

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: Metsimaholo Case Study

SAMSON, M., GEWER, H., GUYA, J., HARRISON, K.,
KESSELMAN, B., NTULI, Z., PHOLOTO, L., SEKHWELA, M. AND TIMM, S.

Waste Research Development and Innovation Roadmap Research Report

20 January 2020

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

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

CSIR Natural Resources and the Environment
PO Box 395, Pretoria,
South Africa, 0001

Authors

Samson, M., Gewer, H., Guya, J., Harrison, K., Kesselman, B., Ntuli, Z., Pholoto, L., and Timm, S.

20 January 2020

Any statements, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this research report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Science and Technology or the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

Executive Summary

This Technical Report analyses waste picker integration in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, which forms part of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality in South Africa's Free State province. It is one of two case studies conducted as part of the research project 'Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives: Development of Evidence Based Guidelines to Integrate Waste Pickers into South African Municipal Waste Management Systems' funded by the Department of Science and Innovation's Waste, Research, Development and Innovation Roadmap.

The Metsimaholo research was conducted between June, 2017 and December, 2018 by a multi-disciplinary team from the University of the Witwatersrand. The study employed a range of qualitative methods to analyse municipal policy and practice related to waste pickers, and how waste pickers, municipal officials, and residents experienced integration.

As in many municipalities, Metsimaholo's waste management department was underfunded, and the extension and provision of basic services remained the key priorities. The municipality did not have a waste picker policy, and the few references to waste pickers in successive Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) focused on eradicating them from the existing landfill. Plans for a new landfill stated that waste pickers would not be permitted to work there and that recycling activities would be run by entrepreneurs who would create jobs for "community members". There was no recognition that these plans would destroy jobs that waste pickers had created for themselves, or that a social plan should be put in place to compensate them for their loss of livelihood.

As the IDPs did not include waste pickers, there was no budget for waste picker integration projects and work with waste pickers was not included in officials' key performance indicators (KPIs). Officials therefore had neither funds nor time for work with waste pickers. However, as waste pickers were intimately (if informally) integrated into the municipal waste management system, the officials encountered them on a daily basis. In the absence of formal guidance, officials developed 'practical norms' (de Sardan, 2013) and de facto strategies to work with waste pickers. This meant that the municipality provided some support to waste pickers. However, it also placed the officials under extreme pressure as it added to their already heavy workloads and they could not fully address all issues raised by waste pickers. As these norms and strategies were unofficial and undocumented, waste pickers were not aware of them and were unable to contribute to, or directly contest them.

Formal and informal municipal processes were opaque to the waste pickers and there were no official mechanisms through which they could raise issues with officials. Cooperative leaders had not seen the IDPs and were not aware that their issues and programmes to address them could be included in the IDP or the Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP). Across the board, waste pickers felt disrespected by municipal officials, whom they believed disregarded their concerns and had not fulfilled commitments. Officials and waste pickers appeared to share a mutual miscomprehension of the key challenges faced by the other group. This is not surprising given the lack of a forum where they could meet and engage one another.

Waste pickers worked at three locations - the landfill, the streets, and the Vaal Park Recycling Centre (VPRC) run by the Ikageng-Ditamating (ID) cooperative. Landfill waste pickers had no real prospect of integration, as this would require them to form cooperatives and leave the landfill, which most were not keen to do. The only functioning integration initiative was the VPRC and the associated separation at source (S@S) service ID provided to residents in the upmarket, predominantly white and Afrikaans suburb of Vaal Park. This pilot project had been initiated by the South African Waste

Pickers Association (SAWPA) and the packaging industry, not the municipality. Three years after launching, the VPRC had achieved several successes. Two-thirds of households in Vaal Park participated in the S@S programme. ID generated additional income selling recyclables residents dropped off at VPRC and through providing collection services to private businesses. ID also sold reusable items collected from residents.

However, the cooperative was struggling to survive. Sixteen of the twenty-two initial members quit and returned to the landfill due to their low incomes and the challenges of working as a cooperative. The VPRC pilot was the first waste picker integration collaboration between waste pickers, industry, and different levels of government in South Africa, and a number of key issues had not been foreseen. The challenges faced by the cooperative could also be traced back to the highly informal nature of the pilot. Perhaps due to enthusiasm to get started, the budget and in-kind contributions were cobbled together. The lack of a written project proposal, implementation and sustainability plans, monitoring and evaluation systems, and contracts between parties created space for waste pickers, industry, and the municipality to have different expectations of the pilot, identify different problems, and have different ideas of what was required to support and sustain the VPRC. A similar level of informality characterized a Sasol offset project to support waste picker cooperatives in Zamdela township which had stalled due to delays in accessing municipal land.

The independent Vaal Park street waste pickers experienced waste picker integration as exclusion and dispossession as they lost access to materials when ID began collecting recyclables in the area where they worked. ID offered some compensation and solidarity by inviting the street pickers to sort and sell their materials at VPRC. However, some remained aggrieved due to the negative effects on their work and livelihoods and the fact that these had not been considered when the project was designed. Independent waste pickers who worked in Zamdela faced a different source of competition, as many residents earned additional income by selling their own recyclables.

Only Vaal Park residents had direct experience of waste picker integration. Unaware that waste pickers moved between sites, residents stereotyped them as inherently different. Most did not know that the people who ran the VPRC were waste pickers. The residents praised them for being polite and reliable, and saw them as more trustworthy as they had uniforms and a vehicle. By contrast, residents dehumanized landfill pickers as *aasvoels* (vultures). Some residents accused street waste pickers of bringing crime, while others gave their recyclables to them. Power relations based on race, class, and language shaped the engagements between residents and waste pickers.

Ironically, the research identified a surprising level of informality in how the municipality and industry sought to integrate waste pickers. Particularly given the historical exclusion and maltreatment of waste pickers, integration processes must be formally planned, adequately funded, fully participatory, and completely transparent. This includes transforming unequal power relations and explicitly addressing discrimination and exclusion based on race, gender, and class within municipalities, neighbourhoods, and the industry. It also requires that waste pickers receive financial, technical, and educational support that they prioritise and are involved in designing, so that they can meaningfully engage other parties, achieve their goals, and ensure that they benefit from integration initiatives. All parties require new skills and a deeper understanding of the sector and each other. Dedicated funding, policy, and support from national government will be central to ensuring the success of waste picker integration, as will inclusion of integration in officials' KPIs.

Table of Contents

Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures	iv
Acronyms	iv
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research questions	2
2 Methodology	2
2.1 Methodological approach	2
2.2 Research Site	3
2.3 Research Methods.....	4
2.4 Limitations.....	4
3 Municipal policy on waste picker integration	4
4 Officials’ experiences of integration.....	6
4.1 Absence of key performance indicators.....	7
4.2 Officials’ unofficial understandings of integration.....	7
4.3 Practical norms.....	8
4.4 Creative approaches and de facto integration strategies	9
4.4.1 Integration via cooperatives.....	9
4.4.2 Fostering inter-departmental relations.....	9
4.4.3 Fostering inter-governmental linkages and multi-scalar collaborations.....	9
4.4.4 Implementing temporary measures to assist landfill waste pickers.....	10
4.4.5 Engaging waste pickers.....	10
4.4.6 Collaborating with industry	10
5 Waste pickers’ experiences of integration	11
5.1 Landfill Waste Pickers.....	11
5.2 Vaal Park Recycling Centre Waste Pickers	12
5.3 Street Waste Pickers	15
5.3.1 Street Waste Pickers in Vaal Park.....	15
5.3.2 Street Waste Pickers in Zamdela.....	16
5.4 Waste pickers’ understanding of integration.....	18
6 Residents’ experiences of integration	19
6.1 Landfill waste pickers	19
6.2 Street waste pickers	20
6.3 Vaal Park Recycling Centre waste pickers	21
7 Reflecting on the research questions	21
8 Conclusion	27
9 Acknowledgements	29
10 References	29
10.1 Student research reports and theses	29
10.2 Other references	29

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location of Fezile Dabi.....3

Figure 2: Research Sites.....3

Acronyms

CDW	Community development worker
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
ID	Ikageng-Ditamating Cooperative
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IndWMP	Industry Waste Management Plan
IWMP	Integrated Waste Management Plan
LED	local economic development
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
PETCO	PET Recycling Company NPC
PRASA	Paper Recycling Association of South Africa
RAG	Recycling Action Group
SAWPA	South African Waste Pickers Association
S@S	separation at source
VP	Vaal Park
VPRC	Vaal Park Recycling Centre

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 sold into 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 stigmatization 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.²

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 (DEFF).

'Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Initiatives' aimed to facilitate the sustainable integration of waste pickers into municipal waste management systems by conducting in-depth analysis of existing integration experiences and extracting lessons to inform future initiative.³ The research was conducted by a multi-disciplinary research team that conducted in-depth case studies in two municipalities: the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and the Metsimaholo Local

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 It is important to note that despite this agreement in the literature, it is still common for many municipalities to work within what Velis et al. (2012) refer to as traditional top-down development models of waste picker integration that do not uphold these core components.

³ The research also informed the process to develop the Department of Environmental Affairs' Guideline on Waste Picker Integration for South Africa that was facilitated by the project leader.

Municipality. This Technical Report presents the findings of the collaborative research conducted in Metsimaholo.

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 focuses 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 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 and negotiating 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, waste pickers, or municipal officials.⁴ Four master’s students conducted research in Johannesburg. Due to Johannesburg’s size, nine Geography honours students conducted supplementary research. Three master’s students conducted research in Metsimaholo.⁵ The seven master’s students were pursuing degrees in geography, environmental science, anthropology, and urban studies. Each student

⁴ 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 anthropology master’s research report. All students were supervised by the project leader, Dr. Melanie Samson.

⁵ The three master’s students who conducted research in Metsimaholo were Jokudu Guya, Zandile Ntuli, and Lethabo Pholoto, who focused respectively on officials, waste pickers, and residents. The sections of the report that focus on these constituencies primarily draw on the relevant student’s data and analysis, as well as additional data and analysis generated by the other co-authors. The students’ master’s theses are included in the references as Guya (2019), Ntuli (2019), and Pholoto (2018).

brought her own disciplinary lens and shared methods that others incorporated into their research, strengthening the research as a result.

2.2 Research Site

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality is part of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality in the Northern Free State. Metsimaholo was established in 2000 through an amalgamation of the Sasolburg, Deneysville, and Oranjeville Transitional Local Councils. Currently, Metsimaholo’s jurisdiction includes the towns of Sasolburg, Zamdela, Deneysville, Refengkgotso, Oranjeville, Metsimaholo, Viljoensdrift, and Coalbrook (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2018). Research for this report was conducted in Sasolburg’s upmarket Vaal Park suburb, the Vaal Park Recycling Centre, the Sasolburg landfill, Zamdela township, and the municipal offices.

