

# Protect the Climate through Recycling!

*Please sign this open letter to be delivered to climate negotiators in Copenhagen. The new climate treaty must support efforts to increase recycling through the informal sector, instead of funding incinerators and landfill gas systems.*



Dear Heads of State and Climate Change negotiators:

We are writing to call your attention to an important but under-recognized issue in the climate change negotiations: the mitigation potential of recycling and waste reduction, and the threat posed by false “waste-to-energy” solutions such as incinerators and landfill gas systems. In the developing world, wastepickers and recyclers already contribute substantially to emissions mitigation and are ready to do more, if given the recognition and support they need and deserve.

Recycling is one of the cheapest, quickest and easiest ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developed and developing nations alike. Reducing emissions through recycling is 30% cheaper than through energy efficiency and 90% cheaper than through wind power. The potential of recycling, composting, biogas, and other waste prevention techniques to reduce emissions is enormous. Each family that recycles and composts reduces emissions as much as if it stopped driving the family car.

Recycling has major economic benefits, employing at least 15 million people in developing countries. Even in developed countries, recycling provides 10 times the jobs per ton of waste as incinerators and landfills.

Wastepickers working in the informal economy are at the heart of existing recycling systems in the developing world, and must play an integral role in any expansion of recycling. Evidence from a range of developing countries shows that when municipalities try to bypass wastepickers by granting contracts to private waste management companies, these programs often fail outright and lead to job loss, wasted public resources, lower recycling rates, and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Yet the Clean Development Mechanism is supporting incinerators and landfill gas systems which compete with wastepickers and recycling programs. These projects increase greenhouse gas emissions and unemployment – exactly the opposite of the intended effect of the CDM. Instead, waste pickers need financial and technical support from a non-market based financial mechanism.

Therefore, we ask you to:

- recognize the critical and productive role that the informal recycling sector contributes to climate change mitigation and to a healthy economy.
- approve a Global Climate Fund that will invest in resource recovery programs that ensure decent livelihoods for all workers and traders in the recycling economy, and is directly accessible by wastepickers and other informal sector groups.
- exclude waste disposal technologies (including incinerators, landfill gas and incinerator variants such as pyrolysis, gasification and plasma) from the CDM and other climate funds.

For more information, please see [www.no-burn.org/wp](http://www.no-burn.org/wp) and/or [www.inclusivecities.org/waste\\_pickers.html](http://www.inclusivecities.org/waste_pickers.html)

Sincerely,