

Living Income Study Outcomes

HOW THE STUDY WORKED

- We surveyed 81 waste pickers from 15 organisations to understand:
 - How much they earn
 - What materials they collect
 - How this compares to a living income for a family of four
- Methodology used: adapted from Fair Circularity Initiative & Systemiq

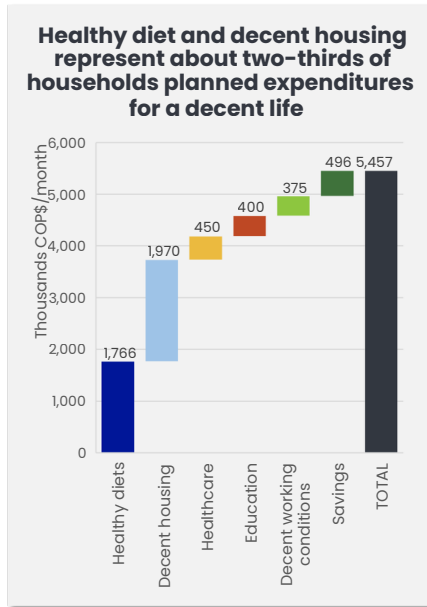
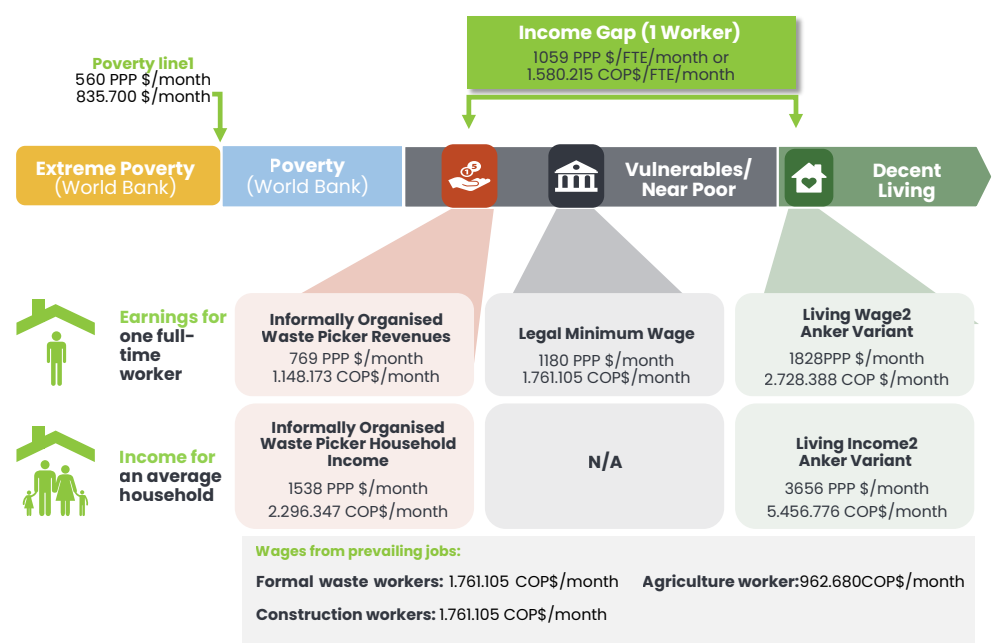
Establish the baseline	Determine the need	Compare against benchmarks
A Current waste picker earnings	B Living income	C Legal minimum wage comparable incomes
Define the current earnings by waste pickers or the salaries received by waste pickers	Calculate the locally applicable living income required to guarantee a decent standard of living for workers in informal and cooperatives settings.	Compare against incomes in other comparable jobs or against government minimum wage
Via primary data . i.e., survey + EPR database	Via primary data . i.e., survey + secondary research	Via primary data . i.e., survey + secondary research