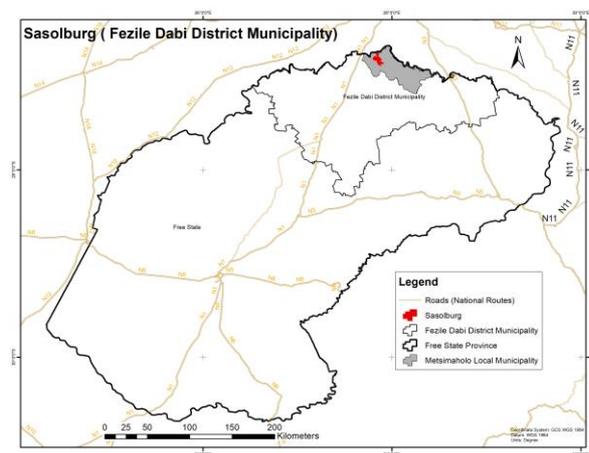


Figure 1: Location of Fezile Dabi (map by Liberty Mlambo)

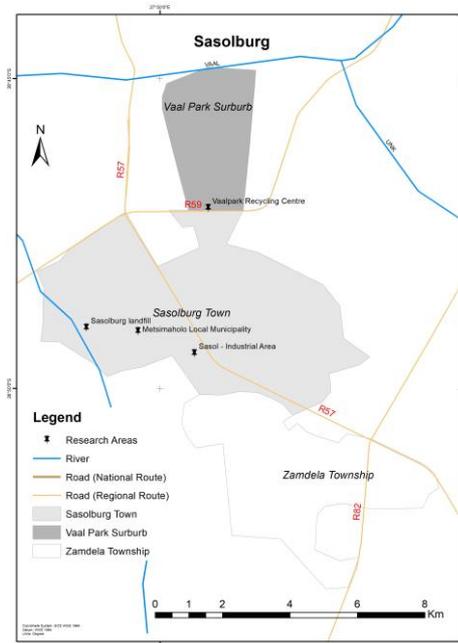


Figure 2: Research Sites (map by Liberty Mlambo)

Sasolburg dominates the local municipality. The history of the town and its present reality are bound up with the history of the energy and chemical company Sasol (South African Oil and Gas Corporation). Sasol was founded in 1950 as part of a collective of state-initiated industries located in the Vaal Triangle. Sasolburg was built to house Sasol’s white workers, and the Zamdela township was built to provide housing for Sasol’s African workers. The company commenced production in Sasolburg in 1955 and was privatised in 1979. It is the largest producer of synthetic fuels on the sub-continent and remains a key role-player in the Free State economy (Free State Provincial Government, 2013; Peberdy, Harrison and Dinath 2017).

Since inception, Sasol’s operations have had a range of well-recorded detrimental effects on the environment (groundwork, 2014; Peberdy, Harrison and Dinath, 2017). In 2014, Sasol successfully applied for a postponement to meet the time frames of the Minimum Emission Standards published under the National Environmental Management Air Quality Act. This was of direct relevance to waste pickers in Metsimaholo, as a condition placed on the postponement required Sasol to implement offset initiatives. As part of the postponement condition Sasol committed to funding

waste removal, and specifically included waste pickers as an offset project (Centre for Environmental Rights, 2017:4, Sasol, 2016a:15).

A final point that must be noted regarding the research site relates to the political turbulence and instability in Metsimaholo during the period in which fieldwork was conducted (June 2017 to December 2018). In 2016 a fragile coalition government had collapsed, and in 2017 the municipality was put under administration after it was unable to pass its budget. A new council was elected in 2017 and the ANC regained control of the municipality through forming a coalition with four political parties (Modjadji and Mailovich, 2017). This political context had important implications for the work of the waste management department, including its capacity to engage waste pickers.

2.3 Research Methods

The Metsimaholo research employed a range of qualitative methods. These included: in-depth and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, reflexive diaries, and mapping. Eighty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with: waste pickers working at the landfill and the Vaal Park Recycling Centre, waste pickers working on the streets in Vaal Park and Zamdela, officials from the Fezile Dabi District Municipality and the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, residents of Vaal Park and Zamdela, representatives of waste picker cooperatives, the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), Sasol, and industry producer responsibility organization. Two focus groups were conducted – one with women working at the Vaal Park Recycling Centre and one with street waste pickers working in Vaal Park. All identities have been anonymized.

2.4 Limitations

The research team encountered a small number of limitations when conducting the research and writing this technical report. First, it was extremely difficult to access a number of relevant municipal documents as they were not available online and access to hard copies was severely restricted. Second, due to the nature of postgraduate study, the three master's students faced limitations on the time they could dedicate to fieldwork and completion of their master's research reports. Third, as young black women, the students confronted significant challenges when attempting to interview white, middle class residents in the very conservative Vaal Park suburb. Many refused to talk to them and some assumed that the students were looking for domestic work. This affected the students personally and limited the number of interviews conducted. However, analysis of this experience generated powerful insights into the power-laden articulations of race, class, and gender that shaped the places where waste pickers worked and how residents related to them. Fourth, the instability in the municipality meant that officials were confronting a number of challenges that placed constraints on their time and hence their ability to participate in the research. Finally, the research design had not included industry's experience of integration. Given the key role that Sasol and the packaging industry played in waste picker integration in Sasolburg, this would have added an important fourth lens into integration. This oversight was partially addressed by interviewing industry representatives and weaving their insights into other sections of the report.

3 Municipal policy on waste picker integration

Metsimaholo did not have a specific policy related to waste pickers. However, waste pickers were briefly mentioned in several key municipal documents. Tracking how waste pickers featured in these policy documents provides insight into how the municipality understood its role in relation to waste

pickers, and what official guidance was provided to municipal officials on issues related to waste pickers and waste picker integration.

Prior to analysing how waste pickers featured in official waste management policy, it is necessary to understand the broader municipal context, the position of waste management in the municipality, and the orientation of the overall policy. According to the 2016/17 Integrated Development Plan (IDP), in 2011 78.9% of the municipality's approximately 59 113 households had access to a weekly refuse collection service. This represented a significant increase of 18.7% in the decade since 2001 (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2016: 203). Subsequent IDPs focused on further increasing the number of households receiving waste management services.

There are significant differences in resources and capacity between a local council, such as Metsimaholo, and a metropolitan council like Johannesburg. In 2010, the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) undertook a turnaround strategy for Metsimaholo and listed the following challenges faced by the municipality:

Poor maintenance of roads and infrastructure, no services master plans, lack of housing data base and housing development, poor management system for CDW's [community development workers] and ward committees in the area, high turn-over levels of staff, poor functionality of portfolio committees, poor financial management, lack of planning data and lack of an LED [local economic development] unit with development strategies (COGTA, 2010; cited in Meyer, 2014: 629).

The subsequent political turbulence was layered on top of this already challenging context.

As in other municipalities, waste management was not a high municipal priority, which meant that the challenges affecting the municipality as a whole were amplified in this sector. As a result, the waste management department was delivering services amidst a severe lack of resources. A shortage of staff and equipment such as trucks and trailers placed constraints on the department (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2011: 66). In addition, it was reported that at times the waste department did not have money to buy diesel for the trucks. These challenges to performing key functions reduced the ability of the department and the municipality to engage with new initiatives such as waste picker integration.

References to waste pickers were included in successive versions of the municipality's IDP, the Integrated Waste Management Plan (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2014b), and the 2013 Local Economic Development Strategy (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2013). In earlier IDPs, the focus was on measures to control waste pickers and lock them out of the Sasolburg landfill. For example, the 2011/2012 IDP stated "[a]n office for gate controllers was erected, however, pickers remain a threat" (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2011: 66). This was in keeping with the municipality's earlier efforts to eject waste pickers and force them to work under the control of a private company contracted by the municipality (Samson, 2009).

After 2012 there was a gradual shift in the municipality's approach to recycling. The 2013 Local Economic Development (LED) Strategy included a section on the green economy that proposed that the municipality should "provide incentives to reduce, recycle and re-use waste material" and:

[d]evelop community groups that recycle household waste. These groups can be subdivided into those that collect plastics, metal and paper, which can be sold to recycling plants (those involved would earn income from the projects) and those that collect household vegetable

waste for conversion into compost, which can be used in community food gardens (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2013: 29).

The 2014 IDP reiterated that “[t]here are no waste minimization strategies that have been developed” and called for programmes to be designed and implemented (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2014a: 197). The Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP) made further concrete proposals that separation at source be rolled out to Zamdela (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2014b).

The increased attention to recycling did not include increased attention to, or support for, waste pickers. The policy proposals and commitments focused on generic “community” members, often interpreted as unemployed youth. There was no official recognition that waste pickers were already collecting recyclables and that supporting new people to enter the sector would take away the waste pickers’ jobs. Metsimaholo was not alone in this approach, which was common across the country.

The 2016/2017 IDP (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2016) identified waste management as a priority area, improving its status in the municipality. However, the six waste management focal points all related to basic waste management functions. The IDP did not mention waste pickers. It noted the establishment of the Vaal Park Recycling Center (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2016: 211) and that informal recycling was occurring, without providing further details. As will be discussed further below, the Vaal Park Recycling Centre was not a municipal initiative, so its inclusion in the IDP was simply for noting.

Metsimaholo had three landfills respectively located in Sasolburg, Deneysville, and Oranjeville. The Sasolburg landfill, the largest of the three, had reached capacity and plans were underway to develop a new landfill. Metsimahlo appeared to be using that move to achieve the long-standing goal of ejecting waste pickers from the landfill. A scoping report commissioned by the municipality argued that a buffer zone to distance residents from negative effects of the landfill would provide “an additional benefit” as it would reduce waste picking and be less expensive and more effective than erecting physical barriers (Terraworks, 2018: 15). In addition, the report suggested that a local entrepreneur be appointed to run a recycling facility at the landfill (Terraworks Environmental, 2018: 71), which would “provide additional employment to the community as well as generate a small income” (Terraworks, 2018: 20). As in the early 2000s, the municipality was focused on supporting an entrepreneur instead of the waste pickers who had significantly extended the life of the existing landfill by extracting recyclables.

Targeting “the community” for employment overlooked the fact that there were waste pickers already doing landfill recycling. It is international best practice (Inter-American Development Bank, 2013) to develop social plans that compensate waste pickers for loss of livelihood when dumps are closed, and to support them to gain other work. However, this was not widely known in South Africa. Like other municipalities, Metsimaholo did not analyse or seek to mitigate the potential effects on existing landfill waste pickers, who would be dispossessed as a result of the municipality’s plans. In this respect, little had changed since 2008 (Samson, 2009).

4 Officials’ experiences of integration

There is a dearth of research on how municipal officials experience waste picker integration. This section focuses on factors that impeded officials’ ability to dedicate time to waste picker integration,

how they understood integration in the absence of an official definition or policy, their need to develop and rely on practical norms to address this policy gap, and the de facto integration strategies that they forged on the ground.

