

Supporting the transition to a circular economy in Colombia

PREVEC

What we do and where

In Colombia, one of the consequences of sustained economic growth, declining poverty and burgeoning mass consumption over the last decade has been an constant increase in the volume of waste produced. Most of the waste collected from urban areas is disposed of at properly managed landfill sites. In larger cities, however, those sites are reaching the point where they can no longer cope with the huge volume of waste. Private operators carry out most of this disposal work. For decades, however, the task of collecting and separating out recyclables such as plastics, glass and cardboard has been performed by an army of some 47,000 *recicladores* (waste-pickers).

Due to the informal nature of their work, this group has been recognised in the constitution as highly vulnerable. A five-year strategy has been adopted to gradually formalise their status, regulate their activities and therefore remove the social stigma associated with their work. This will benefit women in particular.

In addition, the country's National Circular Economy Strategy ushers in a transition from the current one-way system of resource use to a circular model. This will require intensive collaboration between the public sector, the private sector and civil society to identify innovative business models in the recycling industry and change consumer behaviour. Another equally important goal is that of permanently and cost-effectively integrating the country's *recicladores* into the circular economy.

PREVEC supports this transition and helps its Colombian partners deal with the many social, economic and environmental challenges involved.

Objective

Waste recycling is improving in selected metropolitan areas as a result of strategies to switch to a circular economy.

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| Commissioned by | Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) |
| German contribution | up to EUR 7,500,000 |
| Lead executing agency | Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation (APC-Colombia) |
| Implementing organisations | Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Housing, City and Territory; Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism; Ministry of Labour; National Planning Department; National Training Service; Bogotá and Cúcuta city authorities; private sector; waste-picker associations |
| Project area | Bogotá and Cúcuta |
| Planned overall term | October 2019 – March 2023 |

What we hope to achieve (facts and figures)

To help achieve its overall objective, PREVEC has teamed up with Colombian partners in three areas:

- **To increase the recycling rate for specific types of waste** in the target metropolitan areas.

- **To create the right conditions at national level so that local actors can implement** the circular economy strategy.
- **To improve the range of circular economy training courses available.**

The project has defined a series of specific quantitative and qualitative targets:

- The **recycling rate** has risen in both participating metropolitan areas – by 10 per cent in Bogotá and 15 per cent in Cúcuta.
- In total, 1,500 **waste-pickers** (at least 30 per cent women) who previously worked on an informal basis have formal jobs as part of a circular waste recycling system in the two cities.
- Private-sector companies are investing in a total of four **business models** for the recycling of certain waste products.
- City and district authorities are using a digital **waste monitoring system** to report semi-annually on waste recycling and disposal paths (type and volume).
- In both cities, the authorities and the private sector have begun to **implement local and inclusive circular economy strategies** that include awareness-raising activities for consumers and businesses.

- The Ministry of Housing, City and Territory has validated a **guide to standardising the recording and evaluation of waste-related data** (including data on greenhouse gas emissions in the waste sector) at national level.
- The Ministry of Housing, City and Territory and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development have proposed a national **waste catalogue** following consultations between the public sector, the private sector and civil society organisations.
- Two **training programmes** are in place for **waste-pickers** and their associations, e.g. on job formalisation and business management (pilots in Bogotá and/or Cúcuta).
- Two **training programmes** are in place for **city and district authorities and the private sector** to support the implementation of the circular economy strategy.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Colombia's waste-pickers are classed as a vulnerable group. The project has supplied **5,000 hygiene kits** and **basic food items** for around **2,600 people regarded as highly vulnerable** (risk group). Both measures are accompanied by information and awareness-raising campaigns.



Photo: waste-pickers at work in the capital Bogotá. © UAESP

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