

EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FROM AN INFORMAL SECTOR PERSPECTIVE

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What is extended Producer Responsibility?

- EPR is a policy approach that makes producers responsible for the environmental impacts of their products throughout the product life cycle, especially after consumer use.
- Why EPR matters to The Informal Sector?
- Concerns from the Informal Sector.
- Risks of Poorly Designed EPR
- What Waste Pickers Want from EPR.

Why EPR Matters to Waste Pickers

- Provide stable funding
- Create and Improve infrastructure
- Increase access to markets
- Support social protection.
- Improve working conditions.
- Recognize waste pickers as service providers.



Concerns from the informal sector

Key questions waste pickers often ask:

Will EPR support us or replace us?

Will formal systems exclude existing collectors?

Who controls EPR funds?

How are waste pickers represented in decision-making?

Will benefits reach workers ?

Extended Producer Responsibility

Purpose

- Reduce waste generation.
- Increase recycling and recovery of materials.
- Shift waste management costs from governments and taxpayers to producers.
- Promote a circular economy.
- Encourage producers to design products that are easier to reuse, repair, and recycle.
- Reduce environmental pollution and landfill disposal.

Objectives

- Increase Collection and Recycling
- Promote Producer Responsibility
- Support the Circular Economy
- Encourage Eco-Design
- Reduce Environmental Impacts
- Improve Waste Management Systems
- Promote Social Inclusion

Informal Sector Principles for EPR

What waste pickers believe

Recognize existing contributions.

Improve livelihoods.

Protect access to recyclables.

Support worker organization.

Ensure participation in decision-making.

Promote social justice.

Waste pickers should participate in

- EPR Policy Development
- EPR Governance Structures
- Separation at Source Programmes
- Municipal Waste Management Planning
- Recycling Value Chains
- Infrastructure Development
- Training and Capacity Building

The South African Experience

- South Africa has introduced mandatory EPR regulations that recognize the importance of waste pickers in achieving recycling targets.
- Key areas of progress include:
- Growing recognition of waste picker contributions.
- Development of waste picker integration programmes.
- Increased dialogue between municipalities, industry, and waste picker organizations.
- Promotion of responsible sourcing approaches.
- Expansion of separation-at-source initiatives involving waste pickers.
- However, challenges remain around meaningful participation, fair compensation, and equitable distribution of EPR benefits.

Key Recommendations

For Government

Recognize waste pickers in policy and legislation.

Support waste picker integration programmes.

Ensure participation in decision-making.

For Producers and PROs

Invest in waste picker-led collection systems.

Develop responsible sourcing programmes.

Provide infrastructure and business support.



Conclusion

From an informal sector perspective, EPR should not only be about meeting recycling targets. It should also be about creating a fair, inclusive, and sustainable recycling system that recognizes the contribution of waste pickers and improves their livelihoods.

A successful EPR system is one that delivers both environmental outcomes and social justice. Waste pickers are not a problem to be solved—they are essential partners in building a circular economy.

THANK YOU