4.1 Absence of key performance indicators

Key performance indicators serve an important role in municipal governance. They are aligned with the Provincial Priority Outputs and the key performance areas (KPAs) included in IDPs. In this way, they ensure that officials' work supports the achievement of the IDP's goals (Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 2016; Republic of South Africa 2001). The Metsimaholo 2016/2017 IDP included several KPIs related to waste management under the KPAs for Community Development and Social Cohesions, as well as Service Delivery and Infrastructure development. These KPIs related to cleanup campaigns, removal of illegal dumping sites, refuse removal services, revision of the IWMP, closing the existing landfill and opening a new one, and the development and implementation of waste management systems (Metsimaholo 2016: 34, 37). No KPAs or KPIs mentioned waste pickers, and as previously noted, waste pickers were not mentioned at all in the 2016/2017 IDP.

As Guya (2019) notes, the absence of KPIs and programmes related to waste pickers in the IDP meant that no budget was allocated for work with waste pickers. It also placed severe constraints on the time officials had available to engage waste pickers, as any time spent working with waste pickers took them away from the activities against which their performance was assessed. Given the general lack of resources, the waste management officials were already struggling to fulfil basic waste management functions and needed to minimize expending time and money on other activities. As this was not necessarily understood by waste pickers or other parties in the sector, it exacerbated tensions between them. Locating this within a broader context, a district official noted, "[w]hen I attend conferences, all I hear when people speak is how municipalities are not participating, but they never think about what leads to those circumstances" (Senior official, Fezile Dabi District Municipality, 27/9/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 74).

4.2 Officials' unofficial understandings of integration

The term 'waste picker integration' did not appear in any municipal documents. Few officials at more junior levels had encountered it prior to being interviewed. Senior officials were familiar with the idea of waste picker integration but, in the absence of a clear definition in either national or local policies, they had to rely on their own ideas of what it meant. The head of waste management in the local municipality understood integration to mean creating an environment in which cooperatives could thrive:

The municipality cannot do anything more than it has done so far as integrating these waste pickers. The municipality played its role in ensuring that these waste pickers are incorporated and have formed their cooperatives, as that's now the buzzword. If they are registered as a cooperative, the municipality will help them a lot. Not only waste pickers, but all others...So the municipality's role is to ensure that it makes the environment conducive for these people to thrive. We can assist them with registration, we can assist them with the training, if possible, we can assist them with the resources such as your PPE, or your safety materials, and even write letters to service providers recommending and requesting on behalf of those cooperatives. The municipality is just playing that oversight role in assisting... (Senior official, Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 11/10/2017; cited in Guya, 2019: 94).

A District official put forward a more systemic understanding of integration:

Integration, to me, I would say is like a chain interconnected with different links, essentially what we do in our offices, what happens in the home and what waste pickers do is all connected like a chain. Waste pickers are in the middle and we try to strengthen their connection with the other links of this chain. I mean, waste is produced at household level then it goes to the street if it doesn't go the landfill site, then from street and other waste pickers it makes it to middlemen and then gets to the big industries; all of this has the municipality tied to it. So, essentially, we are trying to be better at connecting all these facets and the relationship between waste pickers and all the other stakeholders...So, integration for me is finding the missing links and bringing everyone together, where we can all be on the same page (Senior official, Fezile Dabi District Municipality, 06/08/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 75).

In a subsequent interview, he elaborated: "a huge part of institutionalising waste management is the need to incorporate and integrate waste pickers into the municipality's daily functions" (Senior official, Fezile Dabi District Municipality, 04/12/2018; cited in Guya, 2019: 89). For this official, integration focused on integrating systems as well as different parties working in those systems. Within this approach, waste picker integration would also necessarily entail integrating the municipal waste service chain and the recycling value chain (Scheinberg and Simpson, 2015: 976).

4.3 Practical norms

Although waste management officials had neither a mandate to pursue waste picker integration, nor official guidance on how to relate to waste pickers, they engaged waste pickers on a regular basis due to waste pickers' intimate, if informal, role in the waste management system. The officials lacked what Olivier de Sardan calls "official norms" that "express the rights and obligations explicitly recognized by public and professional institutions" that "incorporate systems of sanctions, directly or indirectly guaranteed by the state, and its arbitration and judicial mechanisms" (de Sardan, 2013: 5). The officials therefore had to rely on "practical norms" which are "*the various informal, de facto, tacit or latent norms that underlie the practices of actors that diverge from the official norms (or social norms)*" (de Sardan, 2013: 8, emphasis in the original).

Interviews conducted with officials from both the local and district municipalities revealed several widely shared practical norms. The first was that support should be provided only to waste picker cooperatives. One Metsimaholo official stated, "[y]ou know who we are communicating with...We only communicate with people who are registered [as cooperatives]" (Official, Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 25/08/2017; cited in Guya, 2019: 96). As another official interviewed on the same day explained, "[i]t's easier with the ones that are registered [as cooperatives] because you know who you are talking to. It's easier to talk to people who are registered and then we know where to find them..." (Official, Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 25/08/2019; cited in Guya, 2019: 96). A certain amount of expediency therefore underpinned the focus on cooperatives. However, the officials' emphasis on, and privileging of, cooperatives also aligned with national government priorities (Satgar and Williams, 2011; Sekhwela and Samson, 2019), as well as the municipality's successive IDPs discussed above. In developing this practical norm, the officials therefore extended official norms and applied them to this new area of work.

The second practical norm was that, as the waste management department did not have a budget for work with waste pickers, any direct support to waste pickers should not require funding from

the municipality. A senior waste management official noted that, “[w]e just enable them, we make the situation to be conducive for them to thrive” (Senior official, Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 11/10/2017; cited in Guya, 2019: 86). Rather than directly providing funding (which they did not have), municipal officials saw it as their role to assist the waste pickers to access funding from other sources, including Sasol.

The third norm related to who should lead waste picker integration in the municipality. Waste picker integration was initially driven by an official from the local economic development (LED) department. When this official resigned, it had been assumed that the waste management department would be responsible for engaging and supporting waste pickers. However, this fell beyond the department’s mandate as the custodian of waste, and waste management officials believed that LED should have continued to play the leading role. This position must be understood in relation to the facts that the department was already overstretched in terms of trying to provide basic services, no additional resources were provided for work with waste pickers, and waste management officials did not have the skills required to effectively engage and work with waste pickers. The fact that senior officials did not think that waste picker integration should be the department’s responsibility had implications for the types of activities undertaken and the guidance given to junior officials.

4.4 Creative approaches and de facto integration strategies

Having been thrust into working with waste pickers by circumstances rather than policy, officials at both local and district levels developed six de facto integration strategies. It should be noted that these were not necessarily explicit or undertaken by all staff.

4.4.1 Integration via cooperatives

As discussed in Section 4.3, there was a strong belief that support for waste pickers and waste picker integration should be via cooperatives. Working with cooperatives was therefore a primary de facto integration strategy.

4.4.2 Fostering inter-departmental relations

Although there was disagreement regarding which department should be responsible for leading waste picker integration, when a new senior LED manager was appointed, the two departments began to collaborate more closely again. Discussing the concept of collective responsibility, a senior official noted:

For me it’s the key people there with [the Waste Management] department and ourselves, we are two main stakeholders because it’s a subject matter related to [the] Waste Department and us we relate in terms of turning that thing into a sustainable business entity in the form of a cooperative (Senior official, Metsimaholo Local Municipality, 28/11/2018).

This recognition that different departments should contribute their specific expertise to waste picker integration processes was important. However, lack of clarity regarding official responsibility created unnecessary complications in such collaborations.

4.4.3 Fostering inter-governmental linkages and multi-scalar collaborations

There was strong recognition that waste picker integration required collaboration with a number of departments at multiple scales of government. The provincial government and the national Department of Environmental Affairs had been mobilised to support the Vaal Park Recycling Centre. A senior district official also secured ad hoc support for landfill waste pickers from the departments

of Home Affairs, Social Development, Traffic, Disaster Management, Health, and Human Settlements. These links with government departments at other scales and in other spheres were forged not only by Metsimaholo, but also (and frequently) by local waste pickers, the South African Waste Picker Association (SAWPA), and industry, reaffirming the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration.

4.4.4 Implementing temporary measures to assist landfill waste pickers

Although municipal policy documents focused on eradicating waste picking at the existing and future landfills, officials were aware that this would not be feasible due to inadequate security (and presumably struggle by the landfill waste pickers that characterized previous responses to attempted evictions). At best it would take an extended period of time. As a result, instead of following the more militaristic approaches of the past, officials found temporary ways to address waste picking on the landfill. These included reported plans to immunise landfill waste pickers, and brokering in support from the other departments as discussed above.

4.4.5 Engaging waste pickers

The former chairperson of SAWPA (who became the SAWPA coordinator during the research period) was based in Sasolburg. Over the years, the municipality and the SAWPA representative developed a strong relationship. This facilitated discussions between the municipality and waste pickers and played an important role in securing support for SAWPA initiatives such as the Vaal Park Recycling Centre.

Perhaps partially due to the strength of this direct relationship, municipal officials at local and district levels engaged waste pickers in Metsimaholo on an ad hoc basis. This created some challenges for officials who reported that individual waste picker cooperatives would visit officials' offices reporting the same problems. It also caused frustration for waste pickers, who struggled to have their issues heard and addressed.

In 2016, the waste picker cooperatives in Metsimaholo came together to form a waste picker cooperative forum as part of a broader strategy to achieve their vision of integration. The local and district municipalities, as well as Sasol (who had contributed to the forum's formation through its support for the establishment of the cooperatives), embraced it as a platform to engage with waste pickers. The District subsequently expressed an intention to create similar fora in all local municipalities, as well as a district forum. This had the potential to play an important role in facilitating conversations between municipal officials, waste pickers, and industry. However, as the forum only included cooperatives, it entrenched the bias towards cooperatives and the exclusion of independent street and landfill waste pickers (see Section 5.4 for further discussion of the forum).

4.4.6 Collaborating with industry

Partnerships with industry secured additional funding for recycling and waste picker initiatives. The Metsimaholo local municipality, Sasol, and Rejuvenation Trust (founded by Sasol in 2000 to support training and social programmes in Metsimaholo) collaborated on a series of projects related to waste, recycling, and waste pickers. After 2015, these were funded as part of the Sasol offset programme discussed above (Centre for Environmental Rights, 2017:4, Sasol, 2016b: 15).

Describing the relationship between the municipality and Sasol, one senior official explained, "we are working well together – they bring money, we bring land. They have an expert in their business unit assisting the coops." The relationship between the municipality and Sasol was mutually beneficial, though not without tensions. Sasol officials were frustrated when the municipality did

not meet commitments timeously. For their part, municipal officials noted that, particularly in an earlier period, Sasol had undertaken projects that had not been prioritised by the municipality, but the municipality was then required to maintain them.

