officials rarely turned to policy to support their positions, each position could be traced back to different policy statements and commitments in Pikitup and EISD documents. Lack of clarity in official documents and KPIs led to disagreements and tensions between officials and hindered processes of reclaimer integration.

5.3 Officials' understanding of integration

Despite these differences in officials' positions, it is possible to identify some common, core assumptions that underpinned their understanding of integration. These assumptions shaped how officials designed and implemented reclaimer integration and empowerment programmes and related to reclaimers. Drawing on and expanding the framework first presented in Sekhwela and Samson (2019), this section identifies nine key assumptions that shaped officials' understandings of integration: 1) who reclaimers were; 2) reclaimers' role in the municipality's existing recycling system; 3) what reclaimers were being integrated into; 4) the objective of integration; 5) reclaimer income and payment; 6) the relationship between reclaimer integration and separation at source; 7) the mode of integration; 8) recognition of reclaimers; and 9) power and control over integration.

5.3.1 Reclaimers are marginal and disempowered

In line with Pikitup's and EISD's programmes, officials saw reclaimers as poor, economically and socially marginalised people who were disempowered and needed to be uplifted and integrated by EISD and Pikitup (see Sections 6.1 and 8.1 for further elaboration).

5.3.2 Reclaimers are replaceable collectors

Officials recognised that reclaimers were the primary collectors of post-consumer recyclable materials in the city. However, they did not believe that reclaimers had a claim to continue playing this role (see Section 6.3.2 for further elaboration). As in other South African municipalities (South African Cities Network, 2016; Department of Environmental Affairs, 2017), neither the officials nor official strategies and plans recognised the complex informal system that reclaimers had created to collect and revalue recyclables, or reflected on how this system should be considered in the development of integration and S@S programmes.

5.3.3 Integration into the municipal solid waste management system

When officials were asked how they defined integration, none referred to the definition in the Separation at Source Strategy (Pikitup, 2015b: 10) and there was a widespread view that neither Pikitup nor EISD had an official definition. However, as in the formal definition, officials interviewed understood integration as integration into the municipal solid waste management (MSWM) system and into S@S collection in particular.

5.3.4 Minimisation of waste to landfill

A number of officials recognised that reclaimers were already part of the MSWM, as they reduced the amount of waste to landfills by extracting recyclables from the waste stream. One official explained that:

[i]ntegrating is like working together again with them because we recognise them. The major issue is we acknowledge and recognise what they are doing because they help us to reduce the amount of waste that goes to the landfill site. Since we know we are running out of landfill airspace, so the City initiated a project to try and work with them (cited in Sekhwela and Samson, 2019: 7).

In keeping with Pikitup's priorities, the diversion of waste from landfills was officials' key priority, and for these officials the objective of integration was to assist in achieving that goal.

5.3.5 Income earned through sales

Officials believed that reclaimers' incomes should be derived from the sale of recyclables. They repeatedly stated that reclaimers, including reclaimer cooperatives integrated into S@S collection, should not be paid for collecting materials and diverting them from landfills. This was despite the fact that private companies were paid for providing the same service. Reclaimers and reclaimer cooperatives were expected to sustain themselves through the sale of recyclables and to continue subsidising Pikitup by providing free labour that assisted Pikitup to meet its recycling goals.

5.3.6 Integration and S@S are distinct - S@S first, integration second

While officials disagreed regarding whether it was necessary to include reclaimers in S@S, they were clear that S@S took precedence over reclaimer integration and that integration should only be considered *after* the approach to S@S had been decided. There was also an assumption that reclaimer integration (or empowerment) initiatives could be implemented alongside S@S.

5.3.7 Integration via cooperatives

Officials saw cooperatives as so central to integration that the formation of, and provision of support to, cooperatives became synonymous with integration itself. This was despite the fact that research completed in 2015 found that over 91% of waste cooperatives in the country had failed (Godfrey et al 2015). Officials shared a number of reasons for their strong association of cooperatives with integration. These included: national government's prioritisation of cooperatives; the associated government funding for cooperatives; then Mayor Tau's emphasis on cooperatives through Jozi@Work; the prioritisation of cooperatives in successive Pikitup Business Plans; the compatibility of funding of cooperatives with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA); and officials' lack of exposure to other forms of reclaimer integration. In addition, several officials explained that in 2011 Pikitup had been compelled to insource casual workers and Pikitup did not want to create any opportunity for reclaimers to claim a right to employment. It was believed that integrating reclaimers via cooperatives would place them at sufficient distance to preclude such a demand.

5.3.8 Utilitarian recognition

Officials saw registration and recognition of reclaimers as central to integration. This was primarily for utilitarian purposes so that they could better plan their work with reclaimers; know whom to invite to reclaimer training; identify reclaimers to be supported to form cooperatives that could be integrated into S@S; and provide companies contracted to provide S@S with lists of reclaimers they could integrate in some way. The registration of reclaimers was also seen as central to establishing firmer control over reclamation and collection of recyclables in the city. No official mentioned the

need to register reclaimers so that they could be recognised as waste management service providers and receive permits to work, which Baker, Memela, and Rampete (2016) cite as a legal requirement and key motivation for registration (see sections 4.1.6 and 6.9 for further discussion).

5.3.9 Charity approach

Finally, integration was seen as the municipality's and Pikitup's prerogative. Reclaimers had not been included in discussions about what integration should mean or the form that it should take. Although at times reclaimers were consulted about their needs, they were not included in designing or implementing programmes. As reclaimers were framed as poor people in need of assistance, integration was something that the municipality and Pikitup did *for* reclaimers as a charitable act to help uplift the poor (Samson, forthcoming).

5.4 Challenges

5.4.1 General challenges

Officials from Pikitup and EISD identified a number of challenges encountered in their efforts to integrate reclaimers. These included:

- insufficient allocation of funds in municipal and Pikitup budgets for work with reclaimers
- lack of dedicated funding from other levels of government and industry to support municipal efforts to integrate reclaimers
- conditions that were not appropriate for work with reclaimers attached to EPWP funding
- lack of clarity regarding whether and how to integrate the significant number of non-South African reclaimers
- poor relations between reclaimers and the police and other government departments made reclaimers suspicious when Pikitup and EISD attempted to register them
- high levels of reclaimer distrust of officials
- limited reclaimer understanding of the bylaws and relevant legislation, and hence lack of reclaimer appreciation of the constraints officials worked within
- difficulty “finding” reclaimers to register them
- collection of recyclables by independent reclaimers before the Pikitup trucks could collect them for the cooperatives
- competition with other municipal entities and departments for land earmarked for buyback centres
- the length of time required to conduct the environmental impact assessment required to receive authorization to build a buyback centre
- residents in high-income areas thwarted the establishment of buyback centres in their suburbs, which was where the most valuable recyclables and highest volumes were salvaged
- it was not possible to generate accurate statistics on how much recyclable material was diverted from landfills as materials collected by reclaimers were not recorded (for some this was an indication that reclaimers should be included in S@S, while for others it indicated that new methods needed to be found to prevent reclaimers from taking materials)
- lack of guidance and support from national government related to reclaimer integration.

5.4.2 Challenges related to cooperatives

Officials shared a cluster of challenges and frustrations related to what they referred to as reclaimers' “unwillingness” to be integrated. As officials saw cooperatives as the route through

which reclaimers could be integrated into S@S, they went to great lengths to encourage reclaimers to form cooperatives and admonished them for not doing so. One EISD official expressed dismay that reclaimers saw officials as undermining and excluding them from S@S, telling reclaimers at a meeting held on September 29, 2016:

Don't see us as enemies. We are trying to help you form coops...the more you see us as enemies, it is a problem. Let's find a way to say, this is what we are putting on the table and please consider us. The cooperatives we are establishing, we are trying our best to assist them.

At the same meeting, a Pikitup official took a tougher stance, reminding reclaimers that “[w]hen Jozi@Work started we said this is what is going to happen; form coops or you will be left behind.” According to these officials, it was reclaimers who were choosing to exclude themselves by not forming cooperatives.

However, officials also shared challenges and concerns related to the cooperatives that had been formed. One Pikitup official articulated the commonly held opinion that “coops like to be spoon-fed, they can't be on their own” (Pikitup official, 28/11/2016). This was particularly frustrating for the official who explained that:

when we started we told them (cooperatives) that the project is for one year, Pikitup will help you up to a certain point. From there you have to sustain yourself, but they cannot sustain themselves. If we pull out today, they will all be dead... they depend too much on Pikitup, if Pikitup doesn't assist... they fold their hands but at the same time expect money to come in (Pikitup official, 28/11/2016).

This sense that cooperatives required too much support underpinned one EISD official's explanation of the preference for working with private companies:

If you had to get sugar for your coffee and you had two option, the one option being a bowl of sugar and the second where you would have to take sugar cane that needs processing first, which option would you take? (EISD official, 28/11/2017; cited in Dladla, 2017: 120).

The official elaborated that reclaimer cooperatives required too much support, over too long a period of time to be contracted to provide S@S in high income areas, and working with reclaimers resulted in “vicious cycles because the cooperatives that they develop do not last for a long time” (EISD official, 28/11/2017; cited in Dladla, 2017: 120).

The simultaneous commitments to rolling out S@S and integrating reclaimers into S@S via cooperatives therefore created a situation in which officials continued to exhort reclaimers to form cooperatives while knowing that the majority did not want to do so, and that reclaimer cooperatives would not be considered seriously as S@S providers in high income areas.

5.4.3 Challenges related to non-South Africans

Officials repeatedly raised concerns regarding the large number of non-South African reclaimers working in Johannesburg. While no accurate data existed, there was widespread agreement that non-South Africans comprised a significant percentage, if not a strong majority, of reclaimers working in the city. The largest populations of non-South African reclaimers were from Lesotho and Zimbabwe. However, there were also small numbers of reclaimers from countries ranging from Mozambique to Ivory Coast.

Despite non-South African reclaimers' crucial role in the collection of Johannesburg's recyclables, they were excluded from the few integration opportunities that existed. Although initially non-South Africans were included in registration (EISD, 2014: 2), by the time the research was conducted this was no longer the case, which became a major point of contention with the African Reclaimers Organisation (see Section 6.9 below). Officials reported that the terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act (Republic of South Africa, 2004) and the EPWP (National Department of Public Works, 2014) prevented them from including non-South Africans in training, providing them with equipment, or assisting them to form and register cooperatives. Officials feared that if they did so, they would be reprimanded and possibly compromise the municipality's clean audit status.

The only creative suggestions by officials regarding how non-South Africans could be included without contravening legislation was to encourage Jozi@Work cooperatives to purchase materials from non-South Africans and simply "let the foreigners continue" while South Africans received support to improve their position in the sector (Pikitup official, 21/01/2016). Yet, as an EISD official observed, this would result in South African reclaimers moving up the value chain while non-South Africans "will remain at the bottom of waste picking" (EISD official, 01/03/2018).

