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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: THE CASE OF THE BOTTLE-KE-TLHAGO COOPERATIVE LIMITED

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ABSTRACT

Waste pickers suffer the problem of insecurity as they lack job security and social protection due to their location in the informal economy. Owing to labour market flexibility, formal employment is no longer easy to come by which has resulted in the enlargement of the informal sector. In this scenario, the informal sector deserves to be taken as an important sector for the sustenance of people's livelihoods as it is the only option left for the jobless, therefore it deserves to be labour law compliant for the achievement of decent working conditions. The study sought to find out if these problems of insecurity have been addressed or are being paid attention to by the state, private sector, cooperatives, unions and the reclaimers. Interviews were conducted in Diepsloot with cooperative reclaimers, informal street reclaimers and others were done in Johannesburg with key players in the waste management sector. It was discovered that, there is still largely a lack of job security and social protection for waste pickers although key players claim to be improving the working conditions of waste pickers through formalisation of the waste management sector.

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The interview respondents were very central to the overall outcome because their responses and time made this possible. Notably, I hail the Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited in Diepsloot for providing their premises as the rendezvous where the street reclaimers would be met. I am equally indebted to organisations like Pikitup, SAMWU and the City of Johannesburg's Department of Environment for sharing the official positions with regard to waste picker interests.

Family and friends provided emotional, moral and financial support without which the uphill task would have been impossible. With the lack of confidence and a feeling of incapacity, their combined efforts should be cherished and celebrated.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work is a product of my personal input besides the referenced and acknowledged work of others infused in the thesis. It is being submitted for the Degree in Masters of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. There has not been a similar work like this submitted for any other degree or examination at another university.

Simbarashe Kutywayo

Date:

ABBREVIATIONS

ASMARE	Associacao Dos catadores De Papel Papel E Material Reprovetavel
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BIS	Business Infrastructure Support
CBD	Central Business District
CBDSP	Cooperative Business Development Support Programme
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CDM	Clean Development Mechanisms
CDP	Cooperative Development Policy
CIS	Cooperative Initiative Scheme
COIDA	Compensation for Occupational Injury and Diseases Act
COJ	City of Johannesburg
COPAC	Cooperatives and Policy Alternative Centre
CSP	Cooperatives Special Projects
CT	Cooperatives tribunal
DEAT	Department of Environment and Tourism

DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EISD	Environmental and Infrastructural Services Department
ELR	Employer of Last Resort
EMIA	Export Marketing and Investment Assistance
ENP	Enterprise network Programme
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAIA	Global Anti Incineration Alliance
GAWP	Global Alliance of Waste Pickers
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMATU	Independent Municipal Allied Trade Union
KKKP	Kagad Kach Patra Kashakari Panchyat
LED	Local Economic Development
MBOs	Membership Based Organisations
MIIU	Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit
MRF	Material Recovery Facility

MWMS	Municipal Waste Management System
NCS	National Cooperative Strategy
NGP	New Growth Path
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PPE	Personal/Proper Protective Clothing
RIC	Resin Identification Code
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SALGBC	South African Local Government Bargaining Council
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SARS	South African Revenue Services
SATAWU	South African Transport Allied Workers Union
SAWPA	South African Waste Pickers Association
SEFA	Small Enterprises Finance Agency
SMMEs	Small Medium Micro Enterprises
SWM	Solid Waste Management
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund

WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising
WREP	Waste Reclaimers Empowerment Project

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the decent work concept which was adopted by the ILO since 1999. For example, the ILO Global Jobs Pact is based on the decent work agenda which calls for full employment, wage recovery, social security and social protection meant to also cover precarious workers (ILO, 2012). Why decent work has been placed emphasis upon is because of the importance of work which should be productive, provide organisational and participation space in decisions that affect workers as well as equality of opportunities. The decent work agenda has been a response to neoliberal policies that have been in operation in the last four decades. According to Harvey (1989), capitalism faced the crises of hyper inflation, economic stagnation, fall in profitability, unemployment etc. in the 1970s. To rectify the anomaly, social, economic and political transformation led to the reorganisation of work and labour, technological advance, reduced state role in the economy, trade liberalisation and financial deregulation. The result has been the market led economy which privileges capital at the expense of labour thereby reversing all the gains of labour under Fordism and Keynesianism to the end that precarious workers located in the periphery of the labour market have been subjected to insecurity (Harvey, 1989). Several studies have revealed that neoliberalism is global in nature as it has polarised the labour market resulting in the reduction of the labour force found in formal employment (Bieler et al, 2008; Gallin, 2001; Webster, 2005). The precariat can be defined as a social group characterised by insecurity and a class in itself meaning that they are structurally distinct with peculiar circumstances when compared to other working class groups (Standing, 2011).

According to David Harvey (1989:150), the effect of neoliberalism on the labour market has led to the creation of three distinct classes namely the core, semi periphery and periphery. Theron (2003) similarly characterises these as the standard employment relationship, full time or part time contract employment and casual, part time and informal employment. The core consists of people who are entitled to full employee benefits that include full salary, job security, medical aid coverage, leave entitlement and pension benefits enjoyed under Fordism. The semi periphery has got limited entitlement to these benefits due to the contractual nature of their employment relationship whereas the last category does not have a contract or non wage benefits. It is this last category of workers that Standing (2011) calls precarious. Among the affected are people in the informal economy either as self employed, through externalisation, outsourcing, casualisation or

franchising and as unemployed (Theron, 2003; Webster, 2005). The problem that exists is the lack of full coverage by labour legislation for the informal economy, especially for waste pickers who operate outside a legislated framework characterised by the lack of decent work.

Webster et al (2008) define the lack of decent work as the "decent work deficit" due to general lack of security and coverage by labour legislation, a situation which particularly obtains for the informal economy. The Structuralist school (Moser, 1978) highlights the prevalence of this deficit as it perceives the relationship between the informal and the formal economy as exploitative despite a strong link between the two. The state is also found to connive with capital at the expense of labour under neoliberalism thereby reducing protection under labour law and the absence of a counter ideology to neoliberalism has further worsened the job security and social protection prospects for the precariat as a collective (Kalleberg, 2008). The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights views employment as a human, natural and economic right which is a prerequisite for social justice. This prevalence of security challenges necessitated finding out if waste pickers, the state and other stakeholders in South Africa are doing anything to ensure that the informal economy is covered under the decent work agenda.

This study was an attempt to better understand the problems and challenges confronted by waste pickers and to investigate whether they are taking any steps to address the decent work deficit gaps they confront as a group in the post apartheid period in South Africa. The decent work deficit ascertains to what extent workers are entitled to the benefits of decent work in terms of security in seven key areas - labour market, employment, job, work, representation, skills and reproduction as well as income security (Standing, 1997). According to Standing (1997), labour market security refers to the availability of jobs on the labour market (and their unavailability leads to precarious employment when individuals resort to informality). Employment security guarantees the security of employees against job loss through legislation but with the preponderance of the non-standard employment relationship associated with global restructuring, this is no longer guaranteed. Job security is the probability that one will retain his or her job with minimal chances of losing it, Work security assures one of continuing to do the same job, skills security include the chance to get on job training to enhance chances of retaining the job as well as promotion. Representation security gives employees the right to belong to a union or have representation of their grievances through a recognised channel but the current situation points to a representation deficit especially for the non core and periphery (Webster, 2005). Lastly, income security pertains to a consistent flow of high and satisfactory salaries and wages on top of benefits. These indicators of decent work are supposed to be universal to all labouring people though this is not the case. What incapacitates waste pickers/reclaimers along with other informal sector employees is the lack of an employer hence the

security becomes non-existent.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 in South Africa defines an employee as someone who has worked for an employer for three consecutive months, is unionised, is using tools of the employer and attending workplace meetings. The ILO on the other hand calls for the enforcement of collective bargaining agreements, the right to join unions for people in triangular employment relationships as well as capacity building for informal economy workers through securing ILO standards and jurisprudence to end precarity (Kalleberg, 2008). Therefore the decent work agenda has been and still remains a controversial and disputed subject because some countries use their labour laws to justify their differential treatment of workers based on their location in the labour market. However, the position that this paper takes is inclined to the latter position which calls for the extension of the decent work agenda across the board regardless of the fragmentation of the labour market. The preference is due to the fact that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 only covers people in standard employment relationships, which leaves out the informal workers.

In the work of Melanie Samson (2004), it was found that many informal reclaimers working for recycling companies and the self employed are found in externalised employment relationships. Although the employed are better off than the self employed, they both fall prey to lack of coverage by labour laws due to their failure to meet the definition of an employee based on the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997.The latter group can be divided into landfill site reclaimers and street reclaimers. Previous studies on the landfill site reclaimers/waste pickers highlight their problems as ranging from exclusion in the planning and negotiating process, lack of medical aid and pension benefits, lack of protective clothing, denial of access to landfills, lack of storage and working space, exploitation by middlemen, lack of formal participation through prioritisation of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) companies, technology threats which threaten job security and lack of coverage by labour legislation (Dias, 2013; Medina, 2007; Samson, 2004, 2009). The existence of these problems points to a high prevalence of a decent work deficit because these workers are not treated as equals in the first place, their safety is not considered whether they get injured or die, there is no compensation, and despite the functionality of their contributions they are still considered informal with little prospects for their formalisation (ibid). Owing to these problems, organisation has been greatly impeded among South African waste pickers who find it increasingly difficult to achieve decent work and recognition in comparison to waste pickers in other parts of the world. Lack of literature in the South African context on the latter group of street reclaimers provided the impetus for taking up this study to ascertain whether the problems they confront are any different from those their counterparts in the landfill sites face.

Literature suggests that waste picking organisation has led to inclusion of waste picker associations, unions, cooperatives and companies formally in the Municipal Waste Management Systems (MWMS), that is the storage, collection, transportation and disposal of waste (Dias, 2006, 2009, 2013; Samson, 2009). They are now treated as equal partners by municipalities with protection under legislation; hence decent work is now assured like any other profession in Brazil, India and Colombia (Dias, 2013). However, in South Africa there are very few formal organisations or movements that have brought together waste pickers mainly due to a tough legal terrain in which the legislation and state officials are uncompromising in formally regulating their activities (Samson 2008, 2010, Medina 2007). This creates the problem of exclusion and invisibility of waste pickers and can be attributed to stigma and marginalisation by society, and the absence of waste picker organisations on the continent and the region (Samson 2009, Urban Earth 2012). Neoliberal policies have also created challenges in the informal sector and the global economy at large through the reduction of the active role of the state as it no longer involves itself in social welfare spending and in the economy (Harvey 1989, Webster et al 2008). However, even though we are in neoliberal times, the state through the Department of Economic Development as well as the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has donated funds to the City of Johannesburg's (CoJ) Environment Department to assist reclaimers, their activities and formalisation. This gesture by the state is an indication that it is possible to have decent work in the informal economy specifically for waste pickers if the state is willing to defy the neoliberal imperatives of a lean state. This view is supported by Dias (2013), Medina (2007) and Samson (2009) who argue that reclaiming has to be treated as a job and source of livelihood worth protection and regulation.

Despite being located in the informal economy, waste pickers are part of the value chain of production linked to the formal economy (Samson, 2008; 2010; Webster et al 2008). According to Urban Earth (2012:1), "... their activities are subordinate to and dependent on the formal sector recycling companies...". Therefore their invaluable contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability should not be undermined as they contribute to cleaner environments and value addition in the domestic and export economy (Dilata 2008, Schoeman and Sentime 2011). Solid waste management (SWM), which is the disposal of hard domestic, commercial and industrial waste, is sustained by waste pickers or reclaimers suggesting their importance in waste management (Dias 2010, Samson 2009, Inclusive Cities 2012). Technology through incineration and compositors for production of electricity through methane gas generation create more greenhouse gas emissions and affects waste picker job security through combustion of the recyclable materials (Medina, 2007). The Global Anti Incineration Alliance (GAIA) has been established in solidarity against incineration since 2009 to protect waste picker job security (globalrec 2013).

Waste to energy conversions and landfill gas facilities further air and water pollution and reverse any efforts made to mitigate climate change and this concern was voiced by waste pickers at the Joburg Waste Summit in July 2013 (Samson 2013). In line with environmental sustainability, the reduction of waste going to the landfill by 20% through separation at source was welcomed (despite its effect on those operating at landfills) as this prolongs landfill life with the threat that by 2020 they will be filled up (Samson 2013, globalrec 2013). Regardless of a host of challenges and problems waste pickers face, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel due to collective efforts that have been launched through the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) and groundWork in confronting state authorities. Besides these organisations, Johannesburg Reclaimers which works closely with Pikitup and the Department of Environment under CoJ is a novel organisation which organises street reclaimers/waste pickers in region F (Inner City Joburg) and A (covering Diepsloot and surrounding areas) through buy back centres. Buy back centres are strategically located collection points which buy, sort and resell recyclable materials from reclaimers within a given area. Other than business rapport with the reclaimers, they aim to improve the working conditions of the reclaimers. Perhaps reclaimers' invaluable contribution to cost reduction for municipalities, cleaning surroundings and the reduction of environmental and health threats will yield official accommodation in MWMS, like what happened in Brazil, India and Colombia (Samson 2013). These prospects can be further concretised if the 300 000 green jobs targeted by 2020 through recycling and public sector investment materialise under the New Growth Path (NGP 2010). The Green Accord (2011) seeks to promote localisation, cooperatives and skills training in the green economy along with small enterprise creation and increased recycling capacity from 45.5% to 51%. The mention of good working conditions by the two policies implies that this should also apply for informal waste pickers because it binds at sectoral level which cannot ignore waste picker input especially in the recycling sector.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. 2.1 The Global History of Reclaiming

Waste has generally been generated by human beings since the early civilisations dating back as far as 6,500 BC in North America, Greece, Europe etc. though its management was not a matter of concern because the level of civilisation and demographic levels were still low (Barbalace, 2003). However with the growth of industrialisation and the concomitant urbanisation alongside increased consumption, the amount of waste generated also increased and with it arose the necessity to find ways to reduce its generation and menace to human civilisation. The most dreaded effects of the waste were diseases like cholera, bubonic fever, water contamination, air pollution and unpleasant sights in urban centres such as London and New York. (Barbalace, 2003; Nightangle, 1954). In London, the administration of waste collection, disposal and incineration was tasked to the municipality in a bid to ameliorate the health and environmental consequences of waste hence the introduction of moveable receptacles collected once every week (the early version of dust bins) under the Public Health Act of 1875. This spread across Europe into North America but within this formalisation of SWM, an informal sector of scavengers thrived.