The local and district municipalities also collaborated with producer responsibility organisations in the packaging industry to develop the Vaal Park Recycling Centre (VPRC). However, neither the local nor the district municipality initiated this project. Instead, the VPRC emerged out of a collaboration between the Packaging Council of South Africa (now Packaging SA), PETCO, the Paper Recycling Association of South Africa (PRASA, now known as RecyclePaperZa), The Glass Recycling Company, Collect-a-Can, Plastics SA, Polystyrene Packaging Council, SA Vinyls Association, and SAWPA. As the municipality did not have a budget for waste picker projects, what became the country's first recycling centre run by a waste picker cooperative would not have been established without the funds from industry.

5 Waste pickers' experiences of integration

Waste pickers in Sasolburg primarily worked in three different locations: the streets, the landfill, and the Vaal Park Recycling Centre (VPRC). A small number of waste pickers in all three locations had formed cooperatives. Most landfill and street waste pickers worked individually, although they engaged in a number of informal forms of collaboration.

While waste pickers laboured in three different spaces, there was fluidity between them. Waste pickers in the Ikageng-Ditamating (ID) cooperative who ran the VPRC had previously worked at the landfill, to which the majority chose to return. Waste pickers also circulated between the landfill and the streets, and some independent waste pickers working on the streets and at the landfill wanted to form cooperatives and create centres like the VPRC.

Waste picking arises out of inequality, as it is predicated on some people being so wealthy that they throw away valuable materials, and others being so poor that they choose to support themselves by collecting and selling (as well as reusing and remaking) these items (Beall, 1997). Due to the articulations of race and class in South Africa, the overwhelming majority, if not all, of the reclaimers in Metsimaholo were African. There were also strong gender differences and power relations between reclaimers. Many women preferred to work at the landfill as it was a safer, enclosed space. Nevertheless, men still dominated the landfill and the streets. There was greater gender parity in most cooperatives, highlighting women's interest in, and leadership of, these collective organisations.

5.1 Landfill Waste Pickers

Sasolburg landfill waste pickers had a long and fraught history of struggling for integration, including physical battles, to retain access to the site (Samson, 2009). In many ways, for landfill waste pickers integration simply meant securing the right to continue working. In this respect they were successful, as despite municipal policy and intent to evict them, the landfill waste pickers continued to work at the landfill at the time of the research. As discussed in section 4.4.3, officials initiated interim welfare-type initiatives to improve landfill waste pickers' basic health and working conditions, and to assist South Africans in obtaining identity documents.

From at least the 1990s into the early 2000s, the municipality had granted private companies contracts to recycle at the dump. However, waste pickers did the actual salvaging work. In 2004, the contractor ceased operations and the waste pickers mobilized to secure the contract for

themselves. Landfill waste pickers reported that the municipality encouraged them to form cooperatives or closed corporations so that they could be considered for future contracts. Although some waste pickers at the dump responded enthusiastically and registered organisations, the municipality granted the contract to a small company owned by two black professionals who had no previous experience in the waste or recycling sectors (Samson, 2009).

Sasol Rejuvenation provided the company with support and mentorship to address its lack of experience. Such support had not been offered to the waste pickers, who reported that they had been told they did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to be awarded the contract. Given the waste pickers' intimate knowledge of recycling at the landfill they felt they that if they had received the same support, they would have provided a better service and improved their position in the sector rather than seeing it deteriorate. However, they had not been afforded that opportunity due to negative assumptions about waste pickers and pre-conceived notions of what type of person could be eligible to receive a contract (Samson, 2009).

Landfill waste pickers were therefore acutely aware that establishing a cooperative did not necessarily lead to integration. In addition, some waste pickers who had joined cooperatives had left them due to problems related to internal politics, leadership, finances, and challenges in working collectively. Others simply preferred to retain their autonomy. This left many landfill waste pickers despondent about their prospects for integration.

Nevertheless, some pickers persisted in forming and maintaining cooperatives. After the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) was formed in 2009, these cooperatives received support and encouragement from SAWPA and the environmental NGO groundWork. Two cooperatives (one that had primarily included young men and the other women and older men) merged to form the Ikageng-Ditamating (ID) cooperative and concentrated on establishing the Vaal Park Recycling Centre (VPRC).

5.2 Vaal Park Recycling Centre Waste Pickers

The Vaal Park Recycling Centre pilot project emerged out of a confluence of two interests: 1) the Department of Environmental Affairs (now the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries) required PACSA (now Packaging SA) to develop an industry waste management plan (IndWMP) that included waste pickers; and 2) SAWPA adopted a proactive strategy of piloting different approaches to waste picker integration in several municipalities across the country.

In 2011, as part of its work to develop the IndWMP, PACSA organised a trip to Brazil to learn more about how Brazilian industry worked with waste pickers. PACSA invited the chairperson of SAWPA (who was also the chairperson of Ditamating) to join them. Upon completion of the trip, the participants decided to work together to create a pilot project loosely based on the Brazilian model. SAWPA endorsed Sasolburg as the pilot site and Ikageng as the participating cooperative.

The pilot focused on supporting the cooperative to establish a recycling centre and provide a separation at source service to residents in the suburb of Vaal Park. Between 2011 and 2014 a task team met monthly to rally support and move towards implementing the pilot. The task team included all key stakeholders and had representatives of SAWPA, Ikageng (and subsequently ID), PACSA, PETCO, PRASA, the Recycling Action Group (RAG), the waste management company Waste Plan, Rejuvenation, the Metsimaholo local municipality, the Fezile Dabi District Municipality, and the Free State provincial government.

In many ways, the pilot was a passion project for all involved. The PETCO representative played a crucial role in bringing other industry and government partners on board and securing their contributions. Resources to fund the pilot were cobbled together. With assistance from PETCO, ID won R225 000 in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Free State Competition, which it used to purchase a *bakkie* (a small pickup truck). As part of the prize from the ILO competition, PETCO donated 10 waste removal cages, a manual baler, protective clothing, and training. The local municipality provided land for the VPRC on condition that no permanent structures would be erected. The province contributed R550 000 and shipping containers for an office and storage space. It also upgraded and secured the site. The District provided an electric baler and roof. DEA provided 6000 recycling bins for households. Industry assisted ID to register the cooperative and open a bank account. Industry organisations and companies also converted the vehicle and provided small equipment, personal protective equipment, access to water, a small kitchen, basic furniture, a laptop, vehicle insurance, and training.

The VPRC officially opened on November 27, 2014 on land that had been an illegal dumping site. By 2017, ID had achieved a number of successes. Approximately 2000 of the 3000 households in Vaal Park were separating materials for ID. The cooperative further increased its volumes by branching out and collecting recyclables from private businesses. The centre also sold reusable items collected from households. In addition to recycling, the VPRC therefore promoted reuse of materials discarded by other residents, a component of waste minimisation that is often overlooked in municipal recycling programmes.

Despite these successes and the remarkably widespread support for the pilot, ID and SAWPA experienced a number of problems that had significant material implications for the cooperative and its members. Although the pilot was based on the Brazilian model, unlike in Brazil the cooperative was not paid for the collection and environmental services it was providing. ID was expected to sustain itself purely from the sale of recyclables and struggled financially. Waste pickers earned less than when they worked at the landfill, and by 2017 all but six of the original twenty-two cooperative members had returned to the landfill. Few were replaced, as ID reported that when new members realised how little they were earning they would quit. In addition, the cooperative members wanted to protect their meagre incomes. Due to the cooperative's financial constraints, it paid casual workers low wages to sort materials, which only entrenched exploitation in the sector.

Adding another layer of financial constraints, one leader noted:

The project started off with no start-up capital so we had to work with nothing just to ensure that we find a way to pay off the expenses we had such as the truck's fuel, maintenance and insurance, which was problematic because people were not understanding why they could not be paid even though they were working so hard when the project was launched (Waste picker representative, 07/08/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 55).

None of the members of ID had experience running such a large-scale initiative or managing finances. Government conducted some training, as did industry experts, who also provided pro bono mentorship, assistance with developing financial systems, and support in keeping financial records. The training and support were provided on a relatively ad hoc basis as needs emerged.

While industry representatives felt that they had provided generous support, the VPRC was struggling and members of ID felt that the training and mentorship had been inadequate. Despite the professionals' general expertise and commitment to supporting ID, they did not necessarily have

expertise in working with informal workers. Waste picker leaders reported discomfort in working with them and argued that they should have been involved in selecting the mentors and trainers. Because the support was being provided pro bono, some industry representatives felt that this was unrealistic. All of this serves to highlight the importance of budgeting for appropriate training and mentorship as part of waste picker integration projects, as well as the more general need to secure an adequate budget before commencing any project.

Many of the VPRC's problems could be traced back to the fact that the pilot was run on a surprisingly informal basis. ID did not have a contract or memorandum of understanding with either the municipality or industry. The parties had not developed a project proposal, comprehensive implementation plan, or financial sustainability plan. Interviews revealed that there was no clear agreement on what was being piloted or how long the pilot would run. Although pilots are meant to generate lessons to inform future initiatives, neither a monitoring and evaluation system, nor a review process had been created. As a result, when problems arose there was no agreed way to analyse and address them. In addition, there was no dispute mechanism to move beyond disagreements between the parties.

These absences and gaps created space for the parties to develop and work within very different understandings of what the pilot was trying to achieve and how this should be done. One ID member shared that they felt they were given just enough support to get by, but not to progress beyond that. Another articulated ID's sense of deep betrayal:

before the project was launched it was agreed upon that we would be given machinery such as a baling machine and also, we would have electricity installed for us; when the project was pitched, this was sounding like they were building a separation at source and recycling firm for waste pickers. However, during the stakeholders meeting everything changed towards the launching of the project. The promises that people made during project development were unfulfilled towards the time of having to launch the project... (ID member, 07/08/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 55).

For their part, the municipal officials expressed deep frustration, as they insisted that they had not committed to electrifying the site, and did not have a budget to provide electricity or further support. Industry representatives were surprised by the complaints, as they believed they had already made significant financial and in-kind contributions and that the cooperative should be able to support itself.

The pilot was likely the first initiative in the country in which industry and municipalities committed to work collectively with waste pickers in planning and implementing a project. However, it was just assumed that all would participate equally, without explicitly reflecting on how this would require identifying and redressing harmful stereotypes about waste pickers, as well as unequal power relations, skills, and access to resources and information. As a result, waste pickers became frustrated that they felt they were being patronized and industry was forging ahead and imposing its own ideas, while industry representatives were frustrated that waste pickers were not taking more initiative, came to meetings unprepared, and continued to require support (including in performing basic financial functions and resolving internal disputes).

If all parties had jointly developed and agreed to a project proposal, plans, and dispute resolution mechanisms, and if all agreements had been recorded, many of these tensions could have been significantly reduced, if not completely avoided. Despite the parties' mutual disappointments and

frustrations, they each expressed pride in the contributions they had made to the VPRC. Conducting a formal evaluation of the pilot could, therefore, possibly be useful in extracting lessons, improving relations, and developing agreed plans on how the VPRC could be supported moving forward. This would, however, require commitment to transforming the initiative from a pilot into a permanent programme, recognition that it was necessary to plan and fund longer-term support, and acceptance that this would require fundamental transformation in how the parties relate to each other.