As with their promotion of cooperatives, officials were aware that the exclusion of non-South Africans compromised their integration initiatives. One explained that:

You go to Goudkoppies trying to implement a project and find out that most of them are not South African. While you are trying to implement the project violence erupts from the non-South Africans. Then what do you do? You stop the project (EISD official, 01/03/2018).

However, the officials were unanimous in their belief that there was no scope to change this situation without amending legislation, which at least one official actively opposed declaring: "[N]o policy should be changed. Nothing. The non-South Africans must go back home and come back when they have legal documentation" (Pikitup official, 19/03/2019).

6 Reclaimers' experiences of integration

This section focuses on reclaimers' experiences of reclaimer integration. It begins by discussing how reclaimers understood and felt about their relationships with officials. The following sub-sections focus on reclaimers' experiences of Pikitup and EISD empowerment, integration, and S@S programmes. Specific attention is paid to the experiences of women and non-South African reclaimers. Common assumptions underpinning reclaimers' understanding of integration are then explored. Section Six concludes with a brief discussion of how reclaimers contested and negotiated the official programmes, as well as how they proactively forged alternatives.

6.1 Denigration and exclusion from decision-making

Reclaimers on the streets and at the landfills understood that they were the core of recycling in the city. Yet they were acutely aware that this was not how the municipality saw them. A long-time landfill reclaimer described the pain reclaimers had experienced in earlier years when officials called them scavengers (amongst other derogatory terms) and completely refused to talk to them (Landfill reclaimer, 09/07/2017). In the early 2000s, the municipality, Pikitup, and officials began to use the more respectful name "reclaimers". However, despite the change in name, reclaimers frequently spoke of how they felt officials did not see them as human beings because they worked with rubbish.

Reclaimers felt deeply infantilised by officials. Working within a "charity model of integration" (Samson, forthcoming), officials frequently assumed a role of guiding and instructing reclaimers. At

the May, 2017 workshop, one Pikitup official castigated reclaimers for not registering, telling them “you need to be registered! You need to be known!” At a later meeting, another Pikitup official told reclaimers that integration needed to start with “baby steps” and exhorted the reclaimers to “open up your minds about opportunities!” (Pikitup official, 11/10/2016). There was no indication that either official considered that they and their colleagues should open up their minds to meaningfully engage reclaimers’ critiques and concerns. One reclaimer summed up the thoughts of many at the May 17, 2017 workshop when he exclaimed “[h]ere we are being treated like kids!”

Reclaimers considered their infantilisation and exclusion from decision-making as an affront to their dignity. A street reclaimer informed Pikitup and EISD officials that:

[t]he municipality should treat us with respect and dignity. Even though we are doing different work from others because it is dirty work, we have dignity in ourselves because we are doing this for our kids (Street reclaimer, 17/05/2017).

At another meeting between Pikitup, EISD, and reclaimers, a Pikitup official also focused on the question of reclaimers’ dignity, telling them, “we are trying to bring back your dignity by improving relations with committees. If you look at the room, there is no leather chair for [the name of the official] and another one for you. We want to be on an equal level” (Pikitup official, Sept 29, 2016). The official seemed to be implying that others had robbed reclaimers of their dignity and now, as part of their charitable acts, Pikitup and EISD were “giving” reclaimers dignity by sharing chairs with them. This statement revealed a stark lack of understanding of the deep, historical processes through Pikitup and EISD actively undermined reclaimers’ dignity, as well as the depth of transformation required to redress this. These power-laden relationships between officials and reclaimers underpinned and shaped reclaimers’ experiences of Pikitup and EISD’s empowerment, integration, and S@S programmes discussed in the following sub-sections.

6.2 Empowerment Programme

6.2.1 Training Workshops

Training was a priority for many reclaimers, and information on cooperatives was useful for those who wanted to create cooperatives or had already done so. Through the EISD workshops reclaimers also learned that if they wanted to receive support from EISD and Pikitup it was necessary to form cooperatives, spurring some to follow this path even if it was not what they most desired. In a sense, the workshops helped reclaimers to learn how to play the integration game.

However, reclaimers who had attended EISD’s workshops raised a number of significant concerns. They noted that there were too few opportunities for training, that many of the people attending training were not reclaimers, and that non-South Africans were excluded (see Section 6.6 for further discussion on the exclusion of non-South Africans). In 2017, reclaimers who had attended a training workshop were not paid their stipends and it took ARO many months to ensure that they were paid.

Reclaimers were deeply critical of the content and facilitation of the workshops. They emphasised that they were being taught about different materials and how to sort them when they were already highly knowledgeable about these issues. Reclaimers reported that because of the way the information was presented in the workshops, they struggled to understand the material on topics such as by-laws, policies, and business management and how it related to their work.

Nomathemba Dladla’s reflections on the two days of a three day EISD reclaimer training workshop that she attended while conducting research for her Master’s degree in 2017 are illuminating:

Within the workshop, the facilitator talked to the reclaimers like business people. This was good in the sense that he spoke to them with respect. But this was disadvantageous because the content of the work[shop] was at a high level. Since the procured company was left to compiling the content to be used at the workshop, the information provided was too dense. Some of the sessions went for longer than an hour due to the facilitator wanting to meet his goal in three days. The content of all the concepts and ideas presented were clear in the English language, but some things were then lost in translation to Zulu and especially Sotho. Since the presentation was in English, the facilitator would translate the content for the reclaimers. This left the reclaimers who mostly speak Sotho distraught because of the language barrier. One could argue that these workshops tended to be intimidating for the majority of the reclaimers because of their level of education. Some of the concepts were very theoretical even for me and they were hard to apply in the context of what reclaimers do. For example, the workshop facilitator talked about how businesses are classified according to the profit gained. At this point I could hardly tell where this was part of what felt like an economics lecture was leading and what the connection was in terms of empowering reclaimers. During one of the breaks, I spoke to some of the reclaimers and one of them was open enough to share how he found the training. He spoke in English and said,

“This is helpful for less than 3 per cent of us and some of the stuff is hard to understand for my colleagues.”

I asked him why this was the case and he pointed out that most of his peers were illiterate and they had difficulty understanding all that was taught. For example, the content on how reclaimers should treat their work as a business was very wordy and included economical terms that were hard to break down in vernacular (Dladla, 2017: 123-4).

Dladla emphasises that EISD had not provided the contracted company with meaningful guidance regarding what material to include, the level at the which the workshop should be conducted, or how the material should be shared with the reclaimer participants. Echoing reclaimers, she argues that this is one reason why reclaimers must be centrally involved in designing training workshops. She adds that it is important that training providers be given clear guidance and direction. It is important to note that designing and conducting training for reclaimers is far from the regular work of EISD, and that it is unlikely that the officials had the knowledge of participatory pedagogy or skills required to meaningfully guide and oversee contracted training providers. This highlights the importance of having committees with reclaimers and stakeholders with relevant expertise to oversee integration programmes and provide officials with support to manage these initiatives.

6.2.2 Equipment

Reclaimers who received personal protective equipment (PPE) from EISD derived immediate benefit. However, they received only one set of PPE, which meant that the uniform needed to be washed daily or worn dirty. When the PPE wore out, was damaged or lost it could not be replaced. Rather than being a sustained commitment to improving reclaimers' working conditions, the distribution of the PPE was more akin to a once-off charitable donation. In addition, the vast majority of reclaimers did not receive any PPE at all. Due to the extremely limited amount of funding available it was not feasible for EISD to provide PPE to all reclaimers on a sustained basis. However,

the reclaimers' critiques raise the question of whether the purchase of PPE was the best use of funds intended to empower reclaimers.

For some reclaimers, the trolleys became emblematic of the problems with EISD and Pikitup's approach. A street reclaimer berated officials stating:

You don't know the trolley, you don't push it. We push it on a daily basis. You made trolleys without handles. You need to know why we choose what we choose, look at how many people are using different ones. For example, we have plastic handles as they are easier to push (17/05/2017).

More recently, a street reclaimer ARO activist remarked that if EISD and Pikitup truly wanted to support reclaimers to improve their working conditions, position in the value chain, and incomes, instead of giving reclaimers trolleys they should find creative ways to make trucks available to assist reclaimers who are not members of cooperatives (26/08/2019). ARO held the position that instead of providing each small cooperative with trucks and infrastructure, Pikitup should work with ARO to create recycling hubs where independent reclaimers could have space to sort and store materials, access to trucks and other equipment, bale their materials, work together to process the recyclables and create new products, and access childcare, healthy food, ablution facilities, and other amenities. This would require more funds than were available for reclaimer integration at the time, but ARO argued that it should be included in future plans and also be supported by industry.

6.2.3 Registration

A number of reclaimers, particularly those working at landfills, reported that they had registered with the City several years prior. However, as officials acknowledged, the registered reclaimers were in the minority. Reclaimers reported a number of reasons for not registering. These included not seeing the benefits of doing so, not trusting the municipality and Pikitup, and not knowing about the registration process.

Street reclaimers were incredulous when officials listed "not being able to find" them as a key challenge encountered in registration drives, as they worked on public streets across the city. The issue of finding reclaimers was not limited to Johannesburg. It was of such concern that when it was raised at a workshop to develop the national guideline on waste picker integration (which included representatives of EISD and ARO), the working group dedicated time to develop a list of strategies municipalities could use to "find" and register street reclaimers. Virtually all strategies were proposed by reclaimer representatives, with the central one being that reclaimers needed to be partners in registration campaigns (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2017). For reclaimers, this was an example of how disregard for their knowledge and skills undermined the City's achievements of its own objectives. As discussed in Section 6.9, Pikitup and EISD subsequently collaborated with ARO to start a collaborative registration campaign. Both the initial success of the campaign in registering a large number of reclaimers, and the campaign's ultimate demise provide important lessons regarding registration and reclaimer integration.

6.3 Integration into S@S

6.3.1 Reclaimer integration initiatives

Reclaimers were not involved in designing or overseeing the Robinson Deep or Linbro Park projects to integrate reclaimers into S@S. Unsurprisingly, these projects did not meet a number of the participants' core needs and even had negative implications for the reclaimers. Ultimately all

reclaimers withdrew from the Linbro Park project and virtually all withdrew from the Robinson Deep pilot project. Those who remained became “coopreneurs” who paid casual workers to collect materials for them while they returned to the landfill (Pholoto, 2016; Sekhwela, 2017).

As all reclaimers had left Linbro Park it was not possible to interview them to ascertain why they had done so. However, research by Pholoto (2016) and Sekhwela (2017) identified a number of reasons why reclaimers withdrew from the Robinson Deep pilot project. Due to the similarity in the design of the two initiatives, many of these reasons were likely applicable to Linbro Park as well.

