

Green jobs in the circular economy

Circular cities contribute to climate action and employment

Introduction/Context

Colombia is facing considerable social challenges: two thirds of the working population are employed in the informal sector and the jobless rate is 9.3 per cent (June 2023). Women are at a disadvantage on the labour market and have less access to land titles, resources and institutional support. As a result, their average income is lower and they are the group hardest hit by poverty (40.5 per cent of women in rural areas of Colombia).

Across the country, around 47,000 people work as waste-pickers in the waste management and recycling sector, of whom 40 per cent are women. People who work in the waste management sector are exposed to increased health and economic risks, for example because they handle hazardous waste and because their income is irregular on account of fluctuating purchase prices. Women and migrants, including people from Venezuela, are at particular risk.

According to data from the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE 2020), 60 per cent of the country's household waste is organic, while 30 per cent is made up of recyclables such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic and metal. The official recycling rate, to which waste-pickers make a considerable contribution, rose from 11.82 per cent to 14.46 per cent between 2018 and 2020.

Despite the positive development in recycling, Colombia's overall volume of waste has been steadily increasing for years, with the country producing 32,746 tonnes of waste per day in 2021. There is no sign of a reversal in this trend at present. Local authorities are increasingly facing the problem that their landfill sites are reaching their limits.

Strengthening the circular economy in towns and cities offers great

Project title	Green jobs in the circular economy – PREVEC II –
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Budget	EUR 8,000,000
Project areas	Bogotá, Norte de Santander (Cúcuta), Valle del Cauca (Cali), Bolívar (Cartagena)
Lead executing agencies	Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia); Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia; Ministry of Housing, City and Territory; municipal governments of Cartagena, Cúcuta and Bogotá
Overall term	November 2024 to March 2027
SDGs	8 (Decent work and economic growth), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 13 (Climate action).

potential for establishing new business models, creating green jobs and enabling materials, water and energy to be used and managed more efficiently. It also makes a considerable contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

PREVEC II will cooperate with the Colombian Government, local decision-makers and authorities as well as the private sector in Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena and Cúcuta to implement measures on the circular economy. These will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote employment, thus contributing to a just transition towards a climate-neutral society.



Alcaldía de Cartagena



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The objective

PREVEC II improves the technical and institutional capacity of government and private sector actors to implement climate and employment-related measures on the circular economy effectively at local and national level.

Our main goals

- 15 business models in the circular economy sector are initiated, of which 7 have considerable potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are led by small enterprises or organisations, 6 of them headed by women.
- National or municipal actors adopt 3 employment promotion instruments in the circular economy sector to analyse the gender-specific employment potential as part of a just transition, including 1 instrument at national level.
- 75 per cent of 2,000 individuals (of whom 50 per cent are women) who have completed a training programme in areas relevant to the circular economy confirm that this programme is useful or very useful for their career or for their company's development.

Next steps

1. Joint measures will be implemented with the Ministry of Housing, City and Territory to consolidate and implement the Zero Waste programme. The Colombian Government, local authorities, public service providers and civil society will cooperate in this area. The inclusive approach guarantees that the waste-pickers and their organisations are involved, ensures that priority is given to treating and recycling residual materials and strengthens the circular economy.
2. PREVEC II will cooperate with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development under the scope of Law 2232 limiting single-use plastics. Joint steps will be taken to guarantee progress in sustainable resource management and the transition to green jobs.

3. The project will support local authorities in integrating circular economy aspects into urban planning instruments, thus enabling the cities to set objectives and earmark resources for planning and steering projects on the circular economy.
4. In cooperation with Colombia's National Planning Department (DNP), studies will be initiated to determine the potential for green jobs in the circular economy and to generate policy recommendations to promote green jobs throughout the country.
5. In cooperation with actors from the public and private sector and with international partners, planning and dialogue platforms will be initiated in Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena and Cúcuta.



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