5.3 Street Waste Pickers

5.3.1 Street Waste Pickers in Vaal Park

5.3.1.1 *Relationships with Residents*

Street waste pickers had long worked in the upmarket, historically (and still predominantly) white, Afrikaans Vaal Park (VP) suburb. The power-laden class, race, and social inequalities, as well as language differences between the waste pickers and residents created difficult working conditions for the waste pickers. One waste picker shared:

...honestly we are very afraid working in white communities, sometimes the residents are nice and welcoming but in some cases they chase us away. So we are just trying our luck with them because their areas have a lot of recyclables (VP street waste picker, 20/08/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 81).

One resident who had lived in in other parts of the country believed that racism was deeper and more overt in VP and that this affected waste pickers and their work:

I think there's more racism here and usually racism in SA is a bit undercover but here the people are just explicit about it...so the reason why I don't think you'd find waste pickers leaving a mess here is because they are scared there'd be some kind of backlash or penalty against them... (VP resident, 03/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 82).

However, not all residents treated waste pickers this way; some were sympathetic and actively supported VP street waste pickers (see Section 6.2 below for further discussion). Despite their fear, VP street waste pickers highlighted that relationships with residents were crucial, as their access to recyclables was dependent on the residents. They also noted that having good relations with specific residents who saved materials for them also decreased competition and conflicts over recyclables with other waste pickers.

5.3.1.2 *Relationships with ID and the Vaal Park Recycling Centre*

VP street waste pickers had not been involved directly in integration initiatives. However, they were strongly affected by the VPRC integration initiative, as it had brought former landfill waste pickers to collect recyclables in the area where they had already been working for many years. The ID and SAWPA representatives reported that they had invited street waste pickers to join ID. However, a number of VP street waste pickers interviewed disagreed with this assertion. Another provided a more complex story:

... the people who started the project were a bit unfair to us as street waste pickers... they could have included us in the plans before considering waste pickers from the dump, I mean we have been working here longer... yes they did try to invite me to come work there after the project had already started but I refused because I cannot have another waste picker as my boss... I would rather work the way I always did and go sell my things elsewhere... the

project has even reduced the amount of recyclables we recover and so we do not make as much money like before (VP street waste picker, 04/10/2017; cited in Pholto, 2018: 55).

This waste picker's statement could seem contradictory, as he was upset that he had not been included and was losing materials and income, but simultaneously declared that he preferred to work independently. However, what his quote reveals is that while he wanted to preserve and improve his income and working conditions, he did not want this to require him to join the cooperative. As with the landfill waste pickers, his comments reveal the need for approaches that can integrate autonomous waste pickers.

Across the world, when S@S services are provided by either cooperatives or private companies, this typically creates sustained competition between the provider and street waste pickers working in the area. However, after the negative effects of the S@S programme on the VP street waste pickers became clear, ID started to meet with them. They eventually reached an informal agreement in which the street pickers continued to collect recyclables put out on rubbish collection day, but would not take the bags of separated materials put out for ID. In return, ID permitted street waste pickers to sort and sell their materials at the VPRC, reportedly for the same price that the VPRC received.

Reflecting on this agreement, another VP street waste picker reported:

I really do not mind selling the stuff here, we have to support each other as waste pickers and this also helps with not having [to] push my trolley very far where I will get paid slightly more...so it's not worth it, I am okay with selling here... (VP street waste picker, 04/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 54).

Other street waste pickers preferred to walk further distances to receive higher prices. One indicated that as part of a way forward, some VP street waste pickers were planning to come together as street waste pickers and request SAWPA to assist them to create a similar project in another community (VP street waste picker, 04/10/2017). However, this would then lead to the same situation, with waste pickers from VP displacing street waste picker already working in the new area.

In the meantime, some residents chose to continue supporting the street pickers. As one reported:

... what I do when I see the street waste pickers roaming around is that I give them whatever I can, even some of the stuff from the recycling bin which I am supposed to put out for the recycling centre on Thursdays and if I don't see them that's when I put everything in the recycling bin for Thursday... (VP resident, 04/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 81).

The dynamics between the VP street waste pickers, ID, and the residents highlight that when integration initiatives are being developed, it is crucial to ensure that integration of one group of waste pickers does not adversely affect others, and that all potentially affected waste pickers are included in decision-making. It also highlights that residents were active agents in the integration process in Metsimaholo, and that their experiences and interests must be explored and analysed.

5.3.2 Street Waste Pickers in Zamdela

Waste pickers in Zamdela worked in very different conditions from their colleagues in VP. For many years there had not been a waste collection service in the township and illegal dumping sites proliferated. Although Sasol installed skips at the illegal dumping sites, they were insufficient and

illegal dumping continued. Residents were aggrieved, as they believed they should get the same weekly door-to-door service as Vaal Park. This created a challenge for the municipality, as its trucks could not navigate the township's streets. Within this context, residents praised waste pickers for helping to reduce waste.

Unlike in VP, waste pickers who worked in Zamdela lived there. They were therefore known and trusted by the residents and were not treated as intruders. Personal relationships with waste pickers encouraged some residents to separate recyclables for them. For example, one waste picker gained increased access to recyclables by requesting fellow residents in a meeting to save recyclables for her.

The line between residents and waste pickers was blurred, as most residents interviewed indicated that they sold their own recyclable materials to generate additional income. Some residents who gave waste pickers materials expected payment in return. While Zamdela waste pickers' membership of the community reduced the problems and tensions VP waste pickers confronted working in white, wealthier suburb, the Zamdela waste pickers had access to fewer valuable materials and faced competition from the residents themselves.

Zamdela waste pickers did not sell their materials to VPRC as it was too far and its prices were too low. However, other forms of solidarity emerged. VPRC sometimes donated second-hand furniture to people in Zamdela, and ID leaders played an important role in encouraging and supporting waste pickers who worked in Zamdela (as well as other parts of the municipality) to form and build their own cooperatives. The idea of the VPRC also shaped the integration initiative that was pursued in Zamdela as part of the Sasol's offset programme.

The Sasol offset programme provided an opportunity to develop and implement the first waste picker integration initiative in Zamdela. Discussions between Sasol, the local and district municipalities, and waste pickers resulted in a decision to provide eight waste picker cooperatives⁶ each with their own land and infrastructure to sort and store their recyclables. The project also included plans to create a recycling hub that would receive materials from these sites (Sasol, 2018: 15). Sasol argued that the project was an offset as it would decrease potential emissions by ensuring that materials were recycled instead of burned.

The offset supported the waste pickers to establish and register cooperatives. However, participating cooperatives encountered problems not dissimilar to those experienced by ID. They reported that the training they received from Sasol's Enterprise Supply Enablement and Investment Unit did not focus on their key needs. A Sasol representative confirmed that rather than being designed for waste pickers, the training primarily consisted of giving participants notes written in English to read and then expecting the waste pickers to ask questions. Waste picker participants' grievances were compounded as they had been required to pay for their own transport to attend the training.

Perhaps most importantly, there were delays in the municipality allocating the land to be used by the cooperatives. As a result, the cooperatives had not received the promised shelter, ablution facilities, or sorting places. Cooperative members did not know how much money had been allocated to the project, there were no formal agreements in place, and alternative forms of support

⁶⁶ Two cooperatives merged due to their proximity to one another, bringing the total number of cooperatives down to seven.

that could proceed prior to receipt of the land had not been discussed. Cooperative members were despondent as they felt that neither the municipality nor Sasol were hearing their concerns.

5.4 Waste pickers' understanding of integration

The VPRC played an important role in shaping Metsimaholo waste pickers' imaginaries of integration. Landfill waste pickers and some VP street waste pickers desired integration and security. However, they could not imagine how that could be possible without forming cooperatives, which they did not want to do. VP street waste pickers who were interested in forming cooperatives did not think this would be possible, as they believed that integration needed to take the same form as the VPRC, and they did not think they would be able to gain access to land that could be used for their own centre.

Existing cooperatives aspired to have at least the same infrastructure and equipment as the VPRC. Both ID and the other cooperatives identified immediate needs such as business training, electricity, water, land, and infrastructure. However, they had a much more expansive understanding of integration that they were mobilising to enact.

At a basic level, the waste pickers interviewed were clear that transformation in how the municipality related to them was central to integration. One cooperative leader summed up the context at the time as follows: "In specific reference to Sasolburg, I'd say waste picker issues are still being suppressed. Our municipality is still shutting us out, our rights as waste pickers are still being suppressed" (Zamdela cooperative leader, 5/19/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 24). Cooperative leaders noted that they had not seen the IDPs, did not know that waste pickers issues and programmes to address them could be included in the IDP and IWMP, and were not aware that this would be a way to secure funding and support.

Arising from this context, for waste pickers, integration entailed participation in the development of municipal and waste policies and plans, inclusion in policies and plans, and access to all relevant policies, plans, and municipal documents. It was also critical that officials become more respectful, appreciative of their contributions, responsive to their needs and proposals, and available to meet them. Integration also required that state officials engage them as equal partners on a sustained basis. Particularly given the problems they encountered in the VPRC project, waste pickers were clear that this applied equally to industry.

Waste picker leaders identified that integration also required significant transformation of the industry and the recycling value chain. As Ntuli (2019) recounts, one leader emphasised the economic racism in the industry that was still largely white-owned, and argued that the industry constrained waste pickers to lower, dirtier levels of the value chain. This was despite the fact that waste pickers had been present since (and even prior to) the establishment of the formal recycling industry thirty years prior (Godfrey and Oelofse 2017). Ntuli (2019) therefore concludes that the absence of waste pickers from higher positions in the value chain was the result of active exclusion.

The cooperatives had created the Metsimaholo Waste Picker Forum as a key step towards their expansive vision of integration. Explaining the genesis and purpose of the forum, one ID leader reported that he and another ID leader:

sat under a tree and planned this waste pickers' forum in hopes of reaching a point of growth we have always dreamed of. The idea is to register this forum so that middlemen don't mess with the structure or the waste pickers within it. The point of this forum is that we, as waste

pickers within our various cooperatives in the area, will service one municipality. The Vaal Park Recycling Centre is the first official site for this plan and more land will be allocated so that other cooperatives can have spaces to sort from and this plan can come to fruition. The point is that if we combine all our loads together, we can compete with the middlemen instead of selling to them, we can sell to the industries themselves. We don't want things going above us any longer, we want to be able to sell on our own without liaising with middlemen and negotiating with them for prices first. The main goal for us is to own the means of production, we need to be able to own the entire value chain from separation at source to producing products such as tissue with the white paper we collect. We've become smarter and more informed about this entire industry so we deserve more out of it than just being the collectors and separators (ID leader, 08/08/2017; cited in Ntuli, 2019: 65-66).

The forum included all cooperatives in Metsimaholo and met on a regular basis. As noted above, it became a vehicle to collectively engage the municipality and Sasol. While the district official wanted to replicate the forum, the official and the waste pickers appeared to have very different understandings of its purpose. The question that remained was whether the state and industry would provide the support that waste pickers needed to achieve their vision. Another burning question related to the independent waste pickers, and whether they would be able to participate in, and benefit from, these processes.

6 Residents' experiences of integration

The research conducted in Vaal Park by Lethabo Pholoto (2018) identified that residents conceptualised waste pickers differently based on the spaces where they worked and the types of relationships residents had with them in those spaces. Residents classified waste pickers into three distinct groups: they referred to landfill-based waste pickers as '*aasvoels*' (vultures), street waste pickers as 'trolley pushers' and waste pickers from the Vaal Park Recycling Centre (VPRC) as non-waste pickers (for example, as employees of a private company). In general, the more formal the work and the site were perceived to be, the more favourably the residents viewed the waste pickers.

6.1 Landfill waste pickers

The Sasolburg landfill was overcrowded, waste picking was unregulated, and the volume of recyclable materials had been diminishing for a number of years. Such conditions affected interactions between residents and waste pickers, as pickers' pressing need to be the first to claim recyclables that residents brought to the landfill took precedence over the forging of sustainable social relationships with residents.

Typically, waste pickers waited at an entry point to the landfill for residents to come and discard recyclable materials. Residents reported (and waste pickers confirmed) that waste pickers would run and jump onto the vehicles to unload what they wanted, without waiting for the residents to stop the vehicle, introduce themselves or ask for assistance.

Residents indicated that waste pickers at the landfill site seemed desperate for recyclables. However, rather than seeking to understand how this desperation and their working conditions shaped the ways waste pickers interacted with them, most residents framed landfill waste pickers as unsociable and violent. One female Vaalpark resident reported her fear of making a drop off at the landfill: "I went to the landfill with my husband to discard leftovers from building materials and other old things and as you arrive you get swamped by all these people and you do not even know

what they are going to do to you” (VP resident 13/09/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2019: 76). Another declared that “[i]t impossible to even greet the waste pickers at the landfill site due to how they were always ready to scare us off... (VP resident, 14/09/2017; cited in Pholto, 2019: 76). As noted above, the residents dehumanized the landfill waste pickers to the extent that they referred to them as *aasvoels*.

The interactions amongst waste pickers and between waste pickers and residents at the landfill gates were undoubtedly chaotic and aggressive, and it is understandable that residents would feel harassed and annoyed. However, no evidence was provided to support the fear that competition for materials would translate into violence against residents, and the assumption that landfill waste pickers wanted to scare residents away ran counter to the fact that landfill pickers depended on residents bringing materials to the landfill.

It is important to note that not all residents interviewed dehumanised waste pickers. A different resident explained, “For me, most of them are honestly trying to make a living out of waste, especially the ones at the landfill site” (VP Resident, 13/09/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2019: 81). This raises the question of how it could be possible to shift residents’ assumptions about landfill waste pickers so that residents and landfill waste pickers could work together to improve both waste pickers’ working conditions and the interactions between the two groups. As discussed below, the fact that Vaal Park residents held profoundly different beliefs about the same landfill waste pickers when they encountered them in different locations and positions provides some insight into steps that could be taken.

6.2 Street waste pickers

Vaal Park residents had a more positive and accepting view of street waste pickers. One resident explained that “... the street waste pickers have been working in our community for a very long time [so] that we are used to their existence now, we no longer get surprised when we wake up to find them going through the garbage we put for municipal collection...” (VP resident, 02/10/2017). Unlike the presumed *‘aasvoels’* who worked at the landfill site, the street waste pickers were perceived as poor, jobless individuals who were doing something to address their circumstances. As the same resident explained: “if my trash can make him some money then that’s good for him, he is free to take anything from it” (VP Resident, 02/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 78).

Some residents actively supported the street waste pickers by, for example, putting aside separated recyclables so waste pickers would not have to go through the messy garbage. They also offered street waste pickers food, water, jobs, and clothes. One resident elaborated: “I just feel pity for them because I know what they want and it’s so sad looking at them going through other peoples’ garbage while I have sorted the things already. So I just call them and give them and I feel it’s better when I support an individual as opposed to supporting a company. This project [the Vaal Park Recycling Centre and selective collection by the cooperative] for me is more like a company” (VP resident, 04/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 81).

However, other residents complained about the mess left by street waste pickers. As one stated: “Honestly I wasn’t happy with the fact that they would open my bin and leave everything scattered on the ground and now I had to clean after them, so I ended up chasing them when I saw them opening or wanting to open our bin” (VP resident, 02/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 79). The same resident also raised concerns related to the perceived invasion of privacy: “...your garbage is something you feel sensitive about...when someone exposes what you threw in there to your

neighbours it's quite embarrassing and you don't want people who live next to you to start judging you" (VP resident, 02/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 80).

In addition, due to the street waste pickers' lack of uniforms associating them with an established organisation, some residents felt they could not be trusted and criminalised them. There was also concern regarding whether street waste pickers were "legitimate or just opportunistic" (VP resident, 13/09/2017). A section of residents explained that their reluctance to support informal street waste pickers was linked to the perception that street waste pickers disturbed communal spaces.

6.3 Vaal Park Recycling Centre waste pickers

The VPRC had not been introduced formally to the Vaal Park residents as a waste picker cooperative initiative. There was a common perception among residents that the centre was owned and operated by a private company. Opinions on the waste pickers' role varied. Some residents saw them as middlemen, other saw them as workers: "I don't know who they are or where they came from, I just believe that this recycling project was opened by some corporate dude sitting somewhere in an office making money out of our recyclables through the poor recycling workers" (VP resident, 04/10/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 83).

Residents did, however, typically expressed their appreciation for the work of the VPRC waste pickers. As one stated: "...they are nice, friendly and decent people...they do what they promised to do. They don't disappoint and so I'm happy with their work. And also they taught us how to actually recycle, I had personally never done it before this project" (VP resident, 17/09/2017; cited in Pholoto, 2018: 84). Residents reported that it was easier for them to associate with the waste pickers from the recycling centre because they came to the residents' premises with a vehicle that had the name of their community on it. This contributed to some residents expressing a sense that the VPRC waste pickers were part of the community. As the flipside of residents' suspicions of street waste pickers, this also affirms that Vaal Park residents were more comfortable and willing to support an individual who was part of an organisation they were familiar with and could relate to.

Residents did not only wait for the weekly collections of recyclable materials. Some phoned the centre to come collect bags that had not been collected by the truck. Others brought their materials at the centre. Vaal Park residents reported that contrary to their experience of being "swamped" at the landfill, when they arrived at the VPRC's clearly demarcated drop-off section they were met by one or two waste pickers who greeted them and offered assistance. Many residents interviewed explicitly juxtaposed the VPRC workers to the landfill '*aasvoels*'. When Lethabo Pholoto explained to residents that most of the people working at the recycling centre were waste pickers from the landfill, the residents expressed great surprise. The change in the VPRC waste pickers' spatial location, mode of work, and perceived level of professionalization transformed how Vaal Park residents viewed both the waste pickers (who were not seen as waste pickers) and their work. This facilitated the forging of more positive, respectful, and reciprocal relations.

7 Reflecting on the research questions

Having presented the findings from the policy review and qualitative research in the preceding sections, this section briefly reflects on the research project's five overarching research questions presented at the start of this technical report.

1. What approaches are South African municipalities currently using to formally integrate waste pickers into municipal waste management systems?

When this research project was designed there was an implicit assumption that it would focus on approaches to waste picker integration that were formally adopted by municipal councils and encapsulated in municipal policy documents. However, although the Metsimaholo Local Municipality did not have any official policies or programmes related to waste pickers, the research revealed that officials developed an informal approach to waste picker integration rooted in practical norms and de facto integration strategies.

The three practical norms were that:

1. support for waste pickers should be limited to waste picker cooperatives;
2. work with waste pickers should not require financial support from the municipality;
3. the waste management department should not carry primary responsibility for waste picker integration.

The six de facto strategies were to:

1. integrate waste pickers via cooperatives
2. foster inter-departmental relations to draw on each department's strengths;
3. foster inter-governmental linkages and multi-scalar collaborations;
4. implement temporary measures to assist landfill waste pickers;
5. begin to seek ways to engage waste pickers; and
6. collaborate with industry.

This informal approach to integrating informal waste pickers meant that despite not having official programmes, the municipality engaged waste pickers to both provide some support for them to be more fully integrated via cooperatives, and to try to 'disintegrate' them from the landfill. However, as this approach was informal, waste pickers could neither explicitly contribute to the development of norms and strategies, nor contest them. In addition, the municipality's approach fell within the traditional develop approach (Velis et al., 2012) to waste picker integration, in which waste pickers are framed as passive recipients of welfare support, as opposed to knowledgeable experts who are central to the waste management and recycling systems and should be centrally involved in the development of initiatives that affect them and the recycling system.

The research also revealed the importance of analysing how industry organisations and companies approach their own integration initiatives, as well as their involvement in (and influence over) municipal and waste picker led integration programmes. Both the VPRC and Sasol Offset projects were officially endorsed by the relevant company/industry organisations. However, the approaches were highly informal. Neither project had a proposal, project plan, implementation plan, financial sustainability plan, monitoring and evaluation system, or dispute resolution mechanism. This created space for misunderstandings and tensions, had negative material implications for the waste pickers, and compromised the long-term viability of the initiatives.

Waste pickers played a central role in initiating the VPRC, and had equal status on the steering committee. However, there is a difference between formal and substantive equality. As no analysis had been conducted of existing power relations and inequalities, no measures were put in place to rectify them. As a result, waste pickers were not able to fully participate in the planning and implementation of the pilot, and existing power relations were entrenched. The VPRC pilot could therefore be categorised as rooted in a shallow, instrumental participatory approach.

2. What are the main successes and failures of these integration initiatives?

The municipality's de facto integration strategies achieved a few successes. The municipality provided support to waste pickers by collaborating with industry and relying on officials carving out time from their official responsibilities. The primary success was the support provided to waste pickers to form and sustain cooperatives.

The continued existence of the VPRC was in itself a success for ID, particularly when the numerous challenges it confronted are considered. The VPRC achieved a relatively high separation at source participation rate and collected an even higher percentage of recyclables through its drop off facility. Unlike most separation at source providers, ID succeeded in implementing some initiatives to mitigate the negative effects of separation at source on street waste pickers in Vaal Park. ID supported other waste pickers to form cooperatives, and together they created the cooperative forum to advance their own vision of waste picker integration.

There were also a number of failures from which lessons can be extracted. These included:

Municipality

- municipal officials left to develop programmes without guidance of funding
- insufficient skills and capacity in the municipality to meaningfully engage and work with waste pickers
- increased stress and pressure for officials due to additional work and expectations that they could not meet
- waste pickers' working conditions remained poor and their incomes remained low and unstable
- waste pickers were thwarted and frustrated due to the absence of mechanisms for them to raise issues and proposals and ensure these were addressed
- exclusion of waste pickers from decisions about waste picking and recycling
- waste pickers felt disrespected and marginalized
- waste pickers continued to subsidise the municipality by reducing collection and landfilling costs through unpaid labour
- neglect of independent waste pickers who did not want to join cooperatives
- waste picking at the landfill remained chaotic
- looming crisis at the landfill due to the lack of a social plan to compensate landfill waste pickers and support them in gaining new work when the landfill closed.

Vaal Park Recycling Centre

- the electric baling machine could not be used as the centre was not electrified
- Vaal Park street waste pickers experienced decreases in access to materials and incomes
- the integration project did not improve waste pickers' incomes
- reliance of the VPRC on casual labour
- return of most ID members to the landfill
- inadequate training, support, and mentorship for ID members
- weak financial record keeping and programme management
- lack of a plan and measures to ensure the financial sustainability of ID
- distrust and tensions between pilot partners
- lack of monitoring and evaluation system meant lessons had not been distilled and initiatives to address problems had not been developed

- reproduction of power relations

Sasol Offset Project

- the cooperatives had not received promised space or infrastructure
- the cooperatives' working conditions and incomes had not improved
- lack of transparency
- distrust and tensions between the cooperatives and Sasol
- reproduction of power relations

3. What social, political, economic, environmental and cultural factors facilitate successful integration?

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

Social and cultural

- growing recognition of waste pickers' role and contributions
- decreased stigmatization of waste pickers (although this was primarily limited to VPRC waste pickers)
- improved relationships between residents and waste pickers
- provision of uniforms and vehicles to ID made them seem more professional and increased residents' willingness to engage ID members and participate in the Vaal Park separation and source programme
- the VPRC created a space where residents and waste pickers could interact
- ID support for emerging cooperatives
- solidarity and cooperation between cooperatives

Political

- creativity of officials in developing approaches to working with waste pickers
- willingness of officials to create time to work with waste pickers
- collaboration between departments and different levels of government

Economic

- industry support (financial, in-kind, and human resources) for waste picker programmes
- existence of market for materials collected by waste pickers

Environmental

- increased environmental awareness encouraged support for recycling and waste pickers
- access to offset funding.

4. What social, political, economic, environmental and cultural factors inhibit successful integration?

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

Social and cultural

- ongoing dehumanisation of waste pickers (particularly those at the landfill)
- social and spatial chasms and power relations between residents/officials/industry and waste pickers rooted in class, race, and language
- lack of understanding of waste pickers' work and contributions
- framing integration as charity
- culture of top-down decision-making
- assumption of inherent differences between waste pickers working at different locations
- negative relationships between residents and waste pickers (particularly those at the landfill)

Political

- absence of national policy, funding, and guidance for municipalities related to waste picker integration
- instability in the local council
- low priority of waste management within the municipal budget
- no official political recognition of waste pickers
- absence of municipal policies, programmes, and budgets for work with waste pickers
- lack of key performance indicators for officials related to work with waste pickers
- assumption that support for waste pickers should be via cooperatives
- absence of participatory decision-making structures to develop policies and programmes for waste picker integration
- administrative hurdles to allocate land to provide infrastructure for waste pickers
- assumption that no formal agreements or contracts were required for work with waste pickers

Economic

- assumption that waste pickers should collect recyclables for free
- low and volatile prices for materials sold by waste pickers
- weak financial skills of cooperatives
- lack of a detailed financial viability strategy for the VPRC
- inadequate understanding of the type and form of training and support cooperatives required to manage the operations and finances of the VPRC
- no quantification of savings for the municipality due to diversion of recyclables away from landfills and reduction in the quantity of waste materials to be collected by the municipality
- minimal support to waste pickers to move up the value chain
- lack of transformation in the sector and the value chain

Environmental

- the environmental contributions of waste pickers were not quantified or taken into consideration
- failure to see waste pickers as key environmental agents.

5. What guidelines would assist municipalities in developing a context specific approach to successfully integrating waste pickers into their municipal waste management system?

The research identified a number of important points to be included in a national waste picker integration guideline and accompanying documents. These include:

- a clear definition of integration
- inclusion of industry as well as municipalities in the guidelines
- educational material and training programmes for officials, industry representatives, and residents on who waste pickers 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
- initiatives to end stigmatization, harassment, and fear of waste pickers and to ensure that waste pickers are respected, valued, and engaged as equals
- explanation of the deep, existing unequal power relation in the sector and the crucial importance of proactively identifying these and developing mechanisms to redress them
- 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
- emphasis on the importance of allocating space to waste pickers and their organisations, and ensuring that these are fully serviced
- explanation of the importance of paying waste pickers for their collection and environmental services and how this could be done
- information on different approaches to integration and conditions in which they can be appropriate
- an overview of the importance of developing official policies and programmes on waste picker integration; including these in IDPs, IWMPs and KPIs; and guidance on how to do this in a participatory way
- recognition of the different issues, needs, capacities, and support for waste picker integration in small towns and metropolitan areas
- development of specific education and training materials and support programmes for small towns and rural areas
- guidance on how to analyse waste pickers' existing collection system, as well as officials' existing practices, as important inputs into the development of the official approach to municipal recycling
- emphasis on the importance of engaging all different types of waste pickers 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 waste pickers will be affected by changes to any of its components
- information on the importance of developing landfill closure social plans, what they should include, and how to develop them
- examples of waste picker integration plans
- guidance on how to develop waste picker 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 waste picker integration
- suggestions regarding how to engage and integrate residents into waste picker integration
- provision of ongoing support to municipalities to ensure waste picker integration
- training and support programmes specifically designed for waste pickers, waste picker cooperatives, and waste picker organisations that are designed by people who work closely with waste pickers, understand the context within which waste pickers work, speak relevant languages, and use appropriate pedagogy
- development of financial systems for waste picker cooperatives
- commitment to transforming the value chain and ideas regarding how to do this
- emphasis on the importance of dispute resolution mechanisms and guidance for different departments and parties on how to work together
- guidance for waste pickers on how to develop their own ideas for waste picker integration and how to organise to advocate for and achieve them.

8 Conclusion

This report developed a holistic analysis of waste picker integration in Mestimaholo by investigating how waste pickers, municipal officials, and residents (and to a lesser extent industry representatives) each experienced integration initiatives.

It revealed that these groups frequently had completely different understandings of the same events and issues based on their: respective positions in, and experiences of the waste management system and recycling economy; social status; class; race; power in the sector and over each other; access to information and support; and control over financial and other resources. The absence of written plans, agreements, and contracts allowed these divergent understandings, disputes, and tensions to flourish. In addition, the lack of dispute resolution mechanisms meant that issues often remained unresolved and became even more deeply entrenched.

Municipal officials implicitly worked within a charity approach to integration in which waste pickers were framed as passive beneficiaries of programmes designed by officials (Samson, forthcoming). In this top-down approach (Velis et al., 2012), the municipality also assumed the right to make unilateral decisions about where waste pickers could and could not be, and whether and how they should work. It was, however, far more difficult for the municipality to enforce these decisions, particularly as waste pickers had not been involved in making them and no alternatives were provided to waste pickers who would lose access to materials and hence their livelihoods. The Vaal Park Recycling Centre pilot was more participatory, as it was developed by a multi-party steering committee in which waste pickers were seen as equal partners. However, the parties did not take into account or address existing inequalities between waste pickers and other parties, and as a result waste pickers were not substantively equal partners.

Based on these experiences, the research highlighted that informal approaches to the integration of waste pickers entrenched existing power relations and undermined the very integration they sought to promote. Waste picker integration initiatives must therefore be officially recognised, completely transparent, fully participatory, institutionalized, and adequately funded. Given that waste management departments are already generally underfunded, it is crucial that national government and industry make funds available for municipal waste picker integration programmes,

and that industry ensures that sufficient resources and time are committed to their own programmes.

While waste picker integration initiatives must be formally planned, this does not mean that existing informal practices should be dismissed. Because the VPRC pilot did not analyse how recyclables were already being collected in Vaal Park or how separation at source would affect that informal system, the pilot had unanticipated negative effects on Vaal Park street waste pickers. As such, the research established that the first step in developing a waste picker integration programme must be to understand who the waste pickers in the area/industry are, where they work, the different conditions they work under, the challenges they face in each work site, and how the existing informal system to collect recyclables works as an integrated whole.

The research yielded the surprising result that even in the absence of official municipal policies and programmes on waste picker integration, officials developed and implemented informal programmes based on their practical norms and de facto strategies. Analysis of officials' practices and informal programmes must also be conducted in order to build on their strengths, learn what kinds of support, guidance, and policies officials think would be useful, and identify problems and ways to address them in official policies and programmes.

Discussions about residents and separation at source typically revolve around how to better educate residents so that they understand the importance of recycling and what to recycle. The Metsimaholo study revealed the importance of policy makers, industry, and waste pickers understanding how residents see waste pickers and recycling, and what underpins their beliefs and actions. The simple action of providing waste pickers from VPRC with uniforms not only improved their health and safety, but made a significant difference to how residents related to them. This experience indicated that provision of personal protective equipment that identifies a waste picker as being part of an organisation or as a waste picker in that specific area/municipality/ industry could play an important role in improving waste pickers' social status, relationships with residents, and access to materials.

The research also revealed that it is necessary to educate residents about who waste pickers are, why they do this work, how they do it, the contributions they make, how they are affected by the conditions in the specific places where they work, and the fact that they are people with dignity who should be treated respectfully. This must include explicit discussion of racism and the need to stop discrimination of waste pickers based on race, class, and gender. This issue of pervasive racism must also be addressed at a much broader level, particularly in relation to racial transformation of the industry.

In addition to analysing the successes and failures of the particular initiatives in Mestimaholo, this research identified a number of social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors that either facilitated or undermined integration. This reaffirmed that waste picker integration is a complex process that must engage waste pickers as whole people, be multifaceted, and include multiple departments at all levels of government, as well as organisations and experts specialising in different aspects of integration (cf Nas and Jaffe 2004; Nzeadibe and Anyadike 2012; Velis et al. 2012).

It is often assumed that the focus of waste picker integration should be on what can be done for waste pickers and how they must change where they work and the ways they work. However, the issue of waste picker integration only emerges because to date municipalities, other levels of

government, industry, and residents have not recognised or valued the crucial role that waste pickers play in South Africa's waste management systems and recycling economy. They have stigmatised, marginalised, and excluded waste pickers, and assumed that they understand the issues and know best how to solve them for waste pickers. While traditional top-down development approaches frame integration as something that these other parties must do for waste pickers, the most fundamental starting point for waste picker integration is transformation in how municipalities, industry, and residents see, value, and engage waste pickers, and the acceptance that it is waste pickers who must be supported to take the lead in defining what waste picker integration is, and how to achieve it.