Integration led to a decrease in income for participating reclaimers for several reasons. The cooperatives were not paid for providing the S@S service,⁷ yet they earned less money from the sale of their recyclables than when they salvaged at the landfill as they were required to sell to one buyer who paid low prices. By removing reclaimers’ ability to sell to other buyers, the integration pilot actually weakened their position in the value chain. The pilot also led to a reduction in the quantity of materials the reclaimers’ could salvage. As the collection truck was only available for limited hours, street reclaimers collected the materials before the truck arrived and reclaimers could not extend their working hours as they had done at the landfill. One reclaimer explained how this influenced his decision to leave the pilot and return to the landfill:

I stopped working through cooperatives because the working hours allocated to use the truck are less; when I work by myself I cover way more hours and make more money for myself (Landfill reclaimer, Robinson Deep, 01/09/2016; cited in Pholoto, 2016: 42).

In addition to experiencing a decrease in income some reclaimers went into debt when they used their own money to subsidise the cooperative and keep it afloat (Pholoto, 2016; Sekhwela 2017).

The requirement that the reclaimers work in cooperatives in order to be integrated also played a role in their withdrawal from the pilot. Running the cooperative consumed a significant amount of additional labour that could have been used to salvage more materials at the landfill. One former cooperative member explained how they felt coerced into forming cooperatives:

...we were told what to do actually, it wasn’t our choice. It was not someone who woke up in the morning and thought, look, let me start something on my own. So it’s like forcing someone into something he doesn’t understand. So for me it never worked and for the other guys it never worked (Buyer, Robinson Deep, 25/10/16; cited in Sekhwela, 2017: 95).

6.3.2 Jozi@Work

Technically, reclaimers could be integrated via Jozi@Work by creating or joining Jozi@Work cooperatives. However, even a Pikitup official noted that “[r]eclaimer integration was not successful [in Jozi@Work].” While this official hypothesised that reclaimers had not been integrated as “either they didn’t apply or weren’t successful as there was a lot of competition” (Pikitup official, 11/10/2016), reclaimers offered different explanations.

⁷ A few officials rationalised the lack of payment by stating that the cooperatives received in-kind support such as the trucks and drivers. However, such support is a common component of incubating cooperatives. It should not be seen as compensation for service provision as the reclaimers only formed cooperatives as they were required to do so in order to participate; without the incubation the cooperatives would not be able to collect materials at all.

Reclaimers reported that they had not known about Jozi@Work, been invited to apply, or provided with assistance to do so. They were aggrieved that people who had never worked with recyclables or waste were displacing them and being paid to collect recyclables and provide basic waste management services:

I think projects like Jozi@Work are very important. The only problem is that when such programmes are implemented, we don't get considered, they only think of other unemployed community members who have been relaxing doing nothing to begin with. Some of these Jozi@Work people come here to sell their recyclables and they don't even have the knowledge to sort the recyclables properly because they are so inexperienced with this job and instead of hiring us with the expertise they hire them (Street reclaimer, Zonde, 18/08/2016; cited in Ntuli, 2016: 35).

Reclaimers argued that they should have been prioritised by Jozi@Work as they had relevant experience and knowledge and this was how they earned their income (Mahlase, 2016). However, the primary reason that reclaimers were not integrated via Jozi@Work was because officials did not share this perspective. Officials stated in a number of fora that reclaimers could not be given preference over unemployed community members, seemingly blind to the fact that reclaimers were not unemployed as they were already earning a living collecting recyclables.

6.3.3 Completely out with outsourcing of integration

Since 2015, Pikitup had been shifting responsibility for reclaimer integration to the private companies and community cooperatives it contracted to provide S@S services. However, reclaimers were not aware of this obligation or any efforts by private companies to include them. At the workshop held in May 2017, some officials repeatedly stated that as reclaimers had not registered, it was their fault that the private companies had not integrated them. A Pikitup official elaborated:

Being a waste picker is not a ... you don't need a licence. Anyone can be a waste picker. When we say to the service provider "find waste pickers" they will find these people. And they will hire these people and we will take these people. We did our research before we started and we knew this would be a problem. This is why we were doing registration. If people had registered we would have a list to give them (Pikitup official, 17/05/2017).

When reclaimers raised grievances over their exclusion from the roll-out of S@S, officials reported that the contracts with the private providers specified that the companies should integrate reclaimers. However, officials conceded that neither Pikitup nor EISD had provided the companies with guidance regarding how this should be done. It also appeared that the contracts did not contain mechanisms to monitor whether the companies had included reclaimers, nor penalties to be applied if they had not done so. The outsourcing of integration had not resulted in any integration.

6.4 Dis-integration – the effects of S@S

Although Pikitup business plans repeatedly asserted that contracting private companies to provide S@S services would not negatively affect either reclaimers or Pikitup and the City's commitment to them, the reality on the ground was quite different. As elaborated in this sub-section, because Pikitup's approach to S@S did not take reclaimers' collection system into account, S@S by private companies and Jozi@Work served to "dis-integrate" and dispossess reclaimers from the place they had created for themselves from the recycling value chain and waste management system.

6.4.1 Street reclaimers

The private companies and cooperatives contracted to provide S@S services provided residents with special bags in which to place their recyclables. On collection day, the company or cooperative would collect the full separated bags and replace them with empty bags for residents to fill and put out the following week. Reclaimers were explicitly told that they could not take those bags or salvage from them. This led to a dramatic decrease in the amount of materials salvaged by reclaimers, as well as an associated drop in income. Street reclaimers from Zonde explained:

I mean, they found us here doing this job, then the government comes and takes our jobs; people in households don't look out for us anymore, they look out for them. Basically we can't anymore; we are not being given a chance to eat (Street reclaimer, Zonde, 19/08/2016; cited in Ntuli, 2016: 32).

At first, before Jozi@Work existed, it was so simple, I was able to fill up my sac without any problems and make R100 and something in one trip and know that I am fine for the day and it became optional to go and collect again for the second time but now that is not the case, we need to be met halfway because we are suffering, we are really suffering (Street reclaimer, Zonde, 18/08/2016; cited in Ntuli, 2016: 32).

The introduction of S@S by private companies and Jozi@Work disrupted the relationship between reclaimers and residents. While some residents remained supportive of reclaimers, there were numerous instances in which S@S had led to a dis-integration of their relationships with residents and an increase in the hostility they encountered from residents when they attempted to salvage recyclables (Kadyamadare, 2017; Ntuli, 2016; Mahlase, 2017).

Reclaimers reported that long-standing harassment and stigmatisation deepened as residents and private security guards attempted to block them from accessing the recyclables. Some residents began to accuse reclaimers of being thieves, as they had been told by Pikitup that the recyclables belonged to the contracted companies and cooperatives. Reclaimers who had created honest work for themselves were distressed by this transformation in their status. As one explained:

We don't get anything anymore, so now when they put their plastics filled with recyclables in the street corner where the truck comes to pick them up, we have to wait for them to leave then steal the plastics before the truck comes. Honestly speaking that is not right and I do not want to be a thief, I want to find my own recyclables in peace. When they catch you stealing their plastics they beat you up, look at my eye right now they beat me up" (Street reclaimer, Zonde, 18/08/2016; cited in Ntuli, 2016: 33).

When then MMC de Jager announced the introduction of mandatory S@S commencing in July, 2018, reclaimers, residents, the media, NGOs, and academics raised the alarm about potential negative implications for reclaimers. In response, the MMC made repeated statements to the media that reclaimers were welcome to collect bags of separated recyclables and that mandatory S@S would make their work safer (cf Arnoldi, 2018; Fourie, 2018). However, there was no explanation of how this would be operationalised, reclaimers did not receive communication to this effect, and reclaimers' official exclusion, harassment, and loss of income persisted.

6.4.2 Landfill reclaimers

There is a dearth of research on how separation at source affects landfill reclaimers. Per definition, successful S@S means that fewer (and ideally no) recyclables are sent to landfills. This holds true

regardless of whether S@S is provided by reclaimers, cooperatives, or companies. Unfortunately this research project did not include a specific focus on the implications of S@S for landfill reclaimers. However, in engagements with the research team, landfill reclaimers spoke of the source of materials drying up and being left at the landfill watching their incomes dry up. Further research is required on this issue, and the effects of S@S for landfill reclaimers must be included in the development of all plans related to reclaimer integration and S@S.

6.5 Gendered experiences of separation at source

Remarkably few studies on gender and reclaiming have been conducted in South Africa. Research in a number of other countries identifies that reclaiming is highly gendered work (cf Beall, 1997; Dias and Ogonda, 2015a, 2015b; Dias and Fernandez, 2013; Madsen, 2006; Mitchell, 2008; Muhammad and Manu, 2013; Nzeadibe and Adama, 2015; Ogando et al., 2017; United Nations Environment Programme, 2018). The remainder of this section demonstrates that this is also true in Johannesburg, and draws out how this relates to gendered experiences of separation at source.

6.5.1 Gendered workspaces

A few studies (Dlamini, 2016; Maema, 2017; Mvuyane, 2018; Sentime, 2011, Shogole, 2019) support observational evidence that the vast majority of street reclaimers are men. In addition, in the 1990s and early 2000s male reclaimers had used physical force to ban women from working at several of the city's landfills. Women remained a minority at the landfills where they did work, with one study finding that only a quarter of reclaimers at the Marie Louise landfill were female (Samson, 2013).

6.5.2 Gendered embodiment and reclaiming

Shogole's (2019) ethnographic study of street reclaimers depicts the deep physicality of reclaimers' work. Johannesburg had few public toilets and street reclaimers were rarely given access to ablution facilities. Reclaimers typically did not have access to the toilets at Pikitup landfills and where latrines were provided they were highly inadequate and poorly serviced. As a result, reclaimers were forced to relieve themselves in open spaces. While both men and women suffered from lack of ablution facilities, women endured greater indignities and difficulties than men due to their biological differences. Women reclaimers dehydrated themselves to reduce the need to relieve themselves. Menstruation added another layer to women's embodied indignities. One female landfill reclaimer explained that "[a]s women even if it is that time of the month we still visit the bush, without proper places to dispose of our sanitary wear and wash our hands..." (Chidzungu, 2017:29)

Male street and landfill reclaimers used their physical strength to dominate collection of more valuable items, enforce this gender division of labour, and at times steal women's materials (Mahlahse, 2017: 40; Samson, 2013). Women reclaimers were particularly vulnerable when they went to sell their materials. The only female reclaimer in Ntuli's (2016) study explained:

There are challenges, after I sell my recyclables and get some money I have to make sure no one notices that I came to sell because they will rob me of my money. Also a person will approach me and ask me stupid questions while his eyes wonder into what I have collected so that he can see what he can take from me and run away particularly when it comes to aluminium cans because they know how much they are worth (Street reclaimer, Zonde, 18/08/2016; cited in Ntuli, 2016: 28).

6.5.3 A family affair – the patriarchal family as a landfill business unit

Zimbabwean reclaimers at the Marie Louise landfill were confined to working in a shorter “Zimbabwean shift” (Samson, 2019a). Chidzungu (2017) reports that heterosexual romantic couples and entire families worked as business units to increase their efficiency and overcome these time constraints, with men salvaging the materials and women sorting materials or acting as buyers. While this approach enabled partners and families to maximize their total incomes, it entrenched the gender division of labour. Unfortunately, Chidzungu did not study how income was distributed between partners and family members.

