

Aliou Faye



Aliou Faye lives in Diourbel, Senegal. He works with the Association Book Diom des Recuperateurs et Recycleurs in Mbeubeuss, a landfill serving the greater Dakar region. The association was founded in 1994. Aliou, who is 34 years old, has been recycling since he was 16.



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“What motivates me to be a recycler is a familiar situation,” he said. “In order not to steal, to keep my dignity, and to avoid taking a second job.”

Aliou works primarily as a recycler but is also involved in other matters with his association, such as organizing and planning meetings.

“We want people to know that recycling is a business, recyclers need to be recognized and treated as citizens of society,” Aliou said. “Recyclers also need to organize, and go through training and capacity-building.”

Suman More



To find out more about
KKPKP:
[http://www.wastepickersco
llective.org/](http://www.wastepickersco
llective.org/)

Suman More is a proud mother. Her son, L. More, has completed his bachelor's in Arts and is currently pursuing his master's degree. This did not come easily to Suman, a waste picker in Pune, India. Her parents had migrated to Pune from their village in search of work and began wastepicking. She started wastepicking with them when she was about 13 years old. Suman married at the age of 22. While Suman's husband also contributed to the finances, their main source of income was waste picking.

When Suman started work she would pick up recyclable waste on the roadside, in local waste depositories or public waste bins. She walked long distances and worked from dawn to

dusk. Her children helped sort the waste at home because sorted waste offered a better price.

In 1992-93, organizers of the KKPKP trade union of wastepickers came to Suman's community to talk about the need to organize. They explained that the benefits of organizing included access to waste at source, fewer hours of work for the same amount of money, cleaner working conditions, and insurance. Many of her neighbours discouraged her from becoming a member but Suman decided to join KKPKP with a few other people in the community and has never regretted her decision.

Since Suman began working with the cooperative, her working conditions

(Suman More)

have improved significantly. Suman now works fewer hours and earns more money by collecting waste door to door. The quality and condition of waste is much better and door to door collection has other benefits. Suman builds relationships with people and engages in conversation over a cup of tea. Coming from a lower caste and class of society she never thought this would happen in her lifetime. She is happy that she is able to have a proper lunch break and that they are provided with soap to wash their hands and legs before they sit to have lunch in a cool, clean place in the residential complex where she works. A higher income has also meant that she can afford proper medical care instead of self-medicating with the help of a pharmacist to avoid going to the doctor.

Suman no longer takes the waste home to sort. The municipal corporation has provided a sorting shed where several waste pickers gather to sort their waste. Once she goes home, she has time now to watch some television to ease off the day's hard work.

As a member of KKPKP, Suman took an oath to educate her children, and enlisted the help of KKPKP to enroll her children in school. Two of her sons have received cash prizes from KKPKP for their achievements. Her daughter-in-law is a computer engineer from a Brahmin (upper caste) family for whom she wants to be a good mother-in-law. She married her daughter only after she turned eighteen and did not give dowry, she smiles proudly.

KKPKP, Pune, India

Eduardo Ferreira de Paula



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Eduardo Ferreira de Paula is a member of COOPAMARE, São Paulo, one of the first wastepickers' cooperatives in Brazil. He's been working as a "catador," or wastepicker, for 23 years.

In addition to working as a wastepicker, Eduardo is a representative of the National Wastepickers' Movement in Brazil (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis) and of the Latin American Network (La Red Latino Americana y del Caribe).

"Many comrades have talked about the rights of wastepickers," Eduardo said. And today many

wastepickers are organized. But what he would like to see created is a political movement in favor of retirement benefits for wastepickers.

"We have been up and down steep hills for more than 20 years -- some for more than 50," he said. "Our work is dangerous, risky. We should be entitled to retirement benefits."

What is lacking, he said, is the political will to make something like this a reality.

Harouna Niass



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Harouna Niass, of Dakar, Senegal, also works with the Association Book Diom des Recuperateurs et Recycleurs in Mbeubeuss. He started recycling when he was 25 years old. He is 42.

By working as a recycler with his association, Harouna is able to support his family as the sole provider. He says the profession also him to make a decent living.

When he is not recycling, Harouna supports other recyclers -- whom he calls comrades -- by organizing assemblies and helping spread the message that recyclers deserve to be treated like other workers.

Harouna has participated in international events such as the World Social Forum. This year, he is participating in COP17. It's important that people of all social classes support associations like Book Diom, Harouna said. The social changes that he and his comrades have achieved have positively affected nearby communities. For example, they've created a community center for health and education.

Sushila Vittal Sabale



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Sushila Vittal Sabale has been a waste picker for nearly 30 years. She has a lot of experience in the field of wastepicking (also called rag-picking) and knows the importance of waste management, she says. She believes that it's important that she, other wastepickers, and PBVS (the wastepickers' organization she works with), help reduce global warming.

Sushila is also involved with gardening and composting projects.

Sushila, a member of the Global Alliance of Wastepickers, will be at COP17 as the official representative for the Mary Robinso

Climate Justice Network.
(www.mrfcj.org)

Last year, she attended COP17 as a representative of the Ragpickers' Association.

Sushila encourages her peers to join the association so they can receive its benefits and upgrade themselves and their families.

Marlen Patricia Chacón Cubillo



Marlen Patricia Chacón Cubillo lives and works as a recycler in Escazu, a city outside of San Jose, Costa Rica. She is a member of the city's recycling program, which has municipal support and is run mostly by women. She is one of the proud women recyclers there, representing 80 percent of the workforce.



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Marlen began working as a recycler in 2001. She was always interested in environmental issues so when she learned about the possibility of recycling, she quickly became motivated to work in waste management. At the time, she earned very little and to work in an area that one enjoys and is passionate about was extremely important to her.

The hardest part of her work has been to create an ecological consciousness, a cultural paradigm shift. This work has paid off -- the people of her community are now separating 80 percent of their waste. She and the other workers receive the city's recyclable materials in their warehouse. They weigh, separate, classify, and sell directly to buyers and intermediaries.

"We need to support the recyclers who are in the process of organizing and formalizing, and in turn, for society," she said. "We don't want anything to hold us back from helping the environment and minimizing the impact of greenhouse gases."

(Marlen Patricia
Chacón Cubillo)

REFLECTION POEM

Look at me, I am sad
Ask me why, you don't see my tears
They are dark, it's not my imagination
it's just that my heart beats, knowing that my destruction is so close,
and you can help me, hold my hand,
if I tell you, if you consider me a brother.

My legs are collapsing and I can't walk anymore
And my hands are burnt by the sun, I feel I've arrived at an oasis
And I see that my eyes can no longer see
And there is still so much to prepare for those who will come
From now on I will wake up and will no longer
ask that you see my sadness but that you see my beauty
than you see my beauty rather than my sadness.

Marlen's words of advice: Don't expect everything to be done for you,
but fight for others and for yourself.