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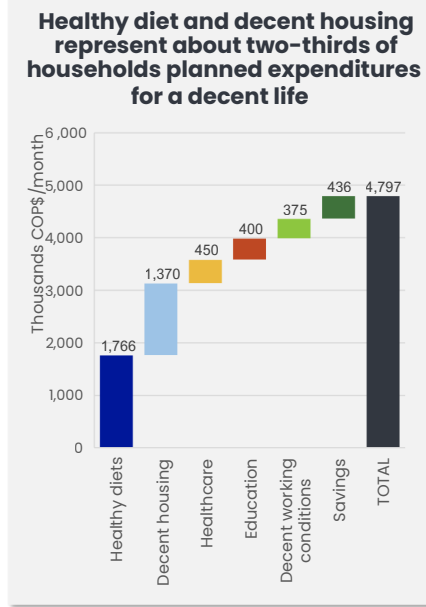
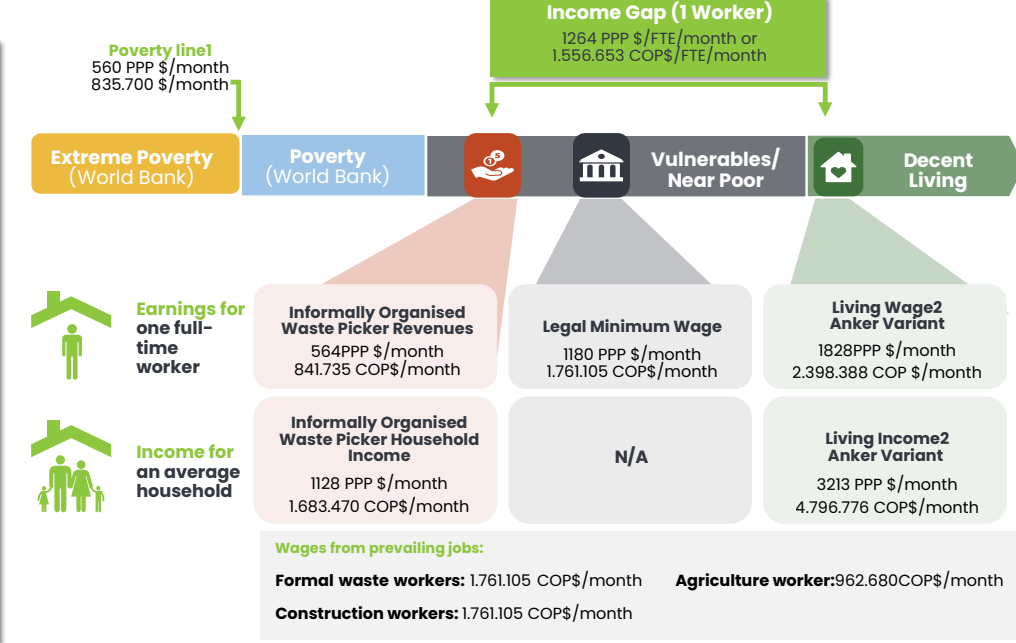
THE INCOME GAP

- The study compares individual earnings with a living wage, and household earnings with a living income benchmark.
- Waste pickers in both cities earn well below what is required for a basic but decent standard of living, whether assessed at the individual (living wage) or household (living income) level.
- Across Bogotá and Barranquilla, the individual shortfall is about 1.5–1.6 million Colombian Pesos (COP\$) per worker, and the household gap exceeds 3 million COP per month.

Income Gap for Waste Pickers in Bogotá



Income Gap for Waste Pickers in Barranquilla

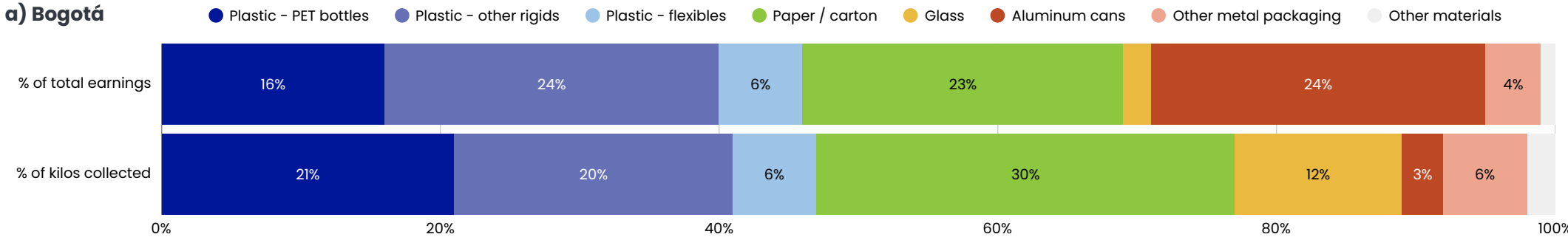


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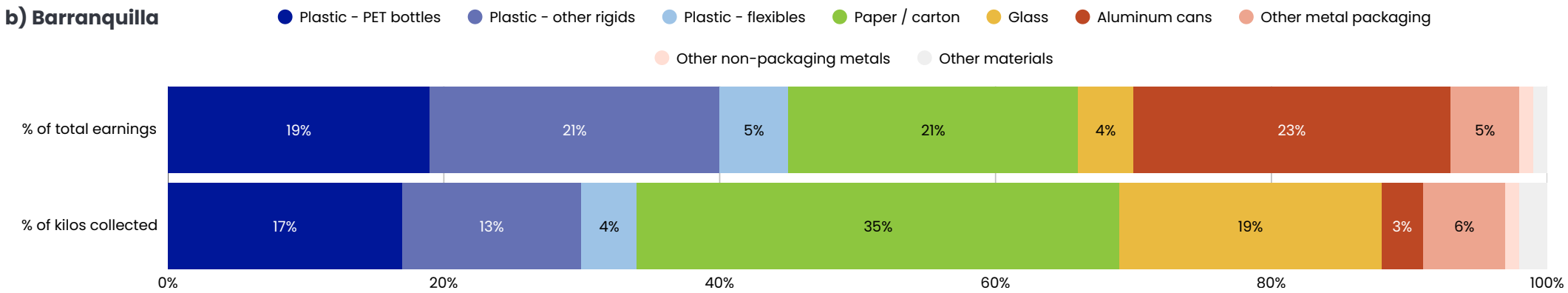
MATERIALS: VOLUME VS. VALUE