6.5.4 Patriarchal households restricting women’s work

All reclaimers subsidised the municipality and industry through their unpaid collection work. Within a highly patriarchal culture women reclaimers also performed unpaid social reproductive labour in their homes, bearing primary (if not sole) responsibility for childcare, housework, household management, and preparation of meals. This labour extended women reclaimers’ working day and placed constraints on the time they had available to work as reclaimers. Mokobane (2017: 55) relates the story of one female reclaimer who sought alternative employment due to condemnation and ridicule from her male partner who called her “dirty” and “a disgrace”.

6.5.5 Gendered territories

Maema’s ethnographic study of male street reclaimers explored how they secured control over particular streets. He argues that “[t]he most effective method is establishing a street and marking it as your own territory by showing power, a fearless attitude and use speed to demonstrate hard work and determination” (Maema, 2017; 7). While Maema does not bring a gendered lens to his analysis, a female reclaimer in Mokobane’s study made these gender dynamics explicit:

Before 2010, there were lots of women who did this job but towards 2011 a lot of them stopped because many men started collecting materials at that time. We did not have designated roads in those days like we do now. Everyone worked together and went wherever the other person did not go. The Sotho men and foreigners came and did not want to share material. The women did not want to fight (Mokobane, 2017: 40).

Men’s establishment of territorial claims pushed women street reclaimers out of the sector and disciplined and regulated the work of those who remained.

6.5.6 Overcoming gendered safety risks in the streets

Women landfill reclaimers preferred to work at landfills as the labour was less physically onerous and they felt safer working in an enclosed space. Safety concerns also significantly shaped how women street reclaimers planned and conducted their work. Mokobane found that in order to increase their safety women reclaimers: shortened their working day to avoid being on the streets in the dark; worked with men as a form of patriarchal protection; and dressed like men to ward off assault. One female reclaimer explained to Mokobane that “when you are a woman on your own and do this work you must transform yourself and be a man. You cannot wear dresses and look weak” (cited in Mokobane, 2017: 42).

6.5.7 Mapping gender inequality

Mokobane (2017) worked alongside two female and two male street reclaimers to explore how gender influenced their physical mobility and access to materials. Through a participatory mapping process Mokobane and her research participants developed stark representations of how women’s mobility was circumscribed, primarily due to their physical limitations and gendered safety

concerns. The following example depicts the areas that a male and female reclaimer each travelled to on separate Mondays. Both reclaimers started from the Bekezela informal settlement in Newtown. The male reclaimer started work at 4 am and walked 21 km to and from Linden, while the female left at 6 am and travelled 9.18 km to and from Brixton (Mokobane, 2016: 46-7). The male reclaimer’s movements are marked in blue and the female’s route is in red.

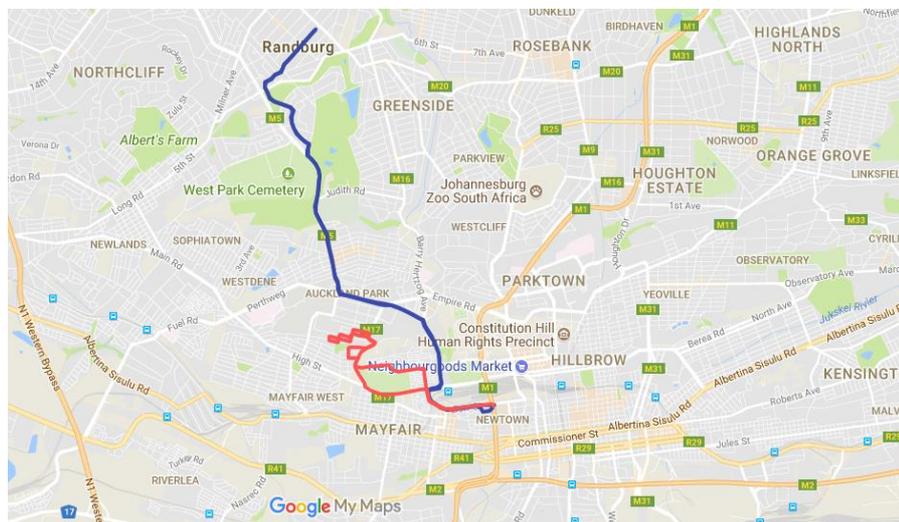


Figure 3: Female and male reclaimers’ Monday collection routes (Mokobane, 2017: 46)

6.5.8 The gendering of S@S and reclaimer dis-integration

Pre-existing gender divisions between reclaimers mean that any external shock or intervention will have gendered implications and effects (Samson, 2015). Having established how reclaiming in Johannesburg was gendered, it is possible to explore some of the gender differentiated ways men and women were affected by, and responded to, their dis-integration

In response to S@S, male reclaimers extended their existing strategy of employing physical force and violence to secure access to materials. However, these options were not available to women:

With us females, we don't draw much in contentions and savagery on the grounds that there is a considerable measure in question here - "my children and other individuals". However men, particularly the ones that salvage recyclables for smoking purposes reacted with viciousness, like they will physically and verbally battle with Jozi@Work labourers for recyclables (Street reclaimer, Alexandra, 10/07/2017; cited in Mahlase, 2017: 39).

Just as men relied on their gender stereotyped masculine power and aggression, both this woman’s need to keep reclaiming and her strategy to continue doing so were rooted in her gendered responsibility for social reproduction:

I was inspired by my kids to join this recycling business. They used to salvage recyclables on weekends to make pocket money. That is when I have realised that there is potential in this industry. However, mid-2014 things changed as Jozi@work was fully functioning. There were no more materials anymore due to high competition Jozi@work has created, and as women salvaging recyclables to support my kid's things became very difficult. I had to get my kids to help on weekends in order to be able to put food on the table, though I am

exposing them to a very hostile environment as they are fights amongst us as well” (Street reclaimer, Alexandra, 10/07/2017; cited in Mahlase, 2017: 44).

The strong gender division of labour at Johannesburg’s landfills meant that the negative effects of S@S for landfill reclaimers would also have been highly gendered. There is a need for further research into this issue in order to ascertain the specific ways in which women landfill reclaimers are affected by S@S, and to put in place compensation packages and alternative income generating activities that will address women’s specific needs and interests.

6.6 Non-South African reclaimers and integration

Non-South Africans were subjected to additional layers of stigmatisation due to their nationality. For example, one official (who lumped all non-South Africans together regardless of whether they possessed valid forms of identification) argued that they could not be included in integration programmes as “they can be lying, they cannot be traced. Also they pose a security risk” (EISD official, 01/03/2018). This framing of non-South African reclaimers resonated with more widely held beliefs in Johannesburg (and the country) that “foreigners” brought crime to the city and took jobs away from South Africans; beliefs that were also articulated by then Mayor Mashaba in highly publicised statements against non-South Africans (cf. Bornman, J., 2019; Chaskalson, 2017).

While officials focused on the legal barriers to working with and integrating non-South Africans, reclaimers remarked on officials’ unwillingness to think creatively about how to provide non-South African reclaimers with meaningful support (ARO organising team member, 20/04/2018). For example, ARO proposed that the City could approach relevant embassies to assist non-South African reclaimers to obtain formal identification. Although the officials may not have had time to undertake these activities immediately, adding them to Pikitup and EISD’s programmes and business plans would have made it possible to create time to include them in future work. Support could also have been requested from sister departments and organisations. Ultimately, ARO undertook the task of engaging the embassies and consulates itself, demonstrating that it was not such an onerous task.

In addition to non-South Africans’ exclusion from official reclaimer integration initiatives, they confronted challenges integrating with South African reclaimers. Samson (2019a) elaborates how South African reclaimers at one of Johannesburg’s landfills informally secured greater rights to recyclables and the ability to restrict and control Zimbabweans’ access to materials. Not insignificant numbers of South African street reclaimers sought similar authority. They also asserted that South African reclaimers should be prioritised for inclusion in official integration and empowerment initiatives. ARO selected the name African Reclaimers Organisation to affirm that it was open to all reclaimers, regardless of nationality. Although there was still much work to be done, ARO had taken concrete steps to overcome national divisions and forge unity between reclaimers, including insisting that they be registered.

6.7 Reclaimers’ understanding of integration

This section identifies common core beliefs that underpinned reclaimers’ understanding of integration and shaped their responses to municipal integration and S@S programmes, as well as their development and implementation of their alternatives. As with the officials’ understanding of reclaimer integration presented in section 5.3, the reclaimers’ understanding is analysed in relation to their beliefs regarding: 1) who reclaimers were; 2) reclaimers’ role in the municipality’s existing recycling system; 3) what reclaimers were being integrated into; 4) the objective of integration; 5)

reclaimer income and payment; 6) the relationship between reclaimer integration and separation at source; 7) the mode of integration; 8) recognition of reclaimers; and 9) power and control over integration.

6.7.1 Reclaimers are founders of recycling in the city and knowledgeable experts

Reclaimers on the streets and at the landfills understood that they had created the city's well-functioning system to collect recyclables. They were experts about how to collect and revalue recyclables who should be respected and valued and should play a leading role in designing reclaimer integration and S@S.

6.7.2 Reclaimers are the core of Johannesburg's recycling system

Reclaimers knew that without them, all of Johannesburg's recyclables would be buried at landfills. Some eloquently argued that as they had been collecting recyclables for decades before the City and Pikitup became interested in waste as a resource, it was the municipality and Pikitup who were integrating into their system, and not the other way around.

6.7.3 Integration into the SWM system, recycling value chain, and communities

Reclaimers understood integration as taking a hybrid form (Scheinberg, 2012) that included integration into both the MSWM system and the recycling value chain. Reclaimers believed that support to progress up the recycling value chain was a key component of integration as this would enable them to capture a greater proportion of the value of the materials they salvaged and sold, and expand their work into new areas. Integration into the MSWM system was also critical, as it would reduce their harassment and stigmatization; improve their working conditions; provide them with access to clean, sorted recyclables; increase quantities collected and incomes; and ensure greater security in their work. Reclaimers also saw deeper integration into communities and strengthening relationships with residents as core components of integration.

6.7.4 Improvement in income, conditions, and social and political status

Reclaimers believed that integration should improve their incomes, working conditions, and status, and that integration should certainly not make these worse. One reclaimer noted that for him, integration meant "assistance in terms of providing uniform, money and work" (cited in Sekhwela and Samson, 2019: 12).

6.7.5 Income from sales and payment for services

Reclaimers believed that they should continue to sell recyclables and that they should also be paid for doing so. They were firm that meeting the City's goal of reducing waste to landfill should not be based on the free labour of poor, black workers. They argued that EISD and Pikitup should be willing to work with them to find legally compliant ways for reclaimers to be paid, and that a fair and just payment would still be less than the payments to for-profit private companies.