9 Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all of the research participants for their generosity in making time to participate in the research and sharing their insights and experiences with the research team. We are particularly thankful to the waste pickers in the Ikageng-Ditamating cooperative and the officials in the Mestimaholo Local Municipality for opening their doors and permitting the students to accompany them in their daily activities. We are also appreciative of Jennifer van den Bussche and Andries Mkhathshwa for providing fieldwork training and support. This report was written by Melanie Samson.

10 References

10.1 Student research reports and theses

- Guya, J. (2019). *Local state practices of informal waste picker integration: the case of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality*. Master's of Urban Studies research report, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Ntuli, Z. (2019). *The network of waste picker-led cooperatives: the struggle for power, resources and integration*. Draft Master's of Science thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Pholoto, L. (2018). *Theorizing the relations between space and waste: residents' Insights on recycling practices and waste pickers in Vaalpark, Sasolburg*. Master's of Science thesis, University of the Witwatersrand. Available at: <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/26488/Lethabo%20Pholoto%201339937%20-%20Masters%20Thesis%20-%20Final%20-%20Sept%202018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (Accessed on: 22/09/2019).

10.2 Other references

- Beall, J. (1997). Thoughts on poverty from a south Asian garbage dump: gender, inequality and household waste. *IDS Bulletin*, 28(3): 73-90.
- Booker, B. (2018). 'Vaalpark update' [Presentation]. Presented 20 June 2018.
- Centre for Environmental Rights (2017). *Implementation Of Minimum Emission Standards (Mes): Centre For Environmental Rights 7 November 2017 Pcea Workshop On Mes*. Available at: http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/171107Outline_of_CER.pdf (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Chikarmane, P. (2012). *Integrating Waste Pickers into Municipal Solid Waste Management in Pune, India*. WIEGO Policy Brief (Urban Policies) No 8. Available at: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Chikarmane_WIEGO_PB8.pdf.
- Chikarmane, P., and Narayan, L. (2005). *Organising the Unorganised: A Case Study of the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (Trade Union of Waste-Pickers)*. Available at:

- https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/migrated/resources/files/Chikarmane_Narayan_casse-kkpkp.pdf (Accessed 05/09/2019).
- de Sardan, J.P.O. (2015). Practical norms: informal regulations within public bureaucracies (in Africa and beyond), in de Herdt, T. and de Sardan, J.P.O (eds.) in *Real Governance and Practical Norms in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Game of the Rules*, London: Routledge. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/14422064/Practical_norms_informal_regulations_within_public_bureaucracies_in_Africa_and_beyond (Accessed on: 09/09/2019).
- Dias, S.M. (2011). Integrating Informal Workers into Selective Waste Collection: The Case of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. WIEGO Policy Brief (Urban Policies) No 4. Available at: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Dias_WIEGO_PB4.pdf (Accessed 23/05/2019).
- eNCA (2017). 'IEC releases Metsimaholo by-election results', eNCA, 1 December. Available at: <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/iec-release-metsimaholo-by-election-results> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Environmental Management Group (2018). *Establishment of a New Landfill site and Associated Infrastructure for the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, Free State*; Draft Scoping Report. Available at: <http://envmgp.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Draft-Scoping-Report-for-the-Proposed-Metsimaholo-Landfill-development.pdf> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Feketha, S. (2017). 'SACP fares dismally in #Metsimaholo by-elections', IOL, 1 December. Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/free-state/sacp-fares-dismally-in-metsimaholo-by-elections-12215038> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Free State Provincial Government (2013). *State of the Province Address by Honourable E.S. Magashule Premier of the Free State province 21 Feb 2013*. Available at: <https://www.gov.za/state-province-address-honourable-es-magashule-premier-free-state-province> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Godfrey, L., Strydom, W. and Phukubye, R. (2016). *Integrating the informal sector into the South African waste and recycling economy in the context of Extended Producer Responsibility*. CSIR Briefing Note, February. Available at: https://www.wasteroadmap.co.za/download/informal_sector_2016.pdf (Accessed September 3, 2019).
- groundWork (n.d.). *Making Waste Work: The South African Waste Pickers Association's Success Stories*. Pietermaritzburg: groundWork. Available at: <https://www.groundwork.org.za/Documents/waste/SAWPA%20pilot%20projects.pdf> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- groundWork (2014). *Slow Poison: Air Pollution, Public Health and Failing Governance: A Story Of Air Pollution and Political Failure to Protect South Africans From Pollution*. Available at: [https://www.groundwork.org.za/specialreports/Slow%20Poison\(e\).pdf](https://www.groundwork.org.za/specialreports/Slow%20Poison(e).pdf) (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- groundWork (2016). *Sasol Offset Implementation Plan: Comment by groundWork, Friends of the Earth, South Africa*. Available at: <https://www.groundwork.org.za/Documents/AirQuality/Sasol%20offset%20plan%20gW%20016.pdf> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Gutberlet, J. (2008). *Recovering Resources Recycling Citizenship: Urban Poverty Reduction in Latin America*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

- Inter-American Development Bank (2013). *Preparing Informal Sector Inclusion Plans: An Operational Guide*. Available online: <https://publications.iadb.org/en/preparing-informal-recycler-inclusion-plans-operational-guide> (Accessed on: 03/09/2019).
- Kashyap, P., and Visvanathan, C. (2014). Formalization of informal recycling in low income countries. In Pariatamby, A. and Tanaka, M. (Eds.), *Municipal Solid Waste Management in Asia and the Pacific Islands* (pp. 41–60). New York: Springer.
- Lowenberg, A. and Kaempfer, W. (1998). *The Origins and Demise of South African Apartheid: A Public Choice Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
- Mailovich, C. (2018). Motion of no confidence against Metsimaholo mayor to be rescheduled, *Times Live*, 07 September. Available at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2018-09-07-motion-of-no-confidence-against-metsimaholo-mayor-to-be-rescheduled/> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Marello, M., and Helwege, A. (2014). *Solid Waste Management and Social Inclusion of Waste Pickers: Opportunities and Challenges*. GEGI Working Paper (Vol. 7). Boston, MA. Available at: <https://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/files/2014/11/Social-Inclusion-Working-Paper.pdf> (Accessed on: 03/09/2019).
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2010). *Integrated Development Plan 2010/2011*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2011). *Integrated Development Plan 2011/2012*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2013). *LED Strategy: Report 2*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2014a). *Integrated Development Plan 2014/2015 Second Review*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2014b). *Integrated Waste Management Plan: 2014 to 2019*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2016). *Integrated Development Plan 2016-2017*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Metsimaholo Local Municipality (2018). *Revised Integrated Development Plan 2018/2019*. Sasolburg: Metsimaholo Local Municipality.
- Meyer, D. (2014). Local economic development (LED), challenges and solutions: the case of the northern Free State Region, South Africa, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (16), 624-634.
- Modjadji, N. and Mailovich, C. (2017). SACP sets terms for ANC coalition, *Business Day*, 4 December. Available at: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2017-12-04-sacp-sets-terms-for-anc-coalition/> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Musgrave, A. and Mde, V. (2017). Will the Metsimaholo by-elections bring relief to its beleaguered residents?, *Mail & Guardian*, 30 November. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-11-30-metsimaholo-parties-promise-to-heal-broken-bridges> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Nas, P.J.M and Jaffe, R. (2004). Informal waste management, *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 6 (3): 337–53.
- Nzeadibe, T. C. and Anyadike, R.N.C. (2012). Social participation in city governance and urban livelihoods: constraints to the informal recycling economy in Aba, Nigeria, *City, Culture and Society*, 3 (4): 313–25.

- Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2018). *Minimum Emission Standards: Compliance Roadmap with Industry + NGOs Inputs; DEA Offsets Programmes*. Marion Island challenge. Available at: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/25766/> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Peberdy, S., Harrison, P. and Dinath, Y. (2017). *Uneven Spaces: Core and Periphery in the Gauteng City Region*. GCRO Research Report No 6. Available at: https://www.gcro.ac.za/m/documents/Uneven_Spaces_report_2017.pdf (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (2001). *Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001*. Available at: <http://www.msukaligwa.gov.za/MsukWeb/Documents/Acts/Municipal%20planning%20and%20performance%20Management%20Regulations%202001.pdf> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Rejuvenation (2019). *Rejuvenation*. Available at: www.rejuvenation.org.za (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Samson, M. (2008). *Reclaiming Livelihoods: The Role of Reclaimers in Municipal Waste Management Systems*. Pietermaritzburg: groundWork, pp. 1-60. Available at: https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/migrated/publications/files/Samson_Reclaiming_Livelihoods.pdf (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Samson, M. (2009). Wasted citizenship? Reclaimers and the privatised expansion of the public sphere, *Africa Development*, 34 (3 & 4), 1-25.
- Samson, M. (forthcoming). The political work of waste picker integration". In M. Chen and F. Carré, *The informal economy revisited: looking back, thinking forward*. London: Routledge.
- Sasol (2016a). *Annual Emissions Report Prepared for Fezile Dabi District Municipality*. Available at: (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Sasol (2016b). *Joint Offset Implementation Plan: Sasol, Sasolburg Operations And Natref*. Available at: https://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/SASOL_Postponements/SASOLBURG_NATREF_OFFSET_IMPLEMENTATION_PLAN.pdf (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Sasol (2018). Sasol presentation to Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs [PowerPoint presentation], 6 February. Available at: <http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/180206sasol.pdf> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).
- Satgar, V., & Williams, M. (2011). Cooperatives and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa: contradictions and challenges. In A. Webster, A. Brown, D. Steward, J. K. Walton, & L. Shaw (Eds.), *The hidden alternative: co-operative values, past, present and future* (pp. 177–202). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Scheinberg, A. (2012). *Informal Sector Integration and High Performance Recycling : Evidence from 20 Cities*. WIEGO Working Paper, No. 23. Available at: https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/migrated/publications/files/Scheinberg_WIEGO_WP23.pdf (Accessed 06/04/2019).
- Scheinberg, A. and Simpson, M. (2015). A tale of five cities: using recycling frameworks to analyse inclusive recycling performance. *Waste Management and Research*, 33(11): 975–985.
- Sekhwela, M. and Samson, M. (2019). Contested Understandings of Reclaimer Integration – Insights from a Failed Johannesburg Pilot Project. *Urban Forum*, 1- 19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-019-09377-1>.

- Terraworks (2018). *Metsimaholo New Landfill site: Landfill Site Selection*. Report prepared by TerraWorks for the Metsimaholo Municipality. Unpublished.
- Velis, C.A., Wilson, D., Rocca, O., Smith, S.R., Mavropoulos, A. and Cheeseman, C.R. (2012). An analytical framework and tool (‘InteRa’) for Integrating the Informal recycling sector in waste and resource management systems in developing countries. *Waste Management & Research* 30 (9): 43–66.
- Vrynehoek, L. (2016). *Growing a Dream: The Vaal Park Recycling Centre*. Available at: <http://www.wiego.org/blog/growing-dream-vaal-park-recycling-centre> (Accessed on: 18/08/2019).

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