With the passage of time and with greater advances in technology, population growth and consumption increased, the amount of waste too increased such that incineration and disposal in dumps and landfills along with dumping and burning had to be substituted by more environmentally friendly methods. In order to save land, reduce emissions, save natural resources, create value, create employment and make money out of waste, recycling and waste minimisation were taken as the most appropriate strategies (Barbalace, 2003; Hebert, 2007). Although there has not been a complete discarding of incineration, burning and dumping, their minimisation has been taken as a welcome development. From the twentieth century onwards, especially with increased global environmental campaigns to save the environment and natural resources through clean energy mechanisms, recycling has become an important element towards the realisation of such ends. There are large recycling companies in the developed world which collect and recycle waste and create employment in the sector including informal waste pickers who are more secure in their employment. On a comparative basis, they are more advanced than those in the developing world where the bulk of the workers in the sector are largely informal, unrecognised by labour laws and exploited regardless of their functionality in sustaining formal sector companies and municipalities (Dilata, 2008; Medina, 2007).

The absence of publications on the developed world's waste pickers and their struggles for decent work might suggest that they have better conditions of service when compared to those in Latin America**,** Asia and Africa. Samson **(**2009**)** traces regional and global networks of waste pickers as having emerged in Latin America first**,** followed by Asia before the inclusion of Africa. Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising **(**WIEGO) and AVINA foundation are applauded for having coordinated the first World Waste Picker Conference which was held in Bogota**,** Colombia in 2008**.** It was meant for deliberation on matters that affected their job security and social protection and to intensify their struggle against recalcitrant officials in their respective countries **(**Bonner and Spooner**,** 2012**;** Dias, 2010**).** Some parts of Latin America and Asia have managed to improve their working conditions through recognition by the municipalities but this is insignificant as it only caters for very few segments and municipalities (Dias, 2013). Although the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers exists, it has not made a meaningful contribution to the **realisation** of decent work and recognition of reclaimers by the ILO if compared to other informal sector workers like domestic workers**,** home based workers and street vendors**.** Lack of coordination among waste pickers and different responses by governments stand in the way of their realisation of decent work.

1. 2. 2 The South African History of Reclaiming

Reclaiming activities started during the apartheid period in South Africa even though the apartheid government was restrictive of the activity (Samson, 2008, 2010). Some of the respondents interviewed by Samson had over 32 years experience in waste picking otherwise termed "career" reclaimers (Schenck, Blaauw and Vilojen, 2012) due to their knowledge in reclaiming and sole survival on waste picking. Segregatory policies made movement of people limited, for example the pass laws made it illegal and a punishable offence to collect waste from landfills through surveillance and strict law enforcement. In short, waste picking was pervaded by a situation of hostility from the state and this still applies in the post apartheid period where access to the landfills is still denied (Samson, 2009, Schoeman and Sentime, 2011). A possible explanation for this might be that in the early years of the apartheid period, there were "transient" reclaimers (Schenck et al, 2012) who scavenged for food and other necessities not so much for earning livelihoods than for reuse and consumption owing to an unestablished recycling sector and market for the waste and lack of technology for recycling. With the profitability and utility of reclaiming notwithstanding the environmental, land and cost reduction effects, it has become a means of survival for the urban poor as unemployment increasingly becomes a cancer in the economy. However the problem faced by

the waste pickers is that they lack decent working conditions coupled with lack of formalisation of their work and state exclusionary policies which denies them active participation as citizens in democratic processes and decision making in matters that affect them most (Dias, 2006).

Reasons for engaging in this type of work range from unemployment, poverty, family legacy and the demand for recyclable waste by industry as the people find no alternative form of employment (Samson, 2009). Their working and living conditions are deplorable when it comes to safety, protective clothing and general coverage by labour laws (Dias, 2013; Medina, 2007). In response to these challenges they have formed cooperatives, associations, close corporations, non-governmental organisations and community based organisations in order to seek recognition and improve their working conditions. Notable waste picker organisations include SAWAPA, groundWork, Asiye e Tafuleni and numerous cooperatives (Samson, 2004; Urban Earth, 2012). Johannesburg Reclaimers and Bottle-Ke-Tlhago are organisations which call themselves a committee and a cooperative respectively which have not been documented before but are doing a lot to improve reclaimers in collaboration with the CoJ Department of Environment and Pikitup. South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) mobilises waste pickers at local, provincial, national and international level through communication. At international level it engages with the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers (GAWP) with other regional and continental waste pickers organisations and organises exchange programmes for skills and idea sharing and capitalisation/ provision of financial assistance to local economic activities (groundWork, 2012). groundWork organises and facilitates unity through meetings and provides information and support on organisation. Despite advocacy for waste pickers, groundWork became operational before waste pickers associations working on environmental justice campaigns on issues like renewable energy, pollution, climate change etc. Asiye e Tafuleni deals with urban informal sector groups who work in open spaces but for waste pickers, it has been instrumental in destigmatising waste picking as a job by improving self perception of the reclaimers and that of society through public participation and presentations. The Inclusive Cities project is an umbrella collaborative organisation which seeks to strengthen the organisational capacity of membership based organisations that deal with the urban poor. It targets the urban informal workers assisted through advocacy and policy analysis so that they have a voice in urban planning processes (Horn, 2009). One question that needs to be asked about these organisations, however, is their marrying of theory with practice as they tend to exist officially but they are absent on the ground. Informal reclaimers in Diepsloot only know the buy back centre and struggle to organise among themselves and in most cases blame the government for ignoring them.

My research showed little evidence of people in Diepsloot having any knowledge about

groundWork and SAWPA. Also, waste pickers are a heterogeneous group as some work in the streets and others in the landfills meaning that they encounter different sets of problems. The ability to address these problems timeously and with equal weighting thus becomes problematic especially coordination of their activities although those working in the landfills are getting support from SAWPA, groundWork and Asiye e Tafuleni. While those at the landfills have formed committees and cooperatives to be recognised and meet regularly, this is not always the case for the other reclaimers operating on the streets. Notable examples of these cooperatives include Ikegeng and Ditimating cooperatives in Musunduzi (Samson, 2008). The geographical disparities pertaining to waste picker locations make it difficult to have strong structures that work permanently for the improvement of the lot. For example the first Waste Pickers' Meeting held in 2009 was noble but follow ups after the meeting seem to be non-existent. The same can be said with the post Joburg Waste Summit in 2013 although a national working committee has been said to be in existence (Samson, 2009, 2010). Thus waste pickers operating in the streets and other spaces besides the landfills are alienated as they sometimes lack information on any developments in the sector. This lack of information incapacitates the representational entitlement of the street reclaimers in the organisations that advocate for their interests. For example, Asiye e Tafuleni and groundWork are head quartered in Durban where they could be concentrating their advocacy and organising efforts without considering other areas like Diepsloot.

Due to this representation gap, the rise of Johannesburg Reclaimers is very essential for informal reclaimers that work with buy back centre reclaimer cooperatives though its operations by the time of the research were limited to region A and F. In collaboration with Pikitup, PET Recycling company, CoJ, Department of Environment Infrastructure and Services (EISD), Department of Economic Development, the Johannesburg Reclaimers committee has been formed (Inner City Gazette 25 October 2014 accessed 04/11/14). It falls under the Waste Reclaimers Empowerment Project (WREP) to assist reclaimers through buy back centres in areas of training, soliciting for funds, provision of protective clothing and trolleys among other services. The committee is a go between in dealings that transpire among informal reclaimers, buy back centres and the municipality towards formalisation and improvement of working conditions (ibid). Buy back centres have reduced transport costs for reclaimers and have created employment for locals in the communities from which they operate. Unemployed youth run the buy back centres while the locals are assured of a means of livelihood and access to cash through the collection and sale of recyclable materials. Besides employment creation, Johannesburg Reclaimers is in the process of registering, training, providing protective clothing and trolleys to reclaimers in a bid to formalise

their operations following the Brazilian model[1] though this is envisaged in the long term. This model of waste management employs reclaimers to couple their salvaging activities with street cleaning in return for an allowance i.e. their recognition as formal professionals (Dias, 2013). Its close links with Pikitup promotes the separation at source programme which minimises the amount of waste going to the landfills. This also promotes recycling in line with the "recycle, reduce and reuse" motto of Pikitup. Although a lot still needs to be done, the creation of organisations like this and their responsiveness to the needs of the people operating at the production floor is a step in the right direction towards the attainment of job security and social protection.

Cooperatives have teamed up to work collectively in order to boost income and voice when they confront the municipal authorities and exist at every landfill to gain recognition as well as in buy back centres (Samson 2009), among them Bottle-Ke-Tlhago. However, cooperatives operating at the landfills have not been as effective as they anticipate because they still operate informally within the MWMS due to aloofness by municipalities, unions and management who intend to eliminate them[2] (Samson 2008, Schoeman and Sentime 2011). In comparison with buy back centre cooperatives who have good working relationships with the municipal authorities and Pikitup, those at the landfill sites do not have cordial working relations with officials. According to Samson (2009, 2010) notable achievements are the attraction of new buyers to landfills, creation of a national working committee following the first national meeting and attaining access to the landfills for some cooperatives. Besides the two types of cooperatives, street reclaimers are not united enough to form their own cooperatives unless someone leads them as is the case with Diepsloot. There is no reclaimer cooperative in the area and most of them are comfortable working alone or in small groups, but are reluctant to form their own cooperative.

The Waste Act of 2009 mentions salvaging but does not have a provision for the official role of salvagers within MWMS, which is a set back in the realisation of decent work for the waste

1 According to Dias (2013), waste pickers have been professionalised in Brazil and are now recognised as equal partners within the waste management system. Under this system, they sweep streets, collect bins and manage dump sites in return for an allowance and benefits. They also continue to sell recyclable materials for personal income such that they earn above the minimum wage.

2 According to Samson (2008) and Schoemen and Sentime (2011), municipal authorities working at the landfill sites are hostile to informal reclaimers and if possible want to see them eliminated. Despite the fact that cooperatives are legal entities that can be considered for tenders, this does not apply for landfill cooperatives because of this negative attitude by the officials.

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2 A are hostile to informal reclaimers and if possible want to see them eliminated. Despite the fact entities that can be considered for tenders, this does not apply for landfill cooperatives because of this negative attitude by the officials.

pickers. As long as they are treated as informal sector workers, their struggle will be suffocated, however they deserve decent work in relation to their immense contribution when compared with other informal sector workers. Bonner and Spooner (2012) argue that domestic workers have made a breakthrough through the ILO Domestic Workers Convention (C189) and the Home Work Convention (C177) which, though not universally applicable, has been won for home based workers, while the street vendors under the auspices of Street Net International are now recognised by the ILO and the international union movement. The GAWP, though increasing in visibility, still operates informally; so great challenges still lie ahead for waste pickers in comparison with other informal workers on the global stage.

1. 2. 3 The History of Reclaiming in Diepsloot

Diepsloot was originally created as a transit camp in 1995 for people from Zevenfontein, a farm under the Transvaal Provincial Administration where they were perceived as squatters. The idea was to transfer them to North West Township (Norweto) in 1992 but others preferred Cosmo city. In 1995 most of the squatters moved to Norweto, which has become Diepsloot, awaiting relocation to an undefined destination and today it has developed into an urban settlement under region A of the Johannesburg municipality because the place was never disclosed or not found (Harber, 2011). As a transit camp there was no initial infrastructural investment in the area hence the activities there have been largely informal. Given its distance from Johannesburg, there are very few people who can afford to go to work as much of their salaries go to transport costs and that is why more than half of its population works informally, it is a mixture of formality and informality. However as the settlement grew in size and demographically, consumption also increased, which created an opportunity for those without employment to occupy themselves with reclaiming as a means of survival and self employment. The characteristics behind its formation have made waste picking a worthwhile economic activity given the current harsh socio economic times people are reeling under.

Even if waste picking might have been transpiring in the area, the scale of operation was not as large as it is today. The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with lack of knowledge of the environment, distance to recycling companies and the concomitant transport costs as well as lack of a buy back centre in the area. Before the buy back centre was established, a possible explanation for economic activities in Diepsloot is that either most of the people had nothing to do or were employed but had lost their jobs. Others were probably doing other informal activities and those already recycling are still taking their materials to the recycling companies they

sold to due to their access to transport. What accounts for the increased number of reclaimers in the area is the strategic location of the buy back centre and the environmental awareness campaigns that were carried out extensively under the auspices of Buyisa iBag[3]and the Department of Environment under CoJ. Transport costs and the lack of knowledge about the utility of reclaiming may have been limiting factors for several unemployed youth and adults alike. After 2012, a number of people who previously had nothing to do, now earn a living through the collection and sale of recyclable materials contributing both to economic and environmental sustainability (Urban Earth, 2012). Despite economic empowerment and poverty alleviation resulting from the promotion of waste reclaiming in the area, one big short coming is the fact that it is not accompanied by decent working conditions. There is no social protection and job security to say the least.

1. 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To further understand the challenges being confronted by waste pickers in the neoliberal capitalist economy.

- To understand what is being done by workers and other players to address the problems and challenges being faced by waste pickers.

- To use the experience of waste pickers in South Africa to better understand the conditions and experiences of the informal economy.

1. 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by the following questions:

Main Research Question

3 Buyisa iBag was formed around 2004 through a joint initiative comprising government, business and labour under section 21 with funds from plastic bag levy. The purpose was for employment creation, empowerment and poverty reduction through buy back centre creation, clean up campaigns and recycling promotion. Its operations used provincial and local government structures before it became insolvent in 2011.

What are waste pickers in South Africa doing to address the challenges they face as a result of their lack of social protection and job security?

Subsidiary Questions

What has government's role been in meeting the needs of the waste pickers?

What efforts have been taken by other stakeholders (like trade unions, bargaining councils, NGOs, CBOs etc) to assist waste pickers?