6.7.6 Integration and S@S are inseparable – integration is at the core of S@S

Reclaimers developed a deeply embodied understanding of the inseparability of reclaimer integration and S@S. They believed that S@S and reclaimer integration should be designed together, that reclaimer integration should be at the heart of S@S, and that the S@S system in Johannesburg should be based on the system they had already created.

6.7.7 Multiple modes of integration

Reclaimers saw the formation of cooperatives as just one possible means to achieve their goals. Reclaimers on several landfills had chosen to form cooperatives. Most were members of the South

African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), which encouraged and supported its members to form cooperatives. These reclaimers understood that forming a cooperative could assist in securing various forms of support from the municipality, national government, and industry associations. However, at the time of the research they had only managed to access a few of these resources and argued that meaningful support for cooperatives was crucial for integration. As the vast majority of reclaimers did not want to join cooperatives, reclaimers believed that EISD and Pikitup should be willing to work with them to develop other creative ways of integrating reclaimers, such as creating recycling hubs for independent reclaimers and paying individual reclaimers to provide S@S services.

6.7.8 Meaningful recognition

In keeping with the academic literature, reclaimers saw recognition as central to integration and had an expansive understanding that included several forms of recognition (Kashyap and Visvanathan 2014; Paul *et al.* 2012). Recognition meant being acknowledged as founders of the recycling system and being respected, engaged as equals, seen as experts, and included in decision-making regarding all aspects of integration. Payment for services provided and the provision of PPE were material forms of recognition. Recognition also meant having their role in joint initiatives acknowledged and celebrated.

6.7.9 Redressing unequal power, democratic control

Redressing unequal power relations was a core component of integration that facilitated the achievement of all other aspects of integration. According to reclaimers, integration could not occur if the municipality and Pikitup continued to erase their contributions, dismiss their needs and ideas, unilaterally determine the form that integration should take, and decide what reclaimers should do for them. For reclaimers, integration meant the creation of participatory, democratic processes to define integration and to design, assess, and revise integration initiatives. It also meant establishing forums through which the municipality, Pikitup, and reclaimers would reach agreements on reclaimer integration policies and programmes, and that included dispute resolution mechanisms.

6.8 Contesting dis-integration and dispossession

Reclaimers contested their dis-integration and dispossession as a result of Pikitup's approach to S@S both individually and collectively.

6.8.1 Individual contestation

Street reclaimers developed a number of strategies to contest S@S and continue to collect materials. These included: salvaging recyclables that residents still placed in rubbish bins; collecting materials put out in recycling bags; forging alliances with security guards; fostering relationships with specific residents who saved materials for them; leaving home before dawn to reach their destinations and access materials before the trucks arrived; "cross-nighting" (travelling to the areas the night before collection day); and sleeping in parks close to the collection sites.⁸ These strategies enabled reclaimers to retain some income. However, they led to a significant deterioration in reclaimers' working conditions, with negative implications for their physical and mental health.

⁸ In the absence of both secure access to recyclables and places to sort and store their materials, some reclaimers chose to sleep in parks so that they could be closer to collections sites and have space for their recyclables. S@S exacerbated this situation.

6.8.2 Collective contestation

ARO (initially known as the Interim Johannesburg Reclaimers Committee or IJRC) emerged as a collective response to Pikitup's S@S programme. In 2016, when Pikitup issued a request for proposals to appoint a panel of S@S service providers, the international NGO Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) held a workshop with reclaimers from across the city to discuss the tender. Reclaimers had not been informed or consulted, and resolved that the awarding of the tender should be put on hold so that EISD and Pikitup could meet with reclaimers to hear and address their concerns.

After repeated requests for a meeting to discuss the tender and a range of other issues, EISD and Pikitup collaborated with WIEGO to hold a reclaimer workshop on May 17, 2017. The workshop provided an important opportunity for reclaimers and officials to share the challenges they faced. However, officials remained adamant that the tenders would proceed, with one stating: "One thing needs to be clear from this meeting. The project is not going to stop".

When Pikitup, EISD, and the MMC did not respond to concerns raised in letters or meetings, the IJRC held its first march against the City and Pikitup on July 13, 2017. The memorandum demanded an immediate cessation to all contracts that took away reclaimers' work, municipal recognition that reclaimers provided a service, payment for this service, and that Pikitup and the City "stop stealing our work". As the MMC refused to accept the memorandum, it was received by then Managing Director (MD) of Pikitup, Lungile Dhlamini, who later agreed to establish a multi-party task team to agree on how to move forward with reclaimer integration.

6.9 Negotiating integration and registration

The task team included Pikitup, EISD, WIEGO, IJRC, and the Joburg Reclaimers Forum (although the latter ceased to attend meetings soon thereafter). It focused on two key issues – developing a framework for the integration of reclaimers in Johannesburg, and designing and implementing a joint registration process.

Negotiations on the framework document faltered as the parties could not agree on a number of core issues. This was partially attributable to the fact that the officials lacked decision-making authority. Although a number of versions of the document were produced, it was not finalised.

The task team engaged in negotiations regarding registration for over a year. The inclusion of non-South African reclaimers required extensive discussion. After receiving a legal opinion that non-South Africans could be registered if the card did not include the city's logo, the team agreed to proceed in that fashion. The joint campaign commenced in February 2019 and was major success. While EISD and Pikitup had struggled for years to register reclaimers, in the first several weeks more than a thousand reclaimers were registered. ARO reclaimer activists played a central role as they met reclaimers in each area prior to registration, explained why registration was important, addressed the reclaimers' questions and concerns, and encouraged them to apply. They worked side-by-side with officials to register reclaimers, which generated greater confidence in the process.

Yet before any cards could be issued, the campaign collapsed. The officials reported that a new legal opinion said they could not register non-South Africans and reneged on the earlier agreement. Their unwillingness to share the legal opinion with ARO exacerbated tensions. ARO refused to proceed if non-South Africans would be excluded.

A dispute also emerged over payment of stipends to reclaimers. When reclaimers worked on the campaign they lost an entire day's income. The extent of the resulting hardship only became evident after the campaign started. Reclaimers' request to receive some financial compensation was met with bureaucratic responses that the request should have been made at the outset and that there was no budget for this expenditure. While reclaimers were demanding payment for the significant earnings already lost, a commitment to find funding for payment at a later date or for future registrations could have demonstrated empathy for reclaimers' financial hardships and recognition that registration should not be subsidised by reclaimers' free labour. The then MMC's refusal to meet with ARO to discuss a way forward resulted in a string of protests and a march on July 13, 2017, all to no avail.

The City's disregard for the reclaimers' labour was evident in its press release about the registration drive, which gave all credit for the success of the initiative to EISD and Pikitup, and did not mention the contributions of reclaimers or AR) (de Jager, nd.; Dube, 2018). Surprisingly, in October 2019 the City received an award from DEA for advancing reclaimer integration, with the registration drive cited as a key achievement.⁹ The MMC's media release regarding the award once again failed to acknowledge the partnership with ARO and the critical role played by reclaimers (de Jager, 2019). It was deeply ironic that the City completely erased reclaimers and their pivotal contributions to a campaign that was celebrated for recognising reclaimers through registration.

6.10 Forging integration

Within this context, ARO began to develop its own approach to reclaimer integration rooted in establishing direct relationships with residents. ARO reached out to resident/community associations to meet with them and share who they were, the contributions they made, how they were being negatively affected by S@S, and how residents could collaborate with them to create their own integrated S@S programmes. ARO reclaimer activists also made presentations and conducted seminars for the general public and students ranging from pre-schoolers to undergraduate students at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Local, national, and international media ran articles and produced documentaries on ARO and the negative effects of S@S. As ARO's reputation grew, other resident associations began to approach the organisation.

In 2019 ARO began to collaborate with resident associations in several suburbs to develop resident-reclaimer integrated separation at source programmes in which reclaimers collected the separated materials. Based on a successful model from Colombia, ARO also partnered with Wits, the Brixton Community Forum, Unilever,¹⁰ and packaging industry associations¹¹ to pilot a system to pay individual reclaimers a collection fee based on kilograms of recyclables collected. At the time of writing these initiatives were still underway. The projects have helped to encourage more residents to separate their materials and have deepened relationships between residents and reclaimers. As this approach is very new in South Africa, a number of challenges and problems have emerged. These have yielded important lessons, and there is a strong focus on revising the initiatives to address these issues. Data is being generated to help to inform future pilots and programmes.

⁹ It is unclear what criteria were used to select the winner and who made that decision.

¹⁰ A team from Leadership Vanguard (<https://xynteo.com/our-work/leadership-vanguard>) were early supporters of the pilot and played a pivotal role in bringing Unilever on board to pay the service fee during the pilot.

¹¹ Packaging SA, PETCO, Fibre Circle, Polyco, and the Glass Recycling Company.

7 Residents' experiences of integration

As discussed in section 6.8.1 above, reclaimers had little choice but to continue to salvage recyclables in areas where Pikitup had contracted private companies and Jozi@Work to provide S@S services. "Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives" conducted research on how residents related to reclaimers in four areas where Pikitup had implemented S@S through private companies or Jozi@Work - Orange Farm, Zondi, Newlands, and Franklin Roosevelt Park.¹² An important research finding was that residents made their own decisions regarding how to integrate and/or dis-integrate reclaimers. Across the four areas, five broad approaches were identified: 1) wasters; 2) agnostics; 3) enforcers; 4) community integrators; and 5) competitors.

7.1 Wasters

Wasters did not see the value in recycling. They did not separate their materials and were not concerned whether their recyclables would be recycled. Although few wasters were interviewed (possibly because of their disinterest in the topic and related unwillingness to participate), it is likely that this perspective was relatively widespread given the low levels of recycling in the specific areas studied and across the city.

7.2 Agnostics

Agnostics did not feel strongly about whether their recyclables were collected by Pikitup or reclaimers. While agnostics were not active supporters of the official S@S programmes, Mahlase (2017) and Ntuli (2016) argue that the arrival of S@S began to shift how residents saw and engaged the reclaimers - as Jozi@Work cooperative members wore uniforms and had protective clothing, this created the perception of a greater level of formality and generated higher levels of trust. As a result, some residents' trust of reclaimers who did not wear uniforms decreased as the residents felt that it more difficult to differentiate them from people engaged in criminal activities. As discussed above, this had implications for residents' willingness to permit reclaimers to enter their yards to collect recyclables.

7.3 Enforcers

Some active supporters of Pikitup's S@S initiatives became enforcers of the programme. Numerous reclaimers reported harassment by private security to prevent them from entering high income areas and force them to leave; physical altercations with separation at source workers and cooperative members collecting recyclables; and castigation by residents who prohibited reclaimers from accessing their recyclable materials. Maema reports that when he was salvaging with a street reclaimer, his companion reached for a bag of separated recyclables, only to have an older female resident shout: "Do not touch that! Pikitup gave it to me and I am standing here to make sure that no one touches that bag" (cited in Maema, 2017: 29). Such residents became active participants in the dispossession and dis-integration of reclaimers.

7.4 Community integrators

In each of the four residential areas, some residents took conscious decisions to continue to separate for reclaimers. This was primarily rooted in recognition that the reclaimers had already

¹² The "Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives project" did not conduct research on residents' experiences of collaborating with ARO. Such studies are currently underway.

been removing their recyclables from the waste stream and that the reclaimers' livelihoods were dependent on this income. One resident in Orange Farm explained this choice as follows:

I do separate waste in my yard, but I do it to give to the reclaimers, because we have reclaimers in this community and I know that they are working to support their families ... (Resident in Orange Farm, 01/08/2016; cited in Ndlovu, 2016: 39).

This same resident added:

I will never separate for Pikitup because they already have money. If they want to separate they can do it without asking us, so I prefer to help poor people in my community ... (Resident in Orange Farm, 01/08/2016; cited in Ndlovu, 2016: 39).

This latter statement connected with a common opinion amongst resident respondents in lower income areas that they were paying rates to the city for Pikitup to collect their waste and that they were not willing to do what they perceived as free labour for Pikitup by separating their recyclables.

Residents reported that they also separated clothes, food, and other reusable items for reclaimers. The residents left these items in plastic bags on top of their bins, which meant that the items were not contaminated and reclaimers easily found them. Their provision of reusable materials to reclaimers was rooted in empathy and a desire to help to alleviate their poverty, and at times recognition of how they had been negatively affected by Pikitup's S@S programmes. For example, one resident told Grace Kadyamadare:

Maybe Pikitup can employ the waste pickers. I think they recycle more than the residents. I put my old clothes on top of the bin for them. Sometimes I put leftover food too so that it doesn't go into the bins. Waste pickers are also human" (Resident in Franklin Roosevelt Park, 16/11/2016).

Residents also gave old appliances to reclaimers with whom they had established a personal relationship and sense of trust. Kadyamadare (2017) reports that some residents had long-standing relationships with specific reclaimers. She argues that residents' ability to identify commonalities between themselves and reclaimers played a role in forging and sustaining these relationships. For example, one white Afrikaaner woman who could not communicate with the majority of reclaimers developed a personal relationship with a coloured male reclaimer based on their shared language. The resident explained to Kadyamadare:

There is one colored guy I speak to because he can speak Afrikaans. He can come to my gate and knock. Then I take the stuff I have kept for him from the back of the house and give it to him. I keep coke bottles, glass, and most plastic containers. He is a nice guy (Resident in Newland resident focus group).

Community integrators' commitment to separating recyclables for reclaimers was also rooted in admiration and appreciation for the reclaimers' work.

7.5 Competitors

Some residents in the lower income area of Newland did not give their recyclables to either the reclaimers or the Pikitup S@S trucks. This was because they sold the materials themselves. As one resident explained: "It [S@S] won't work. We are poor. What we can recycle we sell for ourselves" (Newlands Resident, 03/11/2016; cited in Kadyamadare, 2017: 18). Pikitup officials were aware that there were residents who did not participate in S@S as they sold the materials to buyback centres.

Residents also reported that they sold reusable materials to pawn shops. In such instances, instead of integrating reclaimers, residents were their competitors as they were also struggling financially and saw that they could supplement their household earnings by selling recyclable and reusable materials that they would otherwise dispose as waste.

8 Reflecting on the research questions

Having presented the findings from the policy review and qualitative research in the preceding sections, this section draws on the evidence provided to reflect on the research project's five overarching research questions presented in Section 1.1.

8.1 Municipal approaches to integration

The City of Johannesburg and Pikitup supported reclaimer integration and empowerment through inclusion in policies, plans, and strategies, as well as implementation of targeted programmes. The City adopted a Reclaimer Empowerment Plan in 2011, and Pikitup made formal commitments to formalising and integrating reclaimers. Pikitup and EISD implemented three kinds of programmes that sought to support reclaimers. These can be divided into:

8.1.1 Empowerment

EISD focused on reclaimer 'empowerment' rather than integration. It sought to uplift reclaimers by providing them with training, personal protective equipment, and trolleys; registering them; and producing a video to change public perceptions of reclaimers. EISD consulted reclaimers through a needs analysis workshop and the establishment of the Joburg Reclaimer Forum. However, these were information sharing forums, and decision-making remained officials' prerogative. In keeping with the mainstream 'empowerment' approach (Miraftab, 2004), EISD's initiatives framed reclaimers as a downtrodden group who needed to be 'empowered' by the municipality, without making reference to, or seeking to intervene in, the deeply entrenched unequal power relations in the sector, the broader systems that were the cause of reclaimers' most fundamental problems, and the changing recycling dynamics in the city.

8.1.2 Institutionalisation as cooperatives

Both Pikitup and EISD encouraged and supported reclaimers to form cooperatives, which were deemed the only modality through which reclaimers could be integrated and receive funding and support. Emphasis was placed on assisting cooperatives to establish buy-back centres (although these cooperatives included very few reclaimers). This approach was adopted due to its alignment with national and local government promotion of cooperatives, the relative ease with which cooperatives could be supported within the context of existing legislation, lack of exposure to other forms of integration, and the ability of cooperatives to keep reclaimers at a distance and reduce their claims to employment by Pikitup. Despite these perceived advantages, the exclusive focus on cooperatives was not appropriate. This was due to the facts that like their counterparts across the world, the vast majority of reclaimers were not interested in working in cooperatives, and as widely acknowledged, over 90% of cooperatives in South Africa's waste sector fail (Godfrey et al., 2016).

8.1.3 Integration into S@S

Pikitup implemented several projects specifically designed to integrate reclaimers into the 'official' recycling system and recycling economy. These projects required reclaimers to form cooperatives which would then be supported to provide S@S services in specific residential areas. While the projects engaged reclaimers in relation to a broader system, they did not acknowledge that

reclaimers were already working within a well-established system to extract recyclables from the waste stream and were already deeply integrated into a well-established recycling economy. As such, no consideration was given to whether participation in Pikitup’s integration initiatives would improve or weaken reclaimers’ control over their own work, incomes, and integration into the recycling value chain.

8.2 Differing assumptions regarding integration

Drawing on sections 5.3 and 6.7, Table 1 contrasts commonly held key assumptions identified as underpinning officials’ and reclaimers’ understandings of integration and S@S. These differences had important implications for how integration and S@S programmes were designed, received, and contested, as well as the successes, shortcomings, and failures of Pikitup’s and EISD’s programmes.

Table 1: Assumptions underpinning understandings of integration and S@S

	Aspect of integration	Officials	Reclaimers
1	who reclaimers are	reclaimers are marginal and disempowered	Reclaimers are founders of the city’s recycling system and knowledgeable experts
2	reclaimers’ role in the municipality’s existing recycling system	reclaimers are replaceable collectors	Reclaimers are the core of the existing recycling system
3	what reclaimers were being integrated into	integration is into the MSWM system	integration is into MSWM system, recycling value chain, and communities
4	the objective of integration	minimisation of waste to landfill	improvement in income, working conditions. and social and political status
5	reclaimer income and payment	income from sales	income from sales and payment for services
6	the relationship between reclaimer integration and separation at source	integration and S@S are distinct – S@S first, integration second	integration and S@S are inseparable - integration is at core of S@S
7	the mode of integration	integration via cooperatives	multiple modes of integration
8	recognition of reclaimers	utilitarian recognition	meaningful recognition
9	power and control over integration	charity approach	redressing unequal power, democratic control

8.3 Successes and failures

8.3.1 Successes

Over the past decade, Pikitup and EISD made a number of important strides related to reclaimer integration. The City of Johannesburg was perhaps the only municipality in the country to officially adopt a plan dedicated to supporting reclaimers, and Pikitup made firm commitments to reclaimers in its business plans and strategies.

Virtually all of EISD's own objectives for the Empowerment Programme were met. In the context of extremely limited funding for work with reclaimers EISD and Pikitup found creative ways to access government funds via the EPWP and secured financial support from industry associations to support their activities. EISD and Pikitup also collaborated with industry to support reclaimers to create cooperatives, and Pikitup designed and implemented several projects specifically designed to integrate reclaimers into S@S.

During the research period, Pikitup and EISD demonstrated some ability to shift their approaches in response to reclaimers' demands and proposals. Their joint facilitation with WIEGO of the May 2017 workshop created a space for reclaimers and officials to share their concerns and challenges (although it did not result in any changes). The task team established by the then Pikitup MD negotiated and successfully commenced a joint reclaimer registration campaign. Although relations in the task team became fraught and it failed to meet its objectives, it is important to note that progress had been made, as this demonstrates that it could be possible for Pikitup and EISD to work collaboratively with ARO to develop and implement meaningful reclaimer integration. This would, however, require commitments to reflect on and address the failures and shortcomings of Pikitup and EISD's existing policies, programmes, and approaches to reclaimers, and to move beyond the charity approach to include reclaimers in decision-making as valued and respected equals.

8.3.2 Failures and shortcomings

The research identified a number of significant shortcomings of the official empowerment and reclaimer integration initiatives. The first related to Pikitup policies and strategies, which included reclaimers in inconsistent ways that led to their marginalisation and disregard for their interests. Pikitup business plans and strategies increasingly prioritised private companies and community cooperatives over reclaimers. They also subordinated reclaimer integration to the implementation of S@S by companies and cooperatives. Reclaimers' central role in the creation of the city's recycling economy (and indeed the very existence of this recycling economy) was erased. For many years Pikitup business plans did not consider reclaimers to be stakeholders in the city's waste management and recycling systems. When reclaimers were eventually included, they were the only group relegated to the lowest category of "minimal engagement". In addition, reclaimers were cast as no different from unemployed community members who had never worked in the sector, and there was no recognition that creating income generating opportunities for the unemployed in recycling via Jozi@Work and other initiatives destroyed the jobs that reclaimers had created for themselves in the sector.

Reclaimer integration was not included in Pikitup officials' KPIs and barely featured in the KPIs for EISD officials. As a result, officials did not receive sufficient budgets, training, support, or time to design and implement integration, and were guided to focus on achieving targets related to S@S. Reclaimer integration fell quite far outside most officials' areas of expertise, and officials were not provided with any guidance regarding how to integrate reclaimers.

Officials' work was constrained by policy and by-laws, and they felt that they were attacked and blamed for things over which they had little control. A similar situation arose when middle-level officials were assigned to negotiate with ARO in the task team, but had insufficient authority to make decisions that would depart from the municipality and Pikitup's existing positions.

With respect to the Empowerment Plan, the Guidelines for Reclaimers were not finalised or implemented. The training sessions included non-reclaimers, excluded non-South Africans, and did not employ appropriate pedagogy as reclaimers struggled to understand both the content of the training workshops and the relevance to their work. Reclaimers also raised concerns about the quality of the trolleys and highlighted that access to trolleys, PPE, and training were severely restricted. Although many of the goals of the Empowerment Plan had been met, these were not necessarily the most appropriate ways to empower and support reclaimers.

The establishment of the Joburg Reclaimer Forum had been an important innovation as it was an acknowledgement of the need to engage reclaimers. However, the Forum served as an information sharing structure rather than a platform to include reclaimers in decision-making about programmes that had significant implications for their work and livelihoods. In addition, reclaimers who participated in the research raised concerns that representation on the forum was limited, many reclaimers did not know about it, non-South Africans were excluded, several representatives were buyback centre owners,¹³ and there was an absence of meaningful processes for representatives to obtain mandates and report back to other reclaimers.

The enforcement of the cooperative model as the only route to integration was not successful, as most reclaimers did not want to join cooperatives. Cooperatives that were established did not receive adequate incubation and struggled to sustain themselves exclusively from the sale of recyclables. The Robinson Deep and Linbro Park initiatives to integrate reclaimers into S@S led to reclaimers earning lower incomes, experiencing a weakening of their integration into the recycling value chain, losing control over their working hours and rhythms of work, and assuming additional burdens related to working collectively and running the cooperatives.

Pikitup outsourced responsibility for reclaimer integration to the companies and cooperatives contracted to provide S@S collection services. However, contractors were not provided with guidance on how to integrate reclaimers, nor were mechanisms in place to ensure that this goal had been accomplished. Reclaimers, the contractors, and the municipality were all negatively affected by the failure to take reclaimers' collection system into account in Pikitup's design of its S@S programme - reclaimers' access to materials, incomes, working conditions, and relationships with residents deteriorated significantly; companies did not collect and re-valorise the anticipated level of recyclables as significant quantities were lost to reclaimers; and Pikitup engaged in wasteful expenditure as it was required to pay the companies the rate per household even when the household did not put out separated materials or reclaimers collected the recyclables rather than the company.

While officials focused on the constraints placed on them by policy, legislation, and by-laws, reclaimers emphasised officials' lack of empathy and creativity. Although reclaimers had informed officials of the profoundly negative effects of the Robinson Deep pilot project, Jozi@Work, Pikitup's S@S contracts, and the cooperative model, these remained unaddressed and reclaimers reported a

¹³ While some buyback centre owners may have previously worked as reclaimers this was no longer the case.

general unwillingness of officials to consider alternative ways of integrating reclaimers that complied with the legislation and bylaws. During internal meetings and private interviews and discussions some officials argued that it was necessary to revise their approach to take up reclaimers' concerns. However, this position was not unanimous, and no plans were developed to redress the negative effects of existing programmes and ensure that they were not replicated in future initiatives.

The rapidly changing political context created significant challenges for both officials and reclaimers. During the three-year research period Pikitup had three Managing Directors. The Chief Operations Officer and Board Chair resigned, and a number of officials working in S@S and reclaimer integration also left the organisation. This resulted in a significant loss of institutional memory and capacity. In addition, control of the municipal council shifted from the African National Congress (ANC) to the Democratic Alliance (DA). Each new mayor, MMC, and Managing Director brought different perspectives and priorities related to S@S, and different attitudes towards reclaimers. Pikitup underwent extensive changes in policy and strategic direction, sometimes on an annual basis, requiring continual changes in plans and programmes. It was therefore extremely difficult to achieve significant progress on reclaimer integration.

The establishment of the task team was full of promise that a new type of relationship between officials and reclaimers and a new way of approaching integration could be forged. However, the task team encountered numerous fundamental problems – negotiations were fraught; the framework was not finalised due to significant unresolved disagreements and the absence of a dispute resolution mechanisms; and Pikitup and EISD unilaterally stopped the registration campaign and claimed all credit for the campaign's achievements, completely erasing the reclaimers' and ARO's role in the campaign's success.

The primary shortcoming of Pikitup and EISD's integration and empowerment initiatives was their implicit adoption of a charity approach to reclaimer integration that framed reclaimers as passive recipients of charitable acts of integration, disregarded reclaimers' knowledge, and assumed that officials could unilaterally define and implement reclaimer integration initiatives. This approach infantilised reclaimers and was a profound affront to their dignity. It underpinned many of the shortcomings and failures identified above, including the inability of Pikitup to successfully implement its own projects to integrate reclaimers into S@S. While Pikitup, EISD, and ARO had begun to make progress in establishing a new, collaborative approach to integration, this was ultimately undermined by the resilience of the charity approach, compounded by other factors discussed below.

8.4 Factors that facilitate integration

The research identified a number of factors that facilitated reclaimer integration in Johannesburg .These included:

Social and cultural

- media coverage of reclaimers, reclaimer integration, the contributions of reclaimers, and ARO's struggles
- increasing public awareness of reclaimers as the creators and core of Johannesburg's system to collect recyclables

- increasing awareness amongst the public and officials of the strong, negative effects for reclaimers of S@S that excludes them
- increasing willingness of residents to engage, support, and work with reclaimers
- resident associations and community groups proactively approaching reclaimers to support them and develop collaborative S@S initiatives
- ARO reclaimer presentations to school children, residents, and university students

Political

- some recognition of reclaimers in Pikitup and EISD plans and strategies
- official commitments to empowering and integrating reclaimers
- willingness of officials to create time to work with reclaimers
- reclaimer organising and formation of ARO as a democratic reclaimer organisation through which reclaimers conduct their own analysis of integration, develop their visions and positions, mobilise to change official policies and programmes, and forge their own version of integration.
- creation of some temporary platforms and spaces to discuss reclaimers' grievances and concerns regarding EISD and Pikitup's integration and S@S programmes, and to develop ways of addressing these
- collaboration between EISD, Pikitup, the NGO WIEGO, and the IJRC/ARO to conduct an engagement workshop
- increasing business and industry recognition of reclaimers and the need to ensure that S@S includes reclaimers and their system to salvage and revalorise post-consumer household recyclables

Economic

- funding from WIEGO to organise reclaimers and provide ongoing, grounded support for reclaimers and ARO
- funding from companies and industry associations to pilot integrated S@S
- existence of markets for recyclables

Environmental

- recognition of reclaimers' environmental contributions through the extension of landfills' lifespans and extraction of recyclables from the environment.

8.5 Factors that inhibit integration

A range of factors created significant challenges to, and undermined the success of, reclaimer integration in Johannesburg. It should be noted that many of these factors are related to broader political, economic, social and cultural issues and are likely not unique to Johannesburg.

Social and cultural

- ongoing dehumanization of reclaimers
- disrespect and infantilisation of reclaimers
- erasure of reclaimers' contributions (to the founding of the city's system to collect recyclables, ongoing diversion of materials away from landfills, the successful joint registration campaign etc.)
- failure to recognise and respect reclaimers' knowledge and skills
- framing integration as charity
- culture of top-down decision-making and charity approach

Political

- absence of national policy, funding, and guidance for municipalities related to reclaimer integration
- insufficient municipal policies, programmes, and budgets for work with reclaimers
- inadequate key performance indicators for officials related to work with reclaimers
- lack of guidance and support for officials regarding how to facilitate participatory processes and work with reclaimers to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and revise pilot projects
- lack of education and training for officials on reclaimers, the current system to collect recyclables in the city, reclaimers' role in the waste management system and recycling value chain, a holistic understanding of S@S, and integrated forms of S@S
- inconsistent policies and positions on reclaimers and S@S
- belief that S@S and reclaimer integration/empowerment initiatives can be conceptualized and implemented independently
- concern to ensure S@S does not negatively affect business vs no consideration of the effects for reclaimers or commitment to avoid them
- erasure of the differences between reclaimers and unemployed residents
- belief that reclaimers do not have any specific claims or rights to continue working to collect recyclables and the related (implicit) belief that their work and incomes can be destroyed in the name of job creation for the unemployed
- lack of guidance re how to engage and integrate non-SA reclaimers
- insufficient consideration of the gendered effects of S@S and reclaimer integration programmes
- requiring reclaimers to form cooperatives in order to be integrated; absence of other approaches to integration
- insufficient incubation of cooperatives
- inadequate design of pilots

- lack of monitoring, evaluation, and revision systems for empowerment, integration, and S@S initiatives
- charity approach and belief that reclaimers do not need to be included in decisions regarding their own integration and S@S
- perpetuation of profoundly unequal power relations between officials and reclaimers
- absence of permanent decision-making structures through which reclaimers and officials develop, oversee, monitor, evaluate, and revise policies and programmes for reclaimer integration and S@S
- absence of dispute resolution mechanisms and the presumption that Pikitup and EISD could make unilateral decisions to cancel agreed processes and programmes
- administrative hurdles to allocate land to provide infrastructure for reclaimers
- belief that Pikitup and EISD could renege on agreements and take unilateral decisions on collective processes
- appointment of junior officials without decision-making authority to the task team
- rapidly changing political context
- political leadership's dismissal of ARO and refusal to engage reclaimers concerns, proposals, and demands

Economic

- lack of national government and industry funding designed to support reclaimer integration
- insufficient municipal and Pikitup budgets for reclaimer empowerment and integration
- lack of recognition that reclaiming is work
- assumption by the municipality that reclaimers should collect recyclables for free and non-payment of reclaimers providing S@S services
- low and volatile prices for materials sold by reclaimers
- no quantification of savings for the municipality arising from reclaimers' diversion of recyclables away from landfills and reduction in the quantity of waste materials to be collected by the municipality
- forcing reclaimers to sell to specific buyers

Environmental

- not quantifying the environmental contributions of reclaimers or taking this into consideration
- failure to see reclaimers as key environmental agents.

8.6 Guidelines that could support integration

The research identified a number of points that it could be useful to include in a national waste picker integration guideline and accompanying documents. These are:

- clear national reclaimer integration targets for municipalities

- educational material and training programmes for officials and residents (as well as businesses, industry, and NGOs) on who reclaimers are, their collection system, their role in the municipal waste management system and recycling economy, and the numerous contributions they make to the environment, economy, and municipalities
- establishment of a programme to train and provide facilitators to conduct the educational and training workshops on reclaimer integration and recycling
- a commitment to redressing and transforming unequal power relations between officials and reclaimers, and within the sector as a whole
- explanation of the problems with the development model and requirement for reclaimers to be involved in decisions related to reclaimer integration and S@S and to be engaged as equals
- support to municipalities and reclaimers for participatory policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and revision
- initiatives to end stigmatisation, harassment, and fear of reclaimers and to ensure that reclaimers are respected, valued, and engaged as equals
- development of guidance and training on how to address unequal power relations
- processes to ensure that all parties understand each other's constraints, interests, and concerns
- funding to support reclaimer organising
- education for political leadership and officials on the importance of reclaimers forming democratic organisations and engaging these organisations
- explanation of both the importance of paying reclaimers for their collection and environmental services, as well as how such payment could be done
- information on different approaches to integration and conditions under which they can be appropriate
- an overview of the importance of developing official policies and programmes on reclaimer integration; including reclaimers in IDPs, IWMPs and KPIs; and guidance on how to do this in a participatory way
- guidance on how to analyse reclaimers' existing collection system to generate insights for the development of the official approach to municipal recycling
- information and educational material on gender issues in the sector, specific challenges encountered by women, and ways to address these.
- emphasis on the importance of engaging all different types of reclaimers and ensuring they are catered for in integration programmes
- guidance on how to develop a comprehensive analysis of the entire waste management and recycling systems and how reclaimers will be affected by changes to any of their components

- information on the importance of developing landfill closure social plans, what they should include, and how to develop them
- examples of reclaimer integration plans
- guidance on how to develop reclaimer integration approaches and programmes appropriate for each specific context
- commitments by national government to create funding mechanisms and support programmes, and to revise legislation to promote reclaimer integration
- suggestions regarding how to engage and integrate residents into reclaimer integration
- provision of ongoing support to municipalities to ensure reclaimer integration
- training and support programmes specifically designed for reclaimers, reclaimer cooperatives and reclaimer organisations that are designed by people who work closely with reclaimers, understand the context within which reclaimers work, speak relevant languages, and use appropriate pedagogy
- emphasis on the importance of dispute resolution mechanisms and guidance for different departments and parties on how to work together
- guidance for reclaimers on how to develop their own ideas for reclaimer integration and how to organise to advocate for and achieve them.
- requirement for municipalities and waste department/companies to be transparent – share all information, share challenges and work together with reclaimers.

9 Conclusion

This report developed a holistic analysis of reclaimer integration in Johannesburg by investigating how reclaimers, municipal officials, and residents each played a part in, and experienced reclaimer integration.

The City of Johannesburg and its Pikitup waste management utility have proactively sought to support reclaimers for almost a decade through policy inclusion and the implementation of projects specifically designed to ‘empower’ and integrate reclaimers. Within the same period, Pikitup transformed its business model from a focus on collection and disposal of waste to “Extracting Value from Waste”, and established separation at source (S@S) as a flagship programme. These developments had significant implications for reclaimers and reclaimer integration.

Pikitup and EISD’s policies, strategies, and programmes related to reclaimers were rooted in a “charity approach” (Samson, forthcoming) predicated on the following assumptions:

- Reclaimers were unfortunate, poor people who needed to be helped by the municipality.
- Reclaimers performed simple, manual labour at margins of economy.
- It was not necessary to include reclaimers in decision-making related to empowerment, integration, or S@S.
- Reclaimers could be ‘empowered’ through projects that focused on ‘uplifting’ them without questioning or seeking to transform existing power relations and the systems and structures that underpinned reclaimers’ exploitation and core problems.

- Officials knew best how reclaimers should be empowered and integrated.
- Integration and empowerment were to be done for reclaimers by officials and other professionals.
- Reclaimers should be compliant, appreciative participants in integration and empowerment projects.

The charity approach erased reclaimers' knowledge, experiences, contributions, and expertise. The research found that the charity approach helps to explain how it was possible that while officials believed that they were helping reclaimers, reclaimers felt deeply infantilised, disrespected, and undermined. It also explains why many reclaimers reported that Pikitup and EISD's programmes did not address their core needs, which led them to choose to not participate, withdraw, and mobilise for new policies and programmes.

The research also identified a number of core assumptions underpinning Pikitup's approach to S@S that had significant implications for reclaimers. Some key assumptions were that:

- Pikitup was "creating a recycling economy in Johannesburg", erasing the fact that a recycling economy already existed and that reclaimers had played a central role in its establishment.
- Pikitup's S@S programme could be designed without reference to reclaimers and their pre-existing system to collect post-consumer household recyclables.
- As reclaimers' system to salvage recyclables was not relevant to S@S, reclaimers were equivalent to "other unemployed community members" and did not have any special claim to continue to work in the sector they had created.
- Reclaimers did not possess knowledge relevant to S@S.
- It was not necessary to include reclaimers in decisions about S@S.
- S@S and reclaimer integration were distinct initiatives.
- S@S took priority over integration and integration would only be considered after the mode of S@S had been selected.

A key research finding is that as S@S was implanted on top of reclaimers' existing system to collect household recyclables, S@S and reclaimer integration were inextricably linked. S@S is not neutral, and unless reclaimer integration is central to its design, S@S is a large-scale, systemic 'reclaimer disintegration' programme that dispossesses reclaimers and overwhelms small projects intended to empower and integrate them. It is essential that all recycling initiatives be rooted in a holistic analysis of the entire recycling system and economy, and that integration is prioritised to the same degree as, and in relation to S@S. Both reclaimers and officials who work with them must be included in the development and oversight of S@S policy and programmes, and their knowledge and proposals must be actively sought and valued.

Literature on reclaimer integration does not typically focus on the experiences of officials. The research found that officials responsible for reclaimer integration and empowerment were placed in a difficult position. They were given insufficient time, budgets, and guidance for this work. As policy was ambiguous, officials were forced to rely on their own 'practical norms' (de Sardan, 2015) and pre-existing knowledge; however, reclaimers, the informal economy, reclaimer integration, and

participatory governance fell quite far outside of the officials' areas of expertise. Officials deployed to engage reclaimers also lacked the seniority required to make decisions on key issues and at times were blamed for issues over which they had little control.

If integration is to succeed, then it must be included in officials' KPIs and they must receive adequate resources, education, training, and guidance. In addition, national and local governments must develop clear policies to direct officials, accompanied by national guidelines and support programmes. It is also crucial that political and administrative leadership develop knowledge related to reclaimers and reclaimer integration, understand that S@S programmes cannot be designed and implemented in isolation from reclaimer integration, are committed to integration and meaningful engagement with reclaimers, and are involved in processes that require decision-making. While it is not possible to prevent rapid changes in the political context, it is important to institutionalise specific commitments to integration and develop mechanisms to prevent significant changes to policies and programmes when new senior politicians and officials are appointed.

The research identified a need for policy-makers, academics, and reclaimer organisations to devote greater attention to residents as active participants in the forging of reclaimer integration and S@S. In addition to simply choosing whether or not to participate in Pikitup's S@S programme, different residents actively enforced, competed with, and created alternatives to Pikitup's version of S@S. Residents made political decisions about what to do with their recyclables based on: how they valued and related to reclaimers; their understanding of reclaimers' existing role in the city's recycling system; their beliefs about the role that reclaimers should play; the type of economic contribution they thought S@S programmes should make (generating profit for private companies, preserving and improving the incomes and working conditions of reclaimers, or increasing their own incomes); and whether they saw S@S as just a service or as a social, political, developmental, and environmental issue connected to the type of neighbourhood and city they wanted to live in.

Somewhat surprisingly, the research identified the need to highlight that as reclaimer integration is about integrating reclaimers, they must want to be integrated in the proposed manner and benefit from it. This will not happen if reclaimers are not centrally involved in defining integration and developing, implementing, evaluating, and revising integration initiatives. Such involvement is in itself a core component of integration.

It was clear to reclaimers that they had forged, and were the heart of, Johannesburg's system to collect household recyclables. In the course of their daily labour, reclaimers developed an intimate understanding of how Pikitup's S@S programme disrupted their collection system and displaced and dispossessed them. As a result, reclaimers prioritised systemic integration over integration and empowerment projects. Some key requirements for integration raised by individual reclaimers and ARO included:

- to be treated respectfully, as equals, whose knowledge, expertise, and proposals are valued and engaged
- to be included in all decisions that affect their work, lives, and dignity
- the creation of platforms that include officials with decision-making power to negotiate integration and S@S
- payment for the collection and environmental services they provide

- improvements in their incomes and working conditions
- secure access to recyclable materials
- space, infrastructure, equipment, and funding to improve their current work and support them to move up the value chain, expand their work into new areas, and provide reclaimers with social benefits (such as day care) and social security
- funding to support organising and sustain democratic reclaimer organisations
- modalities of integration other than cooperatives that are relevant to the local context and meet their needs
- recognition that they created the system to collect recyclables and make the greatest contribution to extracting domestic recyclables from the waste stream
- the creation of a S@S system that acknowledges and builds on their existing system, gives them secure access to cleaner materials, and improves their incomes and working conditions
- termination of S@S contracts and programmes that decrease their incomes and working conditions; where that is not possible, revision of these contracts to remove the negative effects until the end of the contract
- inclusion of all reclaimers in integration and S@S
- initiatives to support women reclaimers to be integrated and participate in S@S
- inclusion of landfill reclaimers in integration and S@S and alternatives and compensation when this is not possible
- further and better integration into the recycling value chain as well as the S@S system
- better prices
- sale directly to industry
- greater integration into communities and strong, positive relationships with residents
- improved relationships with residents and officials

ARO believed that both the municipality and industry should support the achievement of these requirements.

At the most basic level, reclaimer integration requires a clear rejection of the charity model. The formation of ARO was a crucial development as it enabled reclaimers to mobilise to end the negative effects of S@S and advance their vision for recycling. ARO encountered significant resistance as it fundamentally disrupted Pikitup's and the City's established ways of relating to reclaimers and designing their programmes. Yet as a result of ARO's some important shifts were made beyond the charity model that enabled the development and initial implementation of a highly successful registration campaign. Organising enabled reclaimers to collectively analyse the current situation; develop their ideas, positions, and proposals; represent themselves; provide meaningful feedback on existing policies and programmes; and propose and create alternative forms of integration. Rather than seeing reclaimer organising as a threat, it is essential that municipalities (as well as industry, government, and residents) value and support reclaimer organising, as well as reclaimers'

ideas and initiatives. Creating platforms to meaningfully engage reclaimers will strengthen integration and S@S.

The analysis in this report provides insight into Pikitup's and EISD's accomplishments, as well as reasons why their initiatives have encountered problems and faced opposition from reclaimers. It also provides insight into how the City, Pikitup, and reclaimers could develop and realise meaningful reclaimer integration. Significant challenges remain due to the pervasiveness of the charity model within local government, vested interests in the status quo, ongoing dismissal of reclaimers and their knowledge, and continued treatment of reclaimer integration and S@S as separate policy spheres by government at all levels. However, Johannesburg has the benefits of existing policy commitments to reclaimer integration, officials who work with reclaimers, and a democratic reclaimer organisation. Such a strong foundation for reclaimer integration does not exist in other South African cities. With firm commitments to developing new approaches to achieve meaningful integration and integrated S@S, Johannesburg has strong potential to lead the way on reclaimer integration in the country.

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Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

Waste RDI Roadmap Implementation Unit

Meiring Naudé Road, Brummeria,
Pretoria, South Africa

Postal Address

PO Box 395, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001

Tel: +27 (0)12 841 4801

Fax: +27 (0)12 842 7687

Email: info@wasteroadmap.co.za

www.wasteroadmap.co.za

Department of Science and Innovation

Directorate: Environmental Services and Technologies

Meiring Naudé Road, Brummeria,
Pretoria, South Africa

Postal Address

Private Bag X894, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001

Tel: +27 (0)12 843 6300

www.dst.gov.za