- Not all materials contribute equally to income.
- Aluminium: only 3% of collected volume but 23% of income
- Glass: high volume, low income
- Cardboard & PET: more balanced contribution
- Even when collected in small quantities, aluminium provides a boost to monthly income. Strengthening access to aluminium streams, and ensuring fair prices, can meaningfully improve waste picker earnings.

a) Bogotá



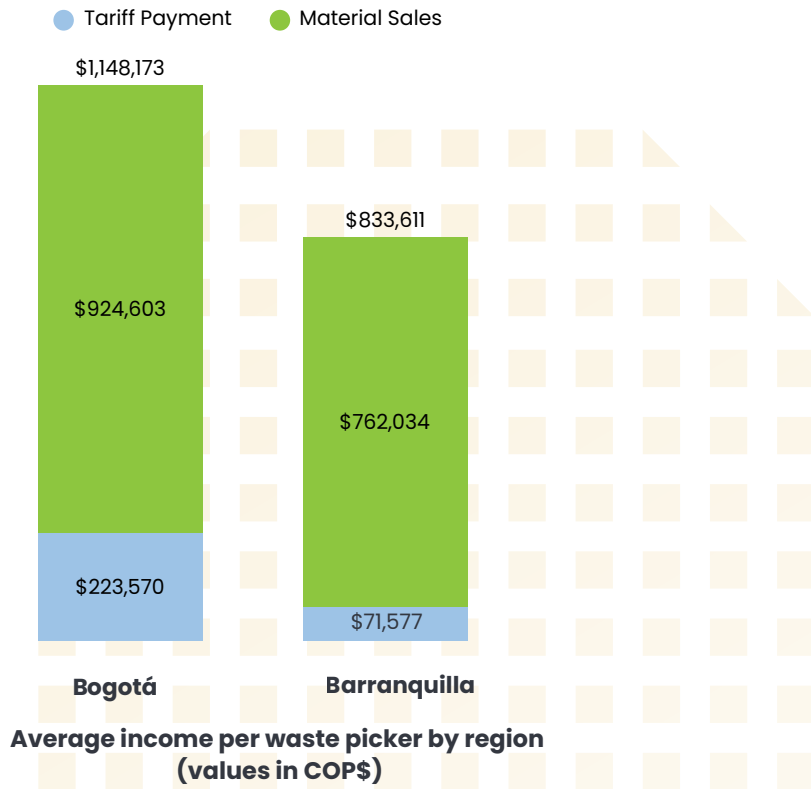
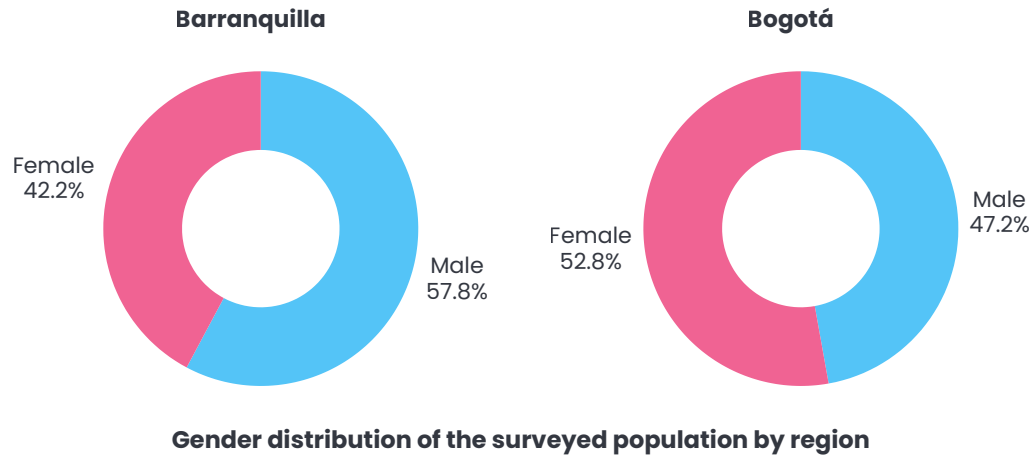
b) Barranquilla



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GENDER PROFILE & AVERAGE EARNINGS

- The gender composition of the respondents differs between Bogotá and Barranquilla, but men and women face similar income structures, with most earnings coming from material sales and a smaller portion from the public service tariff (a regulated payment recognising waste pickers as service providers within the public waste management system).



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WHY THIS MATTERS

Waste pickers are essential to Colombia's recycling system, yet many still face:



Low and unstable income



Limited access to social protection



Irregular or incomplete transfer of public service tariff payments



Insufficient equipment, infrastructure and institutional support



Strengthen waste picker organisations, improve reporting and remuneration



Collective action and inclusive EPRs to fund equipment, infrastructure and safer work



Stronger government-industry-community coordination, and expanding social protection

Coordinated by:



Business support:



Advisors:



Supporters:



This project was made possible thanks to a grant from the ISEAL Innovation Fund, which is supported by:



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
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