How successful have waste pickers been in making links and partnerships with other formations?

1. 5 RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

It is hoped that the project will contribute in some small way to filling in some of the gaps in already existing literature about informal sector workers in particular waste pickers. Previous studies on informal waste pickers in South Africa look at landfill site reclaimers, therefore experiences of street reclaimers will be documented. The study will highlight the problems being faced by street reclaimers as group. Diepsloot has not been covered before and it is a special case in that there are no landfills and regulated dumps, hence this will contribute to knowledge about the area. It was necessary to conduct the study in order to find out the connection between state policy and reclaimers' input with regards to improved working conditions in waste management. The role that cooperatives play as an alternative to the standard employment relationship is important to study when it comes to ascertaining how the cooperative serves the purpose of an employer and representative organs for its members. This cooperative role leads to the professionalisation of the informal sector as well as filling the representational gap affecting the informal sector workers at large.

It was important to carry out the study to generate information through which it will be possible to create awareness of the current conditions of work of street reclaimers. The unearthing of the challenges through the study will hopefully in some way contribute to struggles for positive policy responses to the problems of waste pickers. One possible option for this could be through the extension of coverage by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 to the reclaimers. The decent work expansion to this category of workers could help to dignify the reclaimers' work through the removal of stigma making them respectable workers in the green economy like their

counterparts in Brazil, Colombia and India.

CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to fully understand the prevailing situation in the recycling economy with regards to the extension of decent work and specifically focusing on job security and social protection, the approach taken is in support of the universality of decent work. Literature engaged in reveals both sides of the coin to clearly discuss the problem at hand in the form of lack of formal recognition of waste pickers by relevant authorities in South Africa. Concepts that were used to investigate the problems being confronted by waste pickers and how they are addressing them include waste pickers, cooperatives, decent work (social protection, job security), informal economy and neoliberalism. In addition, existing legislation was further probed to amplify the extent of the problems and locate the focus of the study thematically. This was meant to provide the context within which waste pickers operate to weigh against their prospects for improvement.

2. 1 Waste Pickers

A waste picker, *recicladore* in Spanish or *catador* in Portuguese refers to a person who reclaims "reusable and recyclable materials from what others have caste aside as waste" (Samson 2009:1). This emerged at the Third Latin American Regional and First World Conference of Waste Pickers in Bogota Colombia in 2008 but evidence suggests that waste picker organising can be traced back to the 1960s in Colombia (Samson 2009). The adoption of the name was because it is considered decent compared to usage of the word "scavenger" which is considered derogatory. The seTshwane variable of the word is "*bagaresi*" which means someone who is looking for valuable or good things suggesting that the work is valued (Samson 2010). It is estimated that there are about 15 million people in the world who survive on salvaging waste, about 85 000 in South Africa and about 1% of the urban population in developing countries (Inclusive Cities 2012, Urban Earth 2012, globalrec 2013). There are two categories of waste pickers in South Africa. The first works in the landfills and the second are found working in streets, public bins, dumps, households, malls etc. It is the former group which lacks job security and protection in comparison with the latter because they are not under threat of police, municipality and environmental officials. Despite relative security for those in the neighbourhoods, they are however not fully protected by labour laws of the country even though they face a lot of problems that directly affect their safety and health as well as

lack of assurance of their jobs (Medina, 2007). In contrast to their functionality to environmental, social and economic sustainability it has been argued that it would be much more meaningful if the authorities would consider protecting their job through inclusion in MSWM for them to have decent working conditions (Medina, 2007, Samson, 2008).

2.2 Cooperatives

The history of cooperatives internationally dates back 150 years ago and they have contributed to economic development in South Africa in the last 60 years (Satgar and Williams, 2011). Mostly under the apartheid regime, they operated in a legislative framework that was not compliant with the international cooperative regime (DTI, 2012). White agricultural cooperatives received financial, technical and regulatory support for local and international marketing of their produce at the expense of black cooperatives. In short, the cooperative movement was based on Afrikaner nationalism as they flourished to back the mainstream capitalist economy such that they were business entities not just cooperatives (Satgar and Williams 2011). According to Satgar and Williams, when South Africa attained independence, there was the perpetuation of a racialised approach to cooperatives which uses black economic empowerment (BEE) as the vehicle for the achievement of economic empowerment rather than cooperative empowerment. A state-led business oriented approach is still being used but worker ownership has introduced a new form of work and property relations whereby worker cooperatives have taken centre stage in dealing with economic crises, retrenchments and redundant workers (DTI, 2012). Despite the influential state position with regards to cooperative development, a welcome aspect is the empowerment of women, youth, the disabled and the rural folk who had been disadvantaged by the apartheid regime. By 2010, 38 898 cooperatives had registered (DTI 2009). Cooperatives are believed to provide the answer to the goal of equal participation, unemployment reduction and poverty alleviation if the cooperatives continue to get support from the state in their economic activities.

Although employer-employee relations do not exist in co-operatives, an alternative to decent work is provided through different employment relations that make cooperative members worker-owners (Satgar and Williams, 2011). In this case the cooperative replaces the trade union as a representative organ due to the "crisis of representation" which has been a consequence of neoliberal globalisation for those workers located in the periphery. Through ownership, the likelihood of promoting decent work practices are much higher than in a capitalist-proletariat relationship. It is for this reason that cooperatives are acknowledged as an alternative as well as a

solution to the decent work deficit linked to the crisis of capitalism.

2.3 Decent Work

The Decent Work Agenda is an ILO convention started in 1999 and in 2005. The Decent Work, Decent Life Campaign was hatched and signed in 2007 which prioritises work as important for the socio-economic advancement of individuals, families and communities. It rests on four pillars which include job creation, workers' rights, social protection, and social dialogue while gender equality is universal across the board (ILO). This takes a tripartite form made up of government, employers and labour aimed at achieving social integration at international, regional, national, sectoral and firm level.

Job creation emphasises investment promotion, entrepreneurship and skills development to have sustainable livelihoods through decent and productive jobs. This is applicable for both the formal and informal economy as espoused by policies like the New Growth Path (2012) and the Green Accord (2011) which seek to promote job creation through localisation, cooperative formation and empowerment. The Cooperative Act of 2005 (amended in 2013) seeks the promotion of cooperatives for employment creation, poverty alleviation, economic participation and black economic empowerment. All these policies fall under job creation as a facet of the decent work agenda. However, a serious weakness with these policy drives is failure of implementation, and even if the jobs can be created, in most cases they by-pass the decent aspect. In most instances BEE companies fail to comply with minimum safety requirements in order to meet job security and social protection. In one instance, a BEE company had to give the contract to operate a landfill to a white owned company due to lack of knowledge and capital to run the landfill which is common in most sectors that they are given tenders (Samson, 2004). One could also assert that the failure of job security and social protection is not necessarily to be blamed on government but on indigenisation policies whereby black entrepreneurs prioritise their enrichment at the expense of observing ILO standards of decent work. This leaves the waste pickers exposed to both market and safety related dangers because they are not provided with PPE and underpaid in financial transactions (Samson, 2004).

Workers Rights should be guaranteed and recognised, especially the disadvantaged workers who need representation and participation. Laws should therefore work in their interests. In the prevailing discourse, worker rights are enjoyed by regular employees at the expense of irregular employees (Bieler et al, 2008; Harvey, 1989; Webster, 2005). Due to neoliberal policies that have

given capital an upper hand while reducing the state's role, the state has acted in the interests of capital at the expense of labour and the general populace (Kalleberg, 2008). The argument for the availing of these rights suffers serious limitations if it is taken cognisance of the fact that people in the non-core do not have an employer. In the absence of an employer therefore the value of labour does not lie in a transaction with an employer but in a product or service whose failure to sell makes the value unrealisable (Philip, 2003 quoted in Webster, 2005). This is the situation that informal waste pickers find themselves in because they only have waste to sell to buyers but beyond that they are not selling their labour to anyone. The only way that they are vindicated is the consideration of their contribution to cost reduction, land conservation, waste diversion and environmental sustainability so as to make municipalities succumb to their demands for inclusion. The hazardous work environment they work in is worth considering provision of protective clothing which falls under social protection whereas formalisation relates to job security.

Social Protection is the prevention and overcoming of situations that adversely affect people's well being (UNRISD 2010). It ensures safe working conditions, adequate rest time, social and family values and compensation for lost income and health care access. Overall this reduces poverty and vulnerability through efficient labour markets for risks like unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability, old age etc. (World Bank 2001). The state, employers, international agencies and communities contribute towards social protection. Waste pickers are invisible as a category of informal workers as they do not meet the above mentioned criteria. Their conditions of living and working are characterised by poverty, vulnerability, stigma and general alienation (Dias, 2013). Waste picker formations therefore exist to ameliorate these perennial problems that have almost become naturalised.

Social Dialogue Promotion is also tripartite in nature. It can be facilitated if strong and independent unions and employer organisations are in existence in a bid to build cohesive and progressive societies in conjunction with the state. Although this seems misplaced for the informal waste pickers, Horn (2002) suggests that an entity or authority be identified as a negotiating partner for those found in the periphery. In this case, the negotiating partner is easy to identify as the City of Johannesburg, therefore it is highly possible to have social dialogue for this group at least but what is uncertain is the outcome. Instead of a union, reclaimers have associations, cooperatives, NGOs and membership based organisations (MBOs) that replace and redress the "crisis of representation" suffered by the precarious workers.

2.4 Informal Economy

The first serious discussions and analyses of the concept of the informal economy emerged in the 1970s by scholars like Hart (1973) and the ILO (1972) to describe activities that were taking place outside formally legislated arrangements. Sindzingre (2004:4) describes the informal economy as "non-observed, irregular, unofficial, second ..., informal, cash economy, black market, unmeasured, unrecorded, untaxed ...." In other words there is difficulty in commonly holding the characteristics as referring to the same phenomena and the nature of the relationships. Most people in the sector are those who failed to secure employment in the formal sector, as well as those who evade registration, taxes and minimum wage legislation requirements (Hart, 1973; Chen, 2004).

At the onset, it was seen as transient and it was thought it would disappear with modernisation and industrialisation as it was a residue of the traditional economy (Chen 2005; Gallin, 2001). Chen further states that it was seen as marginally productive, separate from the formal economy made of street traders and small producers. However, it has come to stay and is expanding concurrently with modern industrial growth, is a source of employment for lower income groups, contributes to the GDP and it is linked with the formal economy as well as the decline in formal employment (Chen 2005). According to Gallin (2001), the informal economy is not to be viewed as "atypical" as statistics show that 80% of Low Income countries, 40% of Medium Income Countries and 15% of High Income countries are occupied by informality. Its rise is attributed to the decline in formal employment linked to disproportionate demographic explosion in relation to industrial expansion in the developing world. It has also grown due to neoliberal governments of the USA and UK and structural adjustment programmes (SAPS) which called upon developing countries to liberalise trade and open up their economies (Webster et al 2008; Harvey, 1998). Subsequently, globalisation has increased unemployment through retrenchments in line with labour market reforms leaving informal work as the only option for the displaced workers. In other words, its rise is linked to crisis. As a result, it is no longer confined to the urban poor in unregistered enterprises but in formal enterprises through contracting, sub contracting and casual work which has led to the shrinking of union density (Bieler et al, 2008). The International Conference of Statisticians in 2003 has included employment relationships that are not legally protected, that is informal employment without formal contracts, worker benefits or social protection.

There are three schools of thought on the informal economy which are the Dualist, Structuralist and Legalist schools. The first is the Dualist school (Chen 2004) which argues that there are two economies with the first being regulated and formal in compliance with legislation in terms of labour law and operations so entry is difficult for new players. The other is unregulated and

populated by the poor as a source of income with low barriers to entry hence it persistence (Chen 2004). The Structuralist school (Moser 1978) sees the informal sector as subordinate to the formal economy through a two avenue supply chain with large formal sector companies. The relationship is asymmetrical and exploits the informal sector although this creates employment and facilitates the movement of goods and services (Castells and Portes 1989, Webster et al 2008). De Soto (1989) came up with the legalist school which cites registration costs and time constraints as the reason for operating informally but this is also intentional as people want to pay below market wages, maximise profits and benefit from reduced responsibilities on employees. In the context of reclaiming all the schools of thought are applicable but it is the legalist school of thought which is a disadvantage in the sense that authorities will tend to give a cold shoulder to unregistered people. The structuralist school also accounts for the exploitation they suffer at the hands of recycling companies, municipal officials and middlemen while the dualist perspective punctuates their very existence. Due to these perceptions about the informal economy it becomes difficult for reclaimers to have voice, representation and decent work conditions because they are prejudiced.

It has been argued that the South African economy is dual and the second economy requires the state in the appropriation of resources so as to end social crises that flow from poverty (Webster et al 2008). In 2003, Thabo Mbeki mentioned the "structural fault" between the two economies "one modern and relatively well developed and the other underdeveloped and entrenched in a crisis of poverty" (Mbeki 2003:5). It is seen as incapable of producing growth and development hence the need for active state intervention through micro credit, agrarian reform, skill development, public works programmes and integrating the informal economy into the first economy (Mbeki 2003). However the dual thesis has one shortfall of failing to recognise multiple forward and backward linkages between the formal and informal sectors (Devey et al, 2006; Moser 1978). According to Webster (2005) the dual thesis is challenged because the two economies are symmetrically dependent. Waste pickers are not left out in this campaign which should increase their "visibility", recognition and improved working conditions based on the decent work agenda once the integration is achieved. The unwillingness by traditional unions to organise informal workers also poses a serious threat to their recognition and access to decent work.

2.5 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism emphasises the need for a lean state, reduced deficit expenditure, trade liberalisation, financial deregulation, privatisation and the rule of market forces (Bieler et al, 2008;

Harvey, 1998; Marazzi, 2013; Peet, 2008). This is aimed at achieving economic transformation, poverty alleviation, reducing the gap between developed and developing countries and efficiency enhancement (Achankeng, 2003). Instead of narrowing this gap, inequality has increased in terms of income distribution, assets and economic power especially in African cities (ibid). By prioritising the supremacy of market forces, capital has enjoyed an upper hand over the state and labour especially in its transnational form (Bieler et al 2008) where profit maximisation is the sole aim easily achievable through labour market flexibility. Under this rubric, (Bieler et al, 2008) observe the fragmentation of the labour market into stable and unstable labour which has led to those who are well protected by labour laws and enjoy job security and all benefits and others who are vulnerable to the vagaries of the market hence precarious (Standing 2011). In wake of the reduced welfare or social spending by the state, people found in informal employment are the hardest hit as the financial base which cushioned the poor is eroded (van Ginneken, 2003).

The current paradigm is characterised by this state of affairs for workers in the periphery. Virtually all the workers in the informal sector and those in contracted or externalised employment relationships are victims of insecurity who lack decent and productive jobs as well as social protection (Theron 2003). The self employed in the MWMS are in a much tougher predicament because they do not have a direct employer so their counterparts choose to ignore them despite doing the same job with those employed (Samson 2005). Privatisation and neoliberalism therefore are seen as the biggest culprits for inequality and poverty suffered by waste pickers. There is a general apathy by regular workers towards the irregular workers by denial to represent and include them in unions (Bieler et al 2008, Samson 2005)) and failure of labour legislation to cover the latter further exacerbating their precariousness.

The only panacea for waste pickers and other insecure workers in the current neoliberal paradigm lies in their accommodation under labour legislation so that they are accorded the same status as others to achieve security, productive and decent work (Samson 2005).

2.6 Existing Legislation/Legal Framework

The legislative environment, pre-existence and existence of waste picker organisations at local, national and regional levels, political organisation for collective rights by unions, NGOs etc as well as cooperatives and companies for service delivery are important determinants of policy outcomes (Samson 2009). The municipal officials in South Africa, the region and continent were hostile and are still hostile to reclaiming activities and actually chase (d) waste pickers away from

the landfills (Samson 2010). However with the onslaught of privatisation under neoliberal policies, the situation has further worsened as private companies are not included under bargaining councils and this worsens the possibility of improvement due to the profit rationale they operate under.

The Waste Act of 2009 is a policy designed for waste management in South Africa which works hand in glove with the National Environmental Management Act 1998 by requiring a national Waste Management Strategy (WMS) at national, provincial and local level. The WMS acts as a guideline for all the levels of government for both formal and informal players in the sector. Its licensing procedure empowers municipalities to differentiate user categories within MWMS. One criticism levelled against the Waste Act of 2009 is that it mentions reclaimers implicitly hinting on the unwillingness to fully integrate them therefore the legal provisions are not informal sector friendly. The call for indemnity to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) for waste pickers to work on the landfills strongly communicates this behaviour. With this legislative environment, it is very difficult to envisage an immediate accommodation of informal reclaimers in areas of social protection and job security regardless of the full knowledge of the officials on how hazardous waste reclaiming is.

Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 1993 is highly exclusionary since its definitional scope of an employee does not cover informal reclaimers. In the event of death, sickness or injury, council professes ignorance as it does not employ waste pickers regardless of the role they play to minimise land pollution, cleaning the environment and reduction of pressure on the landfills.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 systematically leaves waste reclaimers unprotected if any injury befalls them by not providing protective clothing. There is surmounting evidence to prove that reclaiming is not seriously considered as a job given the fact that there is no social protection coverage and job security especially for those operating at the landfill sites because in some instances they are chased away by municipal authorities (Schoeman and Sentime, 2011).

The Cooperatives Act of 2005 and the Amendment Act of 2013 have the advantages of joint ownership, worker control, management and participation based on voluntary participation. This empowers people without formal employment to alternatively engage in productive work that leads to economic transformation, investment, industrial development and reduction of poverty. The Cooperatives Development Agency (CDA) provides financial and non financial support, the Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) ensures marketing of products, while the Cooperatives Incentives Scheme (CIS) and the Cooperatives Special Projects (CSP) will provide the much needed financial assistance for their flourishing. If properly managed, this Act works

favourably for cooperatives inclusive of Bottle-Ke-Tlhago which will prioritise decent working conditions in comparison to BEE companies for example. The advantage will hail from the fact that cooperative members are not alienated from the means of production which minimises sabotage and lack of motivation (Standing, 2011).

An important point to note under the existing legal framework is the exclusivity in terms of according of and enforcement of decent work and collective bargaining agreements which favour the formal economy. This is in part a problem resulting from heterogeneity within the sector and lack of an employer, lack of access to labour market institutions as well as to social security systems unless the existing system becomes inclusive or a new system is devised (Horn, 2004). Horn calls for the system to register informal workers, give them identity cards and collect contributions by workers, employers and government. If this system is adopted in the South African case, not only will it assist waste pickers but the informal economy as a whole in compliance with basic labour standards mandatory under the ILO.

CHAPTER THREE- LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature surrounding decent work especially its dearth in the informal economy by trying to argue for its universal application based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the ILO Global Jobs Pact which emphasise the importance of work. If work is a universal human, economic, social, cultural right, then it has to be decent both in terms of social security and permanence of employment regardless of location of sector. Although waste picking is a deplorable and dirty job, its significance is not to be taken for granted socially, economically and environmentally. The literature review will identify the waste pickers in South Africa and their challenges with reference to the global trends and situation. The concept of decent work with particular emphasis on social protection and job security will be reviewed focusing on the waste pickers while the role of government, trade unions, NGOs and links and partnerships with other players will also be discussed. It is equally important to review the role of cooperatives and the informal economy in juxtaposition with the decent work agenda. This, it is hoped, will give a clear picture of the prevailing working and living conditions being experienced by the waste pickers and the way forward with regard to addressing their problems and challenges.

3. 1.1 Waste Pickers in South Africa and the Challenges they face

Historically, waste picking has been the preserve of outcasts and marginal groups like slaves, gypsies and migrants, in India, the harijans or formerly untouchables and non Muslims in Muslim countries (Medina, 2000). Even if these patterns still persist, current people in the profession do this out of poverty and lack of employment in the formal sector which has also increased entry requirements even for manual jobs. Waste picking is also necessitated by increased waste volumes due to an increase in the flow of goods and services that has heightened consumption levels (Achankeng, 2003). Waste picking therefore represents the expansion of the informal sector and its ubiquity. According to the ILO (2002), most informal workers lack legal and social protection even though half to three quarters of the non agricultural labour force in developing countries are in the informal economy while in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia 90% of employment is in the informal sector. The four broad categories of informal sector workers include domestic workers, home based workers, street vendors and waste pickers (Bonner and Spooner, 2012). Generally, waste pickers are poor, usually migrants without protection and access to resources, who survive on the collection of garbage inclusive of waste from household

preparation, cooking and serving food; market refuse, handling, storage and sales of produce and meals. Non-biodegradable solid waste includes paper, carton, cardboard, plastics, clothes, rubber, leather, bottles, glass, ceramics, tins, cans etc. (Achankeng, 2003; Schoeman and Sentime, 2011). Other sources of waste include abandoned vehicles, non-hazardous industrial waste, construction and demolition waste, imported second hand goods and E-waste from computers and other electronic gadgets (Achankeng, 2003). However, insufficient attention from relevant authorities makes it mandatory that they should have decent work, benefits, assets, economic rights, social protection and voice in an environment that makes organisation and representation possible at all levels (Bonner and Spooner, 2012; Budlender, 2013; Medina 2007).

South African waste pickers are not exempt from these challenges which stifle the ability to end poverty and improve their working and living conditions. The major challenges they face include exclusion by labour law, exploitation by middlemen which is monopsonistic, lack of safety, indifferential treatment, lack of formalisation of their work, harassment, privatisation, technology and stigma due to the association with dirt of their work which affects recognition of their worth (Medina 2007, Samson 2009 Urban Earth 2012). They also face the problem of identity as worker organisations do not see them as workers because they are more aligned to business associations while the government usually does not enforce laws meant to protect and advance their interests (Bonner and Spooner, 2012). The use of the word employee instead of worker eclipses their coverage by labour laws unless the word worker is used because it surpasses the employer-employee relationship (Horn, 2004). The word worker is not restricted to the traditional employment relationship hence coverage by labour laws than what employee stands for.

According to Samson (2009), the South African government through the local government ministry and the DEAT along with municipalities do not want to regulate waste picking and this militates against any prospects of their improvement. This view is also supported by Scheoman and Sentime (2011:4) when they said, "... many municipalities consider them to be a nuisance and are trying to get rid of them". As a result of this kind of attitude by the state, most labour laws do not operate in the interest of the waste pickers and other informal workers which hampers protection against risks and injury as well as job security (Theron, 2003, 2010). Samson (2008, 2009), draws our attention to the fact that some municipalities deny waste pickers access to landfills through force which is a denial of a means of livelihood to the poor. At the end of the day, this directly increases the unemployment levels, as a result some have resorted to illegal entry. According to Samson (2005), privatisation is considered one of the biggest enemies to waste pickers as it promotes big companies and SMMEs at the expense of the informal waste pickers whose income is reduced and job security is threatened. In the same vein, the use of technology particularly the

energy conversion from waste and composition of biodegradable waste to produce methane gas for electricity generation is a threat to waste picker survival (Samson, 2013). However, as cited by (Medina, 2000), the waste to energy conversion schemes suffer serious limitations in that Third World countries want to use capital intensive approaches to waste management in a top-down approach for the benefit of the formal sector yet they waste foreign currency and lack capital. The solution offered by (Medina, 2000) instead is that they should engage in waste management programmes that create employment, protect the environment, promote community participation and accommodate informal refuse collectors so as to avoid foreign currency expenditure. Despite the scientific appeals, it is also argued by Achankeng (2003) and globalrec (2013) that waste to energy conversion actually leads to more greenhouse gas emissions, reduces employment for the reclaimers as well as continues to deplete natural resources. In comparison with recycling, it is environment saving despite the fact that 70% of the waste in developing countries is organic. Their workplaces are mainly dumps, landfills, streets, etc. which are dirty and filthy and as such they are treated with disdain by officials which works unfavourably against their formal inclusion within MSMS (Dias, 2006, 2009, 2013; Medina, 2007; Samson, 2009). In terms of identity and lack of enforcement of laws by the government, they lack representation by traditional unions and bargaining councils and they are generally uncovered by the labour laws even though a Ministerial Determination to cover the informal sector has been put in place (Samson, 2005 citing Labour Relations Act 1995).

Therefore waste pickers operate in a hostile environment that precludes their formal inclusion in solid waste management regardless of their meaningful contribution to making cities clean, reducing costs for municipalities as well as environmental sustainability (Dias, 2013; Samson 2010; Urban Earth 2012). Their goal is to challenge the status quo and come up with an inclusive work environment at the planning and implementation process at all levels (Bonner and Spooner 2012) because currently they face a “decent work deficit” (Webster et al, 2008).

3.1.2 Waste Pickers and the Recycling Economy

Although waste pickers are marginalised to the periphery within MSWM, they are an integral component within the chain of production which sustains both the domestic and export economy through recycling (Dilata, 2008). According to Medina (2000), they supply raw materials to industries like paper, plastic, metal, glass etc. Paper, inclusive of K4 or card box, HL1 or white paper and newspapers are used in the making of card box, writing paper and tissue paper. According

to American Chemistry Council, plastic recycling became very important after the society of the plastics industry came up with the Resin Identification Code (RIC) in 1988. RIC differentiates different plastics according to their density and polymer characteristic from code 1 to 7. All these recyclable plastics can be made into filament and fibre for clothing, goetextiles, carpeting, computer soft ware, drainage and irrigation pipes, toys, car battery cases etc. Hartman (2009) notes that metal industries recycle aluminium and tinned cans, ferrous and non ferrous scrap into different products. Cans are usually remade while ferrous metals are those that contain iron and are less expensive than non-ferrous metals without iron such as aluminium, gold, copper etc. They are used for making industrial components used in the manufacture of vehicles, aircraft, machinery, locomotives, tools, furniture and so forth. The glass industry also relies on the use of bottles and jars in the re manufacture of bottles which can also work for window panes, mirrors and wind screens.

Besides the scientific recycling which undergoes an industrial process through smelting and mixing with other raw materials, recycling can extend beyond that. The first process is industrial recycling which reduces the amount of waste going to the landfills. The second way of recycling is the reuse stance which also reduces the amount of waste going to the landfills through non industrial means of making the materials reusable (Achankeng, 2003). For example plastics, bottles, cans can be reused for domestic purposes into furniture, toys or utensils for cans, the plastic into containers or tourist products, tyres into shoes, ropes etc. Biodegradable waste can also be composited into organic manure which ultimately prolongs the landfill life, empowers communities, reduces costs for municipalities including making cities clean when illegal dumping sites are cleared (Urban Earth, 2012). Environmental hazards and the threat of diseases are eradicated through waste picker input. Overall, both industrial and non-industrial methods of recycling represent the reduce, recycle and reuse motto which has become a living maxim of all recycling related organisations including Pikitup. Recycling arguably saves energy, water, virgin materials like iron ore, coal etc. as less of these materials are consumed than when manufacturing including minimisation of mining waste (International Aluminium Institute). At the end water, air and land pollution get reduced which mitigates against global warming because the ozone layer is saved, the water body is made pure and the land is extricated from impurities. Recycling is very central to sustainable development from this perspective including the reclaimers themselves (Medina, 2000).

On a different note, besides the environmental and economic benefits at macro level, recycling and reclaiming can be better paying than other jobs, for examples, in Beijing, they earn three times higher than university professors and in Brazil, they earn above the minimum wage (Dias, 2009; Medina, 2000). Within the Third World, the problem arises from emphasis on collection and disposal instead of reduction, reuse and recycling alongside disaggregate

urbanisation which makes collection incomplete in the poor neighbourhoods (Achankeng, 2003; Medina, 2000). Unless a political willingness by the governments in the developing countries especially in Africa is shown, the recycling economy and waste pickers will remain as if marginal. A closer look at the benefits and success stories in parts of Latin America, Asia and Europe proves beyond reasonable doubt that recycling is functional to neoliberalism. The industry would have been much more lucrative to work in if decent working conditions are adopted for the informal reclaimers found at the bottom of the production process (Dilata, 2008).

3.2 Decent Work (Social Protection and Job Security)

3.2.1 Social Protection

Social protection buffers against risk, vulnerability and reduces poverty for individuals, communities, nations, regions and the world at large (World Bank, 2001). More than half of the world's population is excluded from statutory social protection mostly found in the informal economy neither on contribution based nor tax based social benefits (van Ginneken, 2003). Van Ginneken further asserts that 90% of sub-Saharan Africa is not covered, 20 to 60% in MICs is not covered while 1 out of 5 people in the world or 205 is adequately covered under social security. Social security is considered basic human right uder ILO conventions and the United Nations charters such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In response to neoliberal policies, the ILO launched the Global campaign on Social Security and Coverage for All (ILO, 2001). Classical development theory anticipated secure formal sector employment due to economic growth but this has not been the case as instead people are found in more precarious forms of employment both in thebformal and informal sectors. However part of the decent work agenda seeks to "promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity" (ILO, 1993:3 quoted in van Ginneken, 2003), but this is not happening on the ground as the state has been severely incapacitated to play its welfare function. To this end, there is every need to build human capital to curb risk especially income loss through employment creation as well as the creation of community based insurance schemes which are voluntary and use flat rate contributions that are convenient for the informal sector workers (van Ginneken, 2003).

Social protection can be divided into social assistance or tax financed schemes which give cash transfers, food aid, educational funding and social insurance or statutory insurance for old age, disability and unemployment (van Ginneken, 2003; World Bank).

The former deals with the vulnerable and needy through the state due to their inability to work while the latter is compulsory and income related but the government through subsidies in education, health, food, housing etc. also contributes to social security or protection. For waste pickers, it is the latter aspect that concerns them as they are labouring people who should prevent against these risks. Regardless of the fact that they are workers, they are unable to join compulsory schemes due to their meagre incomes and community based insurance schemes work better for them and their counterparts in the informal economy. van Ginneken (2003) contends that if the government chips in, these schemes can be stabilised through the creation of area-based social security schemes in partnership with local civil society groups before nationalising the model. This closely resembles the stokvels in South Africa which play a pivotal role of cushioning people against risks and vulnerability (Mosoetsa, 2003).

Evidence from the South African waste picker experience points to the complete absence of social protection measures for them, which is common across the informal economy (Samson 2004, ILO 2002). They do not have access to medical aid schemes, pension, unemployment insurance, housing schemes while they are not covered under the Occupational Health and Safety for injury, sickness or death compensation hence vulnerability and precarity (Standing 1997, Samson 2004) or high decent work deficits (Webster et al 2008).

Their working conditions in the landfills are highly risky as they work close to compactors and front end loaders heightening the possibility of death and injury. Toxic industrial and medical waste also pose health threats as they are cut, pricked and usually have a low life expectancy and high infant mortality is rife among waste pickers. They succumb to diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis, skin disorders, malaria etc. that shorten their life span including psychiatric disorders (Da Silva 2006 cited in Dias 2010; Medina, 2000, 2007). No effort has been taken seriously to address these working condition problems. The South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) is struggling hard to effect policy change regarding improved working conditions despite an unwilling state through forming a national working committee that sees to it that they are given formal status (Samson 2009).

3.2.2 Job Security

Job security is defined by the ILO as allowing a degree of self-control over the content of the job creating room for the building of a career. It also refers to professional growth according to Standing (1997) but this is based on the standard employment relationship. However, waste pickers are found in the informal economy, without an employer and union rights making their situation

difficult as they salvage in municipal dumps and streets they do not have exclusive rights over (Samson 2008). Despite labour standards being indiscriminate in their coverage, informal sector players are bypassed definitionally and practically (Horn, 2004). Most of the times those working at the landfills are in conflict with the authorities who sometimes unleash violence to drive them away from dumps hence their job security is not assured. This makes waste picking a "contested social process" due to the struggle which ensues between them and authorities which affects their recognition and the formalisation of their work (Hart 2006).

The efforts by SAWPA and groundWork to assure access to landfills for waste pickers is an attempt to assure job security because once they are closed out they are deprived of the means to livelihood, a situation which will exacerbate poverty and unemployment (Schoeman and Sentime 2011). Research has shown that municipalities in South Africa are not in agreement on how to treat waste pickers as some are hostile but others are accommodative (Samson 2008). The struggle to achieve this wages on not only at landfills but also against conversion to energy and landfill gas schemes that threaten job security. To effect the desired change, the clamour for job security has taken transnational solidarity form under the banner of the GAWP and GAIA (globalrec 2013). Without formalisation, registration, protective clothing, representation in policy making processes and remuneration by local government authorities, the reclaimers are precarious and without job security.

3. 3 The Role of Government in Waste Picking

The government is expected to take the role of "employer of last resort" (ELR) (Wray, 2009) in line with providing employment to the poor when the levels of unemployment become too high. ELR jobs should have benefits, be decent, have slightly below market wages approved by parliament (ibid). However in the neoliberal context this appears to be at variance with the call for privatisation, reduced state role in the economy, flexibility of labour markets, production and exchange rates, financial deregulation, trade liberalisation, technological advancement and the rule of market forces for efficiency and profit maximisation (Bieler et al 2008,Block 1977, Bond 1998, Chang 2002, Harvey 1989, Helleiner 1996, Peet 2008, Webster et al 2008). Limited state role in the current paradigm therefore means that it is no longer able to engage in the interests of labour in particular and the populace at large (Chang, 2002, Shaik, 2003).

Traditionally, waste management has been the preserve of municipalities both in the Third World and in the developed countries but the adoption of neoliberal policies has seen the emergence

of new players like large recycling companies and SMMEs though informal reclaimers have not been left out (Samson 2008, Medina 2007). The state or government and relevant ministries like local government and environment are equally concerned about waste reduction and the environmental impact of waste. A recent study by Medina (2007) has revealed that the MWMS policy stance ranges from repression, neglect, collusion and stimulation depending on the country. Repression totally denies reclaiming by informal waste pickers, neglect is a hands off stance which ignores the waste pickers concerns, collusion is based on political patronage as a condition for salvaging while stimulation is inclusive of waste pickers formally within SWM (ibid). The latter two are common in parts of Latin America and Asia while in Africa the former two are prevalent as government officials either harass or ignore waste pickers (Schoeman and Sentime 2011).

The privatisation of the municipal services in South Africa was for profit generation, cost recovery and reduced state expenditure (Samson, 2005). In the process of privatisation, the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (MIIU) was created to relieve government from public involvement in MSWM giving birth to Pikitup. It is a utility owned by Johannesburg Municipality and it outsources to other companies working on a contractual basis for service delivery boasting of 5 landfills, 11 depots and 1 incinerator. Owing to neoliberalism, three categories have been established in the labour markets in general and the MWMS in particular namely the core, semi periphery/non-core and the periphery (Harvey 1989; Webster and Von Holdt 2005). The core constitutes permanent council and Pikitup employees who are in a standard employment relationship with assured income and benefits so they are entitled to decent work with job security and social protection. The semi periphery/ non-core is likened to people under casualisation working for private companies without entitlement to full employee benefits and receive low wages due to the temporary nature of their work (Theron, 2003). The periphery is people under externalisation seen as contractors due to lack of direct relationship with the employer. Casuals, seasonal workers, part time workers and informal reclaimers form part of this group at the bottom of the production chain with the least security and protection coupled with meagre wages (ibid).

As a result of policy and paradigm shifts, the state is now incapacitated to use its power to improve the working conditions of the waste pickers or the periphery. Although the ANC government has pledged to ensure integration of the informal economy with the formal economy, it is mere rhetoric considering the attitude of municipal officials and the laws that currently govern the informal economy inclusive of waste picking (Samson, 2009, Theron, 2010). However, regardless of the privatisation and limited state role, access to landfills has been allowed but a lot still needs to be done in terms of formalisation of their operations, safety and inclusion in all spheres of operation (Bonner and Spooner 2012, Dias 2013, Samson 2013). In other words, the South African

government policy is between repression and neglect though the struggle for waste pickers envisages a move to stimulation for the fulfilment of their human needs and the environment (Medina 2007: Schoeman and Sentime 2011).

To ensure the inclusion of waste pickers, a joint initiative comprising government, business and labour led to the creation of a Treasury funded Section 21 company called Buyisa iBag which also used plastic bag levy to fund its operations. The purpose was to create jobs, alleviate poverty and empower the youth in the recycling sector (Buyisa iBag). It was tasked with the creation of Buy back centres, embarking on clean up campaigns, promoting recycling through the schools programme as well as youth empowerment. The buy back centres buy, sort and resell recyclable materials and prior to the operations training was provided first in Gauteng and Mpumalanga with financial assistance of R1,8 million per centre. Buyisa iBag was responsible for monitoring and evaluation requiring monthly and annual financial and performance reports. The initiative was supposed to work with provincial and local government structures under Department of Environment and Tourism (DEAT) funding while Indalo Yethu implemented and carried out campaigns. Although it became insolvent in 2011 and was absorbed by DEAT, at least government commitment to the recycling sector is unquestionable. This commitment can be said to be in the neoliberal paradigm through encouragement of individual enterprise under privatisation but the state involvement in funding is a bit out of line.

The continued commitment by government to extend decent work to the informal economy especially to the recycling sector can also be seen in the recent efforts by the City of Johannesburg Department of Environment training programme for reclaimers not working at landfill sites. The funds have been donated by the Department of Economic Development to provide training on safety, road signs, reclaimer rights, hazards and the provision of protective clothing while their registration will formally recognise them as reclaimers of the city. An allowance will also be given to compensate for their lost time during the training but if a similar programme is under way for those working on landfill sites is not known. Therefore waste pickers working on the streets, households, malls and public bins are at least getting attention from the government.

3. 4 Trade Union Role in Waste Picking

A survey of literature shows that across the world, there is no uniformity in terms of organisational form and framework as they range from associations, cooperatives, companies and micro enterprises with the same purpose of improving working and living conditions (Bonner and Spooner, 2012; Dias, 2013). Activists and researchers argue that waste management transpires in an unfair context which makes them invisible in the public sphere and denies them organisational space for empowerment and poverty reduction (Samson, 2010). Associacao Dos Catadores De Papel Papelao E Material Reaproveitavel (ASMARE) and Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchyat (KKPKP) managed to attract recognition from their municipalities through mobilisation and lobbying (Dias, 2013). Although the success stories in Brazil and India are not nationwide, they stand as role models to be emulated by other waste pickers who have not yet achieved the same levels of decent work and job security. Traditional unions do not have an interest in addressing problems affecting informal sector workers and this situation particularly obtains in South Africa (Samson, 2005). According to Gallin (2001), the informal sector is problematic to trade union organisation unless there is a fundamental change in the operation of the informal economy although the notion that it is transitory is a gross misrepresentation of reality.

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Independent Municipal Allied Trade Union (IMATU), South African Transport Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) are all biased towards permanent municipal employees leaving casual and informal waste pickers vulnerable and exposed (Samson 2005). The South African Local Governments (SALG) Bargaining Council and the Road and Freight Bargaining Council follow the same trends proving that freedom of association and protection by labour law have become selective, worker voice gagged as more and more are being relegated to the informal economy (Samson 2004, 2005). The state is not being proactive in addressing the problem of the "decent work deficit" (Webster et al 2008). To Samson (2004), this however does not imply that informal reclaimers are not entitled to labour legislation protection because they are also workers but the problem is their location. Owing to their unfavourable treatment at national level, transnational solidarity under "social movement unionism" (Pillay 2013) can be the panacea although national and regional efforts are mandatory before the transnational level. The advantages of social movement unionism come through the ability of the mobilisation to extend to society in order to make the call for change morally appealing due to numbers like the citizenship forums in Brazil which included stakeholders from private sector, public sector, NGOs, informal sector and

civil society (Dias 2006).

To fill in the organisational space left by traditional unions, waste pickers have formed cooperatives, close corporations and companies so as to amplify their strength and voice when it comes to dialogue with the authorities (Samson, 2008, groundwork 2012). Of late, SAWPA has been very instrumental in uniting all membership based organisations (MBOs) in the country to lobby and advocate for better working conditions. There has been some success in the construction of material recovery facilities (MRF) with the assistance of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in response to SAWPA's pressure. The Mooi River cooperative is a case in point where the MRF reduces waste going to the landfill by sorting recyclables for manufacturers (groundwork, 2012).

Waste pickers can be divided into those working at the landfill sites and those operating away from landfill sites. The former group is always in constant clashes with municipal authorities as their operations interfere with the compaction of waste. They are chased away for safety reasons as some die in the landfills when they are hit by trucks and compactors, they also do not have protective clothing yet the waste that goes to the landfills is an amalgam of domestic, commercial medical and industrial waste. The latter two categories are hazardous to health which is the justification that municipal officials give when chasing them along with the confusion caused when they swarm around trucks that bring waste. Owing to these factors, they have banded into cooperatives, associations, unions etc. to confront the authorities as a united front but their counterparts usually work individually. In Diepsloot, there is no landfill site and no waste picker co-operative exists except for the buy back centre although this does not mean that in other areas they have not come together.

According to Horn (2005), informal sector organisations can either use existing labour regulation systems or have new ones established to deal with their issues. If the political environment is enabling, the tripartite negotiating forum inclusive of the state, the responsible counterparts and the informal worker representatives deliberate on the issues at stake. However, collective bargaining for informal sector workers usually has no permanent forums and most of the collective bargaining takes place on an ad hoc basis (Budlender, 2013). Thus besides use of unions, collective bargaining is an alternative way of presenting complaints. Social dialogue is another avenue which is tripartite in nature that can be utilised by the informal sector to achieve decent work. The antipathy of traditional unions against their informal counterparts does not suggest that there is and can be no progress. According to Gallin (2001), national and international coordination and cooperative formation through advice from the International Cooperative Alliance and ILO Cooperative Branch can improve visibility for informal sector workers. Education through the

internet is also seen to be important towards making them knowledgeable and aware of their rights.

3.5 The Role of NGOs in Waste Picking

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is an organisation which neither belongs to the government nor operates for profit. Its scope of operation and orientation varies or ranges from local to national, regional or international (Bonner and Spooner 2012). Most NGOs are human rights based, developmental and advocacy based and get funding from governments, churches or well wishers or they can be self funded. In South Africa, NGOs that have emerged in the waste picking sector are local and tend to rely on external funding for the fulfilment of their objectives namely groundWork, Asiye e Tafuleni among others (Samson 2004, Urban Earth 2012). The Water Amenities and Sanitation Upgrade (Wassup) project was formed in 2009 in Diepsloot as a profit-making cooperative. Initially, it was tasked with the upgrading of water and sanitation needs in Diepsloot, mainly toilets and taps. Since some toilets were being misused through putting waste in them, it is almost operating like an NGO on environmental awareness and in local recycling although sometimes it is viewed as a cooperative.

groundWork is an environmental justice organisation which apart from organising waste pickers also deals with air quality, environmental health as well as climate justice and energy. Asiye e Tafuleni is an inclusive urban planning and design organisation based on participatory development for the urban disadvantaged operating in open spaces. It conducts awareness campaigns to make people understand the importance of waste picking and removing stigma associated with the job including advocating for street vendors (Urban Earth 2012). It is also a partner of Inclusive Cities along with other NGOs in Latin America and Asia (Horn, 2009). Wassup is based in Diepsloot and was created within the context of upgrading water and sanitation needs in Diepsloot. The river was being contaminated by human and material waste and it sought to return sanity through the provision and repair of toilets in the area as well as environmental cleanliness campaigns. Combined efforts of these and other NGOs has led to the strength of SAWPA and other MBOs to gain from negotiations with the government although they have not achieved their ultimate goal of being accorded equal status within SWM like counterparts in Latin America and India which will entitle them to decent work.

3. 6 Cooperatives and the Informal Economy

Cooperatives emerged in the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Second World War in reconstruction efforts and for the purpose of employment creation (Satgar and Williams 2011). The informal economy as a concept is rooted in the 1970s as it emerged to describe economic activity and employment transpiring outside regulated practices (Hart, 1973). Both phenomena account for work that is carried outside the traditional employer-employee relationship for survival, esteem, social value and poverty alleviation. Thus waste pickers find themselves in the informal economy and some have formed cooperatives to sustain their livelihoods which represents alternative forms of ownership, production and distribution (Satgar and Williams, 2011). Cooperatives are democratic with unanimous decisions on production, finance and consumption as opposed to typical managerial hierarchies of capitalist businesses (Kirun, 2012 in Satgar, 2012). Worker control also increase responsiveness to worker needs notwithstanding the fact that they are transformative in as much as internal, social and economic relations of cooperatives build structural power and solidarity within society (ibid).

A counter argument to the decent work agenda based on the informal economy and cooperative aspect would see decent work as misplaced for waste pickers due to the location of the profession. Waste pickers do not have an employer, do not receive salaries, have no union representation and as such cannot meet all the requirements of the decent work agenda. At the same time as members of a cooperative, they are owner-workers who jointly make decisions such that they have no one to complain to besides being democratic. Therefore cooperatives and informal work are seen as the best alternative to joblessness in the current paradigm which has made the "reserve army" obsolete due to labour market flexibility and has given an upper hand for capital (Bauman, 1998). Since technology is rapidly replacing human labour with machines, a surplus population that is made useless has no option but to join the cooperative movement or the informal economy in order to survive. Government efforts in the provision of funding and training for the cooperatives is commendable as this buffers against high levels of unemployment since full employment enjoyed under Fordism can no longer be returned. All the same being informal does not suggest that there should be a complete absence of basic labour rights that can be accessed through negotiating forums among the informal workers, the state and responsible entity or authority (Horn, 2005).

However, despite the absence of traditional waged employment, the state cannot be exonerated for failing to meet minimum safety requirements for the waste pickers as they work in risky areas. With their contributions in mind, the Cooperative Development Agency should see to it

that economic empowerment should be extended simultaneously with standard working conditions that are ILO compliant.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

4. 1 METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was used in conducting the study. According to Weiss (1994), qualitative research is characterised by detailed description from accounts and integrates multiple perspectives while its flexibility creates room for probing further if responses warrant further clarification. The use of this method better suited my study because it is researcher oriented and treats the participants as subjects and not objects therefore it enabled me to mine relevant data for the question on challenges and opportunities faced by waste pickers in Diepsloot. Since the research was not interested in statistics, this method enabled the researcher to bring about rich and thick descriptions of data as a result of unrestricted responses compared to closed questions.

4. 2 The Case-Study Methodology

A case-study is a research strategy which provides researchers with tools to undertake an in depth study on complex phenomena within their context (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The case study methodology is informed by the constructivist paradigm which sees the truth as relative dependant on the researcher's perspective and constructs social reality through collaboration and story telling between researcher and participants. There are different types of case studies ranging from the explanatory case study concerned about causal investigations, exploratory cases that function as a prelude to social research and descriptive case requiring a descriptive theory to be developed prior to the research (Yin, 2003). Intrinsic case studies are those in which the researcher's interest is pronounced, instrumental for understanding cases for more than what is obvious to observer as well as collective cases through the study of a group of cases (Stake, 1995). It is based on participant observation in daily life and depends on the use of theory for knowledge and empirical phenomenon explanation. In this light, case-study research is usually context dependent as a way of concretising reality and Yin (1994) says the "why" and "how" questions are answered as events unfold bringing into play causal relationships like power relations, motives and complex social interactions. Interaction between the actors gives voice and perspective as it is multiperspectival described as giving voice to the voiceless and powerless (Tellis, 1997). It is prudent to delineate

parameters of the study and to identify the unit of study which will be the focus of study. Most importantly, a case study allows for the intensive investigation of a question or set of questions through a particular set of experiences or events that reflect the broader question or set of questions.

As for this case, the informal economy and Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Co-operative form the area of focus and subject respectively from which data was drawn.

4.3 Research Site

The study was conducted in Diepsloot in South Africa but coming across the case was not an easy task proving the fact that waste pickers are not easy to locate as an organised group. The researcher was referred to Pikitup by researcher Melanie Samson which led him to the leader of Johannesburg Reclaimers, a committee which organises region F and A under the City of Johannesburg (CoJ). He invited the researcher to a meeting where he got to know of Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Co-operative limited. It is made up of six executive members (two of whom are women) and fifteen general members or employees. A preliminary visit was done for familiarisation with the co-operative. What is striking is the fact that both Johannesburg Reclaimers and Bottle-Ke-Tlhago have not been documented before and this might bring in new dimensions on the subject.

Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited is a youth cooperative found in Diepsloot in the North of Johannesburg under Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality region A. According to Haber (2011), Diepsloot is a post apartheid creation when in 1995 people from Zevenfontein were relocated to the area as a transit camp but it has now developed into an urban settlement. However, most of the population is unemployed and informally employed and given its distance from Johannesburg those employed spend half of their salaries on transport costs. Owing to its establishment roots, it is a mixture of formality and informality and as such is pervaded by high levels of crime, violence, murder and xenophobia due to a large number of undocumented migrants (ibid). The housing structures are a mix of both brick structures (mainly RDP houses) and shacks with tarred roads. Given this background and the distance from the city centre, it is an ideal setting for the survival and development of cooperatives and informal economy activities because the residents hail from other informal settlements and were likely not engaged in formal employment. As a stronghold of the ANC, it should also be a beneficiary of the Cooperative Development Policy of 2004 and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 through the implementation of collusion as noted by (Medina, 2000).

4.4. Research Tools

4. 4. 1 In-Depth Interviews

These are question and answer sessions with participants on a one to one basis using their natural settings as this will increase the confidence of the respondents to answer the questions asked (Wengraf 2001). They rely on a flexible approach (Neuman 1997) and open ended questions as opposed to close ended questions. Open ended questions have the advantage of not limiting responses made by respondents because they are not rigid while probes clarify on matters that are not clear (Weiss 1994). They also enrich the data quality due to the researcher-participant interaction and create room for the capture of subjectivities through careful pacing and sequencing (Wengraf 2001). The researcher was knowledgeable with the discourse for relevance of questions that were asked to the co-operative members, informal reclaimers, officials from the municipality, unions and other concerned parties.

The research was conducted between February and December 2014 with a preliminary visit and interview in July before the commencement of the actual fieldwork. The interviews were conducted in Diepsloot at the buy back centre run by Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited while the interviews with other key informants were done in Johannesburg. A total of sixteen interviews were conducted, five with members of Bottle-Ke-Tlhago (cooperative reclaimers), and eight with informal reclaimers as the main category. Other key informants included an official each from SAMWU, CoJ's Department of Environment and one from Pikitup. Other key informants were difficult to come by as they were either busy or unavailable. There was gender balance overall as there were nine males and seven females interviewed in total and in terms of the age of the reclaimers, it ranged from 30 to above 50 years.

4. 4. 2 Profiles of Respondents

Neuman (2000) identifies probability and non probability sampling which are differentiated on the basis of representativeness and illumination of social reality of the samples respectively. For qualitative research, non probability sampling is more suitable because it seeks not representativeness but concrete data about certain phenomena under study which will be enhanced by context. Snowball sampling and purposive sampling were used in the research.

The people who have relevant data will refer the researcher to those they know to be knowledgeable about the subject and the sample grows just in the same manner a snowball grows through rolling. The respondents who could furnish the researcher with the required information pertaining to the issue of social protection and job security among the waste pickers were sought.

The initial point of entry was Melanie Samson after reference from the project supervisor, who then referred me to Pikitup, from there to Johannesburg Reclaimers leading to Bottle-ke-Tlhago Co-operative. The Johannesburg Reclaimers also promised references to other people so the sample grew big with a case and key informants.

Purposive sampling requires search for certain cases with a particular purpose in mind used in exploratory research or field research Neuman (2000). It is used for those people who are difficult to reach and the researcher looks for locations (landfills, dump sites, streets, recycling companies, buy back centres etc.), experts (waste pickers) and associates (unions, NGOs, companies etc.) in order to have a sample. This facilitated the chance to vouchsafe if the challenges confronting the waste pickers are being addressed from all perspectives. The location was Diepsloot, experts were the waste pickers and officials from companies and council, which made the purpose of finding the difficulties faced met from a multi dimensional approach.

4. 4. 3 Document Analysis

Extensive reading of various documents was useful in illuminating on the progress with regards to the advancement of waste picker's rights in the MWMS as they are a functional constituency which reduces the threat of waste to human health and the environment. Documents with a historical character were used to enable the evaluation of the present status as far as waste picker rights are concerned. Policy issues especially the current policy stance was useful in assessing how the waste pickers and relevant authorities are responding to the policy dictates. Newspapers also provided updates on the recycling economy in terms of progress through the provision of the latest news be it on challenges, progress or conflict. This was also part of observation the researcherused in the process of field work.

4. 4. 4 Participant Observation

It is a research method used in the exploration of the nature of particular social phenomena when the researcher's role is defined in the study (Artkinson and Hammersley, 1994). The researcher can either make overt observation by making his/her intentions known to the study population or covert observations, which is the opposite. The researcher used overt observation as the purpose of the study was clearly made to the respondents for both oral interviews and participant observations.

Preliminarily, the researcher paid a visit to Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative following the meeting at Traduna House in Johannesburg where Johannesburg Reclaimers hold their meetings. At the buyback centre, introductions were made between the board members and employees and my intentions were made known to all members. The members took me around the site which has two offices, an open shed, receiving area for waste which is open and bare, sorting sections for the different waste categories, scaling area, baling area, storage area for baled materials which can also be the dispatching area. As the structure of the organisations shows there is a clear division of labour within the cooperative and people are found in these departments doing what they know best.

On a typical working day all cooperative members come to work to do their work in their respective departments while the scale operator and paymaster also rotated awaiting the arrival of waste from reclaimers both big and small customers. Reclaimers brought the materials; they got weighed, inspected to check if the materials are not mixed with other materials or stones, sand, water etc. Afterwards, they would be given a handwritten receipt to go and claim payment from the paymaster at the office. Mondays and Wednesdays are big days for reclaimers coming in with materials, Tuesdays and Thursdays for separation at source programme materials, Fridays reserved for delivery of the baled materials mainly to Nampak although they would switch to higher paying companies in some instances. However there are daily comers to the centre who bring few materials daily living from hand to mouth though a substantial number comes either weekly or fortnightly with bulk orders among them Ace of Waste. It is a company which collects waste from plots, households and malls with a strong trading partnership with the coop.

Generally speaking, reclaimers are shabbily dressed, dirty; have an aloof character identified through these traits and the pushing of a wheel barrow, trolley with recyclables or carrying big bags. When at the buy back centre, differentiation between them and cooperative members is much easier when it comes to protective clothing and smartness. The process is routinised but from the observation made, cordial relations exist between the reclaimers and the buy back centre despite the stark differences evident between them pointing to a lack of social protection and job security.

4. 5 Data Collection

Interviews were the medium of data collection with the aid of an interview guide while the questions were not predetermined but developed as the research unfolded. The questions were made simple to avoid incomprehensibility based on Greenstein's (2004) advice that it is better to under estimate respondents' ability to answer than to overestimate. Tape recording with a digital

device was necessary to capture all the utterances that were made use of after transcription in juxtaposition with field notes.

4. 6 Data Analysis

Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyse the data and can be defined as a theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data through searching for themes or patterns in relation to different epistemological and ontological assumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is also seen as foundational to other qualitative analysis forms which share in common "thematising meanings" such as grounded theory. While there has been this criticism of its lack of independence as a specific method but seen as a tool (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan and Bernard, 2000), the view held by (Braun and Clarke, 2006:5) calls for its consideration as "a method in its own right", The common use of thematic analysis arises from the fact that it provides rich and detailed accounts of data. After data collection, all the data collected are called data corpus divided into data sets for a particular analysis such as interviews with a category or particular topic as well as data items like individual interviews. From these categories within the data corpus will emerge the data extracts consisting of coded chunks of data identified, analysed and reported as themes/patterns within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The method searches for experiences, meanings and the reality of participants and their effects on discourses operating within society. The data set is organised and described in detail including the interpretation of various aspects of the research topic (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theme is defined as something in the data related to the research question with a patterned response within the data set based on prevalence and linkage to the research question. Analysis of the themes can be through thick descriptions, nuanced account of one theme or a group of themes either through the inductive or deductive approach. The inductive approach is a bottom-up method of analysis which generates data driven analysis where as the deductive approach is top-down and produces theory driven analysis punctuated by the researchers preconceptions. The former method is preferable due to its illumination of social reality due to its ability to produce rich data and voice to the participants. Two levels of analysis can be used - either the semantic level which looks at the surface or the latent level which goes deeper. At the first level, there is a description of what the participants said and the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications in relation to previous literature (Patton, 1990). The second level which goes beyond through identification of underlying ideas and assumptions theorised in shaping the semantic content. Latent

level is a better approach due to its interpretive and theorised elements.

In order to do thematic analysis, six phases have to be undertaken with the data corpus which are familiarisation with the data, code generation, searching for themes, reviewing themes, naming themes and write up. Rigour is very integral in the use of theory and method in the analysis process (Reicher and Taylor, 2005).

The first step looks at repeated patterns, what was done or why by way of coding patterns of meaning either through the deductive or inductive approach depending on the research topic. Given a choice, the literature should be engaged at a later stage to capture the story of the participants. Coding involves taking features of data seen as "the most basic segment, or element of the main data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998:63). They are narrow in comparison to themes requiring not only related but divergent themes as well. The third step is a matter of sorting into themes the related codes and the production of an overarching theme with possibility of forming sub-themes and miscellaneous themes for discordant codes. The reviewing stage has two levels at coded extract level and entire data set level. At the first stage you match the candidate theme with extracts in relation to coherence subject to reworking and creation of new themes. At the second level the review is linked to the entire data set for theme validity, meaning/essence and coding of any additional data that might have been missed. The naming phase is further refinement and definition of themes presented for analysis within the data. Data, research questions and overall research topic should correlate while the topics should be concise and suggestive to the reader what this theme is all about. The final stage of write up should convince the reader, coherent with ample evidence both extracts and theoretical in answering the research question. It is an overall story of different themes in relation to the topic.

Although the thematic analysis method works well in the analysis of qualitative data, it has its own shortfalls amidst its advantages.

Advantages

Flexibility due to broadness of theories, it can expand the range of study beyond the individual, interpretation of themes is supported by data, it allows categories to emerge from data.

Disadvantages

No clear rules, no clear boundary, may miss nuanced data, poor analysis may arise due inappropriate research questions, limited interpretive power if not used within theoretical framework, no claims on language use, it meshes together verification and discovery of themes.

4. 7 Limitations

For the respondents who could not converse in English, the problem of language barriers was faced but it was rectified easily through the translation services of the cooperative members from vernacular to English. Certain questions proved particularly difficult for respondents, for example the questions on incineration and landfill gas for energy production from waste to ascertain how they perceived the projects as a threat to their job security was beyond their comprehensibility except for a few cooperative members who exhibited a great deal of insight and knowledge. This failure convinced the researcher that education is also a prerequisite when it comes to reclaiming and recycling although the uneducated populate the sector on the production floor. The importance of education comes in when awareness about one's work, its contribution, context, disadvantages, threats, benefits etc. come into consideration.

4. 8 Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee which issued out a clearance certificate with the protocol number H14/08/24 as a green light to proceed with the research after being satisfied with the ethical considerations of the proposal. Permission was sought from one of the executive members of the co-operative at a Johannesburg Reclaimers Committee meeting to conduct research in their cooperative in Diepsloot. Prior to conducting the research, the participant information sheet was explained to each respondent who all complied through answering all questions while consent was shown by way of signing the consent form. Anonymity and confidentiality of the information collected for in depth interviews was promised and has been honoured by not using their actual names where they are cited in the research report.

CHAPTER FIVE - PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings as well as their discussion based on the main research question which sought to discover what waste pickers are doing to address the work related challenges they face. Broadly speaking, this was based on an understanding of 'the decent work deficit' and narrowed down to testing whether they enjoyed social protection and job security. Thematic content analysis was used in the analysis process in the search for patterns or themes recurring among the respondent responses. Overall, the analysis is divided into three sections comprising the experiences of informal reclaimers, cooperative reclaimers and other key informants. The themes that emerged shall be analysed according to each data set in relation to the topic and research questions.

SECTION ONE: INFORMAL RECLAIMERS

The difference between the informal reclaimers and the cooperative members is with regard to their job descriptions and working conditions which made their responses differ in certain circumstances. Informal reclaimers are found on 'the production floor' of recycling where they scavenge for recyclable materials from bins, dump sites, streets, malls, households etc. whereas their counterparts found in landfills operate from there. A distinguishing feature is that the latter are self employed but cooperative reclaimers are employed by the cooperative. Samson (2008) notes that the landfill site reclaimers have formed cooperatives in some areas, but street reclaimers in Diepsloot have not yet reached that stage. The thrust of the research hinged on what the waste pickers are doing to address the challenges they confront as a result of their lack of social protection and job security. Thus the questions asked are linked to their challenges in the neoliberal capitalist framework, what workers and other players are doing to address the problems and the experience of the waste pickers as well as those in the informal economy at large.

5. 1. 1 Becoming a Reclaimer

A. Unemployment

A majority of the reclaimers cited unemployment as the motivating reason for taking up reclaiming as a job as shown by the following, "The reason I did this kind of job is the scarcity of jobs since unemployment is high so I took up this in order to earn a living." (Respondent 7 10/09/14). Another reclaimer also said, "Before I was working somewhere and the job finished so I could not stay at home doing nothing then I became a reclaimer." (Respondent 5 26/08/14). Previous studies (Samson, 2009, Dias, 2013) have also identified unemployment as the reason for taking up reclaiming or waste picking. From another angle, the rise of the informal sector is due to the displacement of employed people from the core as they are pushed to the periphery (Webster, 2005; Theron, 2003) and among the numerous informal economic activities is reclaiming.

B. Poverty

One male respondent interviewed gave this response, "Because there are no jobs but I need to buy some food and everything you see so I can't stand." (Respondent 9 10/09/14). Although this is the only response that directly mentioned poverty, generally speaking, reclaimers constitute part of the urban poor. According to Bieler et al (2008), the effects of neoliberal policies on the labouring poor are poverty, inequality and unemployment manifested through urban slumification. If this is applied to the Diepsloot setting, there is a practical touch of theory and reality because the poor live in shacks in comparison to the better off who reside in brick structures. Working in the informal economy therefore becomes a way of alleviating poverty but this is insufficient given the great curtailment of the welfare state in the face of neoliberal policies. This poverty is not only a sign of the failure of neoliberalism but the lack of meaningful engagement by the state to provide both decent working conditions and social protection. The research further confirms the lack of decent work and social protection both in the household and the work sphere.

C. Environmental Education

There was one response to this question but it was worth capturing as an important sub theme because some might have overlooked its importance as a worthy reason. This is what the respondent said, "Actually I worked as a construction worker, after I see that we were suffering I decided to leave and find my own home and two years later they hired us to come and work here.

They explained to people what they wanted in return" (Respondent 13 17/09/14). The importance of environmental education is taken as an important motivating factor in taking up reclaiming as a job as prior to that levels of unemployment were higher. Due to knowledge of the environment, people are now active in the informal economy as they pick recyclable materials for resale to the buy back centre. Buyisa iBag played an important role in this regard as it provided training to unemployed youth countrywide along with CoJ's Department of Environment which provided support to the programme. After consolidation of the knowledge, Pikitup chipped in to run the programme for the benefit of the empowered communities. However, the shortcoming only arises when it comes to working conditions that are hazardous especially when they work without protective clothing, by passed by labour laws and do not have assured job security as well as formal recognition of their work (Samson, 2008). With this knowledge on the immense contribution they make towards environmental sustainability, they are being mistreated by the municipalities which should actually reward them, formalise them and recognise them as partners in waste management (Dias, 2013).

5. 1. 2 Challenges

Numerous challenges that affect the reclaimers surfaced during the data collecting process some common between the two categories, some peculiar to each respective sub group.

A. Work Related Challenges

There are numerous work related challenges that informal street reclaimers confront such as overcrowding as exemplified by what one of the female respondents when she noted that, "--- there are also a lot of people who collect in one place." (Respondent 5 26/08/14). There is the problem of too many people who scrounge for recyclable materials at the dump sites, in streets, in bins etc. although they said that there is no fighting. It is also an indicator that jobs are hard to come by as the number of people turning to this kind of work continuously rises in Diepsloot, reflecting a trend observed also in literature related to the global experience (e.g. Marazzi 2011). In this regard, job security is under threat because once the materials become scarce, the means of livelihood will be compromised and people will have nothing to do thereby reducing the number of people who will be active in the labour market. The problem can only be solved if consumption increases but this is subject to high demand itself a dependant variable of high income and decent jobs. In the foreseeable future then, prospects for continued employment remain dim. At least in the foreseeable future, the overcrowding is not going to vanish unless jobs are created in economy.

Exposure to hazardous and toxic materials is also a very grave challenge which causes

injury and disease. As one reclaimer said, “Sometimes I experience problems as you see I have been cut by a bottle so there is need for protective clothing” (Respondent 6 26/08/14) (the researcher actually saw the cut and healed wounds). Other studies on landfill reclaimers have also revealed that reclaimers are exposed to risk in the process of salvaging waste (Samson, 2005; Medina, 2007).

From a labour point of view, they have unfixed working hours and income which is attributable to self employment and informality hence they work on their own time and make a living compared to those who earn a living. Lack of an employer and a workplace also contribute to this lack of gazetted time and unpredictable incomes. Several studies have revealed that informal workers are not covered by labour laws, they do not have an employer, they do not have wage transactions, lack representational rights and can be best described as precarious due to failed occupationality (Horn, 2002 in Webster, 2005, Philip, 2003 in Webster, 2005, Standing, 1997, 2011). This evidence points therefore to a decent work deficit for the informal reclaimers who fail to have voice due to failure by legislation to recognise them. While those in regular employment “earn a living”, the reclaimers “make a living” (Webster, 2005). Here is what some of them had to say pertaining to their working time and incomes; “I start at eight in the morning and knock off at five in the evening every day.” (Respondent 6 26/08/14), “It can be two hours not for the whole day.” (Respondent 11 10/09/14). There is also a variation in the time slots they work depending on their timing as this reclaimer said, “I used to working in the evening and in the morning, during the day I am resting, the municipality has come to collect so I just sit around.” (Respondent 13 17/09/14). On average, their working time ranges from two to nine hours a day showing the atypical nature of their employment and its alienation from ILO standards.

For income they gave these remarks; “They take the kgs and pay. Sometimes it depends R30, R40, R20 something a day, just more than R10.” (Respondent 13 17/09/14) while another said, “Roughly R30 to R50 a day, about a week I cannot say.” (Respondent 11 10/09/14).

Generally, the effort put by an informal reclaimer and the amount of waste collected determine the income not forgetting the frequency to the buy back centre. Those who come on a daily basis can get above R10 to R60 which adds up to less than R500 per month, some earn between R200 to R300 per fortnight, some R150 to R400 per week. The highest figure mentioned was above R2000 per month so on average they earn between R400 and R2000 plus a month. The problem is that they do not get it as a lump sum therefore it is not felt due to its disposability. On average it means they live below the minimum wage and poverty datum line. This shows that the informal economy is largely marginalised and perceived to be structurally differentiated from the formal economy.

B. Equipment Related Challenges

A majority of the reclaimers lamented the lack of overalls, gloves and boots collectively known as Personal or Proper Protective Clothing (PPC) and this was evidenced by rough hands, scars and wounds due to exposure to hazards such as bottles and other dangerous substances. To prove the extent of this problem this is what they were saying; “Sometimes I experience problems as you see I have been cut by a bottle so there is need for protective clothing” (Respondent 6 26/08/14) (the researcher actually saw the cut and healed wounds). Another male reclaimer echoed the same sentiments when he said, “We look dirty no proper protective clothing is the problem that mostly affects us, we don't have overalls, no boots, some wake very early in the morning no gloves.” (Respondent 10 10/09/14).

This challenge is due to the fact that these people are not employed hence they have nowhere to effectively lodge their complaints. They also lack representation irrespective of the social, economic and environmental contributions of their work acknowledged by the municipalities (Medina, 2007; Schoeman and Sentime, 2011). Lack of organisation and representation by traditional unions militates against the realisation of their wishes. Had it been that they had a cooperative, at least the level of representation would be enhanced but thanks to Bottle-Ke-Tlhago and Johannesburg Reclaimers, plans are now under way to provide these necessities which will go a long way in improving their working conditions as part of social protection and job security.

Without trolleys and containers for putting their recovered materials into, it is difficult for reclaimers to increase their income due to few materials collected. Some used the word transport to mean trolleys; for some it meant actual trucks to carry their goods (though I questioned where they will be during the collection). The Pikitup trucks collect waste for reclaimers on Mondays and Wednesdays so they have to be ready on these days for them to enjoy the benefit of free transport making their complaints unjustified. It was also disturbing for reclaimers that the cooperative sells bags to them making them unaffordable to most of them who end up working with insufficient working materials. Given the little money they get, they prioritise food to bags yet both are vital. They said; “I need another something for picking me up transport, wheel barrow or trolley---.” (Respondent 9 10/09/14). Another young man responded this way,

> We want bigger metal dustbins but we cannot get them because they don't have enough material to give to us. We also need bigger bags for bottles but they sell them for R30 but when we come here to sell, the money we get is very little. You cannot have a bag without food; you first need food before you buy a bag. Respondent 10 10/09/14).

Currently the Pikitup trucks specifically carry reclaimer materials on Mondays and Wednesdays from what the researcher gathered and on Tuesdays and Thursdays they collect material under the separation at source programme. Therefore those who complain about the lack of transport might not have gathered enough material on the designated days because there is nothing to complain about in this regard. Trolleys appear to be a big problem and the bags and bins mentioned because once provided, they will increase productivity, engender mutual trust between the buy back centre and the reclaimers in line with decent work promotion. Johannesburg Reclaimers is trying the best it can by engaging both the private and public sectors to provide the needed materials. On the other hand reclaimers complain through the centre on all matters of importance or that need attention.. Provision of these materials or equipment to the reclaimers will be part of answering the challenges of job security and social protection.

C. Organisational Challenges

The major issues surrounding this sub theme include lack of unity among the informal street reclaimers, lack of information, individualism, aloofness by government and lack of communication, from what the reclaimers said. The following statements prove the existence of these challenges:

> For the past three weeks we have been discussing but we are only three. We are busy discussing about how we can develop ourselves in the industry. You know in life we might have the opportunity to upgrade ourselves, maybe we can add something on this particular job. (Respondent 10 10/09/14).

> Mostly organised people to me they are my friends doing the same job with me, no special value about us to organise, us just people go to other side the other to the other side and so so. Maybe some friends work together as friends but mostly people work for himself. (Respondent 11 10/09/14).

> They do not know each other ... but they only meet when collecting recyclable materials. There is no communication with each other and at the moment there is no cooperative of reclaimers in Diepsloot but they are just individuals. (Respondent 5 26/08/14). (This interview was conducted through translation.)

These problems can also be further explained by the fact that the informal economy is characterised by heterogeneity whereby unifying for the same purpose can become problematic (Bieler et al, 2008). Banding together becomes difficult for most of the informal street reclaimers who live in different areas and are concerned about income rather than collective organisation. Possibly, the only way they can overcome the organisational challenges requires an awareness campaign just the same way environmental education was spread. This is seen as the initial stage of resource mobilisation in the build up of a social movement with human resources or people's support as the most basic before money and other facilities because legitimacy is drawn from the people (Zald and McCarthy, 1987).Once the people become conscious, it will then be possible for them to forge unity among themselves. However, the most likely weakness the reclaimers may feel could be the absence of an employer and fear to confront the state on their own due to their location outside the standard employment relationship, as literature confirms (Theron, 2003, Gallin, 2001). Another way this problem can be overcome is through government intervention. Although government is encouraging the formation of cooperatives, it seems not to be doing enough to unite street reclaimers.

D. Space Related Challenges

Some of the reclaimers complained about lack of space for storage of their materials as well as limited space for the movement of their trolleys as some of the streets are narrow. This is a big problem affecting those who want to bring bulk orders to the centre because sometimes the materials are stolen. One said, “I complain because there is no space.” (Respondent 9 10/09/14). It is the onus of the municipality therefore to ensure that storage and sorting space is created for use by the reclaimers because it is their efforts which are prolonging landfill life. At least this will increase their take home since selling in bulk increases the cash levels. Again if this is provided, it will be a form of security due to recognition of their work hence their functionality within MSWM. As long as they are not accorded space for sorting and reclaiming, it will be an indication that they are just treated as informal reclaimers by municipalities and never as equal partners (Schoeman and Sentime, 2011). Narrow streets point to disaggregate urban expansion which is manifested through slumification where the streets are not standard and planned (Achankeng, 2003). Informality is therefore seen to exist at both household and work levels with a double punctuation of lack of decent work and living conditions.

E. Social Challenges

Informal reclaimers are also confronted with social problems such as stigma, harassment and suspicion as common challenges. An outstanding problem discovered was passive smoking for those who collect from taverns. Two respondents were bold enough to say that they are laughed at by others but quickly went on to say that they do not mind because they know what they are doing. These are the statements they gave: "One of the challenges is that people make jokes, they laugh at us but we ignore because we know what what we are doing." (Respondent 7 10/09/14) and the other one said, "People when they look at us they call us hobos but we don't mind because we know what we are doing."(Respondent1010/09/14). For others who are unemployed and engage in crime, it might be this fear of being stigmatised which forces them into illegality when they could be reclaiming to earn a living. Asiye e Tafuleni has done a lot on this aspect through holding meetings so as to transform reclaimers and societal perceptions about the economic, social and environmental viability of waste picking (Urban Earth, 2012). Buyisa iBag is also worth mentioning although now defunct for carrying the training and environmental awareness campaigns for the youth around the country, the fruits of the effort being seen through the thriving buy back centres that have created employment for both the youth and the communities within which they operate. However, despite these worthy efforts to make the job appreciated and considered as a green job, the stereotype of society has not much changed especially municipal officials who do not want to extend contracts to reclaimer cooperatives operating at the landfills as in most cases BEE companies are given priority at their expense (Samson, 2008, Scheoman and Sentime, 2011). For the other group of reclaimers, the case is a bit different in that buy back centres are considered as important players in the management of waste stream by the municipality and they are also trying their level best to improve the working conditions of their informal counterparts through registration meant to formalise their work as official reclaimers of the city.

Passive smoking was cited by one woman who collects cans and bottles from taverns but this appears to be difficult to solve for her purposes unless it is launched through the health ministry under its anti smoking campaign. Given the fact that she will simply be collecting "what others have cast aside as waste" (Samson, 2009), her voice will be very insignificant. Other waste pickers operating in the landfills and on streets and other public spaces may not be citing this health threat which makes representation a bit difficult unless it is common across the board. If it becomes a problem launched under civil society campaigns, the possibility that the problem will be solved amicably is very high not only for her but for other passive smokers who patronise these public places.

Harassment is a common problem among landfill reclaimers who do not have good working relations with municipal authorities as cited by (Samson, 2008; Schoeman and Sentime, 2011) though this is not a problem for street reclaimers in Diepsloot. Suspicion often exists for street reclaimers when they go to households for the collection of waste where people withhold their waste as they are not sure if the collectors are genuine. Due to this reason, efforts to register and train reclaimers are being worked towards. Overall, these social problems discourage some but the derogatory sentiments passed connote the lack of decent work. Unless the job is regulated with the provision of PPE and other benefits, stigma will remain.

F. Marketing Challenges

The structuralist school of the informal economy which sees the informal sector as exploited by formal enterprises despite close linkages best explains the marketing challenges that informal reclaimers face especially with regard to low prices. Another problem that is usually cited by landfill reclaimers is the problem of middlemen (Samson, 2008) but the street reclaimers did not cite it. However, they complained about low prices. The buy back centre is also part of the middlemen but maybe free transport services might be an advantage to them to not complain about the exploitation too much. One female reclaimer voiced the following sentiment; "I am working alright but the money is not alright, I cannot survive on that." (Respondent 5 26/08/14). Full of anger another reclaimer said,

> ... we work very hard but what we got is very little, you just buy bread for that day, the next day you crazy again. You just live for a day, this job we are doing is a job for a day less than R50. (Respondent 10 10/09/14)

Sentiments like this point to disillusionment with the industry not only in monetary terms but also on issues like PPE, trolleys and general good relations between reclaimers and the centre. Proof that the informal economy is based on employment relationships that are not legally protected, without formal contracts, workers benefits or social protection as well as lacking adherence to minimum wage regulations thus finds solace (Hart, 1973, Chen, 2004). These findings confirm previous research on informal reclaimers suggesting that there has been very little improvement in terms of their working conditions.

5. 1. 3 Assistance

This was divided into government and private sector assistance discussed under positive and negative headings. An overall observation discovered the prevalence of government assistance in comparison with private sector assistance for informal reclaimers in Diepsloot.

A. Positive Government Assistance

In line with the role of the government as the employer of last resort, the South African government has promoted the creation of the ministry of Small to Medium and Micro Enterprises that funds investment by indigenous/black investors operating at a micro level. Another measure that has been taken is the Cooperative Act of 2005 whose objective is to enhance economic participation through allowing the formation of cooperatives that register with the DTI and seek for financial assistance from the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), LED and ENP. The Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) which formed part of the NGP's employment creation drive is a very clear example of ELR which has seen job creation in the green economy at so many levels. Notable areas of creation are the buy back centres which created employment for the youth, the surrounding communities who bring the material to the centres and current street cleaning jobs offered to the unemployed in other sectors such as earth moving, construction etc. (NGP, 2010). Buyisa iBag has been instrumental in the establishment of the buy back centres through environmental education while the efforts of Pikitup for coming up with the separation at source programme and the provision of free transportation of materials to the buy back centre is very important.

On top of these programmes, through the Department of Environment under City of Johannesburg, efforts to train, register and provide PPE have been put under way for street reclaimers. Some of the respondents aired these views:

What I heard is that at Extension 2 there was the Department of Environment that promised to help us but unfortunately I was not part of the group because I was doing my job. (Respondent 7 10/09/14).

> We tried to communicate with the Buy Back Centre and we discussed the matter in Joburg, we met Bhezi Xhaza so we are waiting to see what is going to happen in the near future. He said he is going to provide us with these things but we don't know when. We actually saw other people putting on those overalls and this inspired us that things are coming but we don't know when. (Respondent 10 10/09/14).

These are notable programmes which if implemented prove the government's commitment to extend decent work to the informal reclaimers and their empowerment. If the programme succeeds, the process of integration of the first and second economy will be realised not because the two are physically distinct but because they are structurally demarcated (Mbeki, 2003). Time will tell if the programme has succeeded though studies on the landfill site reclaimers show that they still operate in their challenges without redress mainly due to unwilling state officials (Medina, 2007, Schoeman and Sentime, 2011).

B. Negative Government Assistance

Much of the literature on reclaiming and the recycling economy points to lack of government input as the reasons behind the failure of formalised operations for informal reclaimers within MSWM (Samson, 2004, 2008; Medina, 2000). Regardless of the effect of neoliberal policies on the economy at large, if the state was committed to integrate the informal into the formal, it would do so without problems. According to Webster (2005), it is the lack of access to financial resources and information that disadvantages the informal sector workers not necessarily that they belong to a separate economy. Based on the limited state input, some reclaimers were bold enough to say the negative as some of these statements show:

> I think government cause the problem because government can promise this at a later stage this thing is no longer there they say go there and you go there, they say go there. The companies, I don't see problems with them. (Respondent 10 10/09/14).

> Government has not helped so much in the job that we are doing. We are just people who stayed in private doing for ourselves just seen as people for us doing for ourselves. (Respondent 11 10/09/14).

On a different note the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) though noble as an employment creating measure has the problem or weakness of limited or lack of permanence. People can work at the construction stage but when it comes to operation and maintenance the number decreases. For street cleaners, as soon as the budget is exhausted, the jobs come to an end which still leaves the problem of unemployment unresolved.

In as much as the state has gone against the tide of neoliberal policies by extending its arm to the informal sector through cooperative formation, assistance and the creation of buy back centres, the gesture is still inaccessible to the poorest who fail to be uplifted from their marginality

and invisibility not only financially but in terms of achieving decent work. However in an overall analysis, the neoliberal tenets are more pronounced considering the fact that workers in waste management sector are not given due notice in terms of their income and working conditions. In other words more poor friendly institutions and measures and general change of attitude especially by the municipal officials will go a long way in reducing the decent work deficit for the informal sector at large and for waste pickers specifically.

C. Private Sector Assistance

The private sector also has a significant input in the recycling economy in the provision of capital and working materials though on the improvement of working materials front it is still lacking. An observation made is that the private sector is more interested in business oriented assistance rather than decent work related assistance based on the profit rationale.

D. Positive Private Sector Assistance

The most notable input made was by Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC) in Diepsloot through the donation of R183 000 initial capital to kick start the buy back centre operations including construction of the building that is used by the centre. Although this was not directly directed to the informal reclaimers, it was a way of letting them come to it and an encouragement of doing recycling. Petco recycling company has also donated trolleys to inner city reclaimers to assist them in carrying their material which is noble in terms of addressing some of the challenges they face with working materials. Other than that, very little is known about what the private sector has done for reclaimers regardless of the linkage that exists between large recycling companies and informal reclaimers.

5. 1. 4 Future Prospects

Most respondents were optimistic about the future security of their job and social protection although they gave various reasons for their convictions ranging from provision of protective clothing, availability of recyclables, the ability to buy basics currently and the lack of alternative employment. A few were pessimistic and some were non committal. Pessimistic accounts gave these views:

> No, I don't see security in the job. There is scarcity of PET which is the most sought after and earns a lot because there are many people looking for it so people look for other things. It is also seasonal especially in winter when few people drink cool drinks. (Respondent 7 10/09/14).

> When I think of going, I am from Limpopo province actually, so when I decided to go it will stop, if I decide to rest for a while it means it can stop. (Respondent 13 17/09/14).

The neutral responses recorded sounded like this:

> It is entirely on us, we will rely on this job but if we are lazy we cannot go anywhere. It depends on how serious we are. (Respondent 8 10/09/14).

> For the future I cannot to say to see further about it I cannot see anything about it, what can change or not change. Just going as long as we are on the way. (Respondent 11 10/09/14).

Those who were optimistic saw unity and courage to confront the government as a panacea to their woes, having no other alternative and belief that the promises on PPE and trolleys will materialise, some saw the availability of materials as a sign of hope but the cooperative saw security as lying in manufacturing. They believe that once they start manufacturing, there will be greater security as they will now operate in the formal sector, increase their turn over, contribute to Unemployment Insurance Fund and other employee benefits which they are not entitled to. The pessimistic respondents were unsure of the future owing to the fact that one can stop and leave at any time without affecting anyone, the scarcity of PET and competition over its collection due to high price and its seasonality. Non committal responses included just the continuity in recycling as enough with or without changes and seriousness as the key to future security and social protection.

Protective clothing then becomes the most notable indicator of social protection for the reclaimer along with trolleys for carrying their materials. Few saw confronting the government and municipality as valuable while one was of the opinion that the government should give them subsidies because they are doing quite a lot in making the township clean. From the buy back centre, the strongest guarantee for job security and social protection lies in manufacturing as this will mean higher salaries and benefits and the ability to compete with other companies. However, as long as the reclaimers are not registered and recognised by the municipality and do not get any benefits for the work they are doing, it is still a long way before they can achieve job security and

social protection. Even the cooperative members as of now do not have benefits like medical aid, pension and they are not contributing to unemployment insurance fund (UIF) supporting the view that there is lack of social protection in the informal economy. Only if the reclaimers stand up and organise among themselves will they realise the important features of labour relations because the cooperative will not speak for them.

It is very difficult to see an optimistic outlook for both the reclaimers and the cooperative members in terms of their future job security. Job security is the assurance of continued employment based on a contract, collective bargaining agreements or labour legislation but this definition is not applicable to informal waste pickers due to the absence of a standard employment relationship (Theron, 2003). The cooperative members at least have a memorandum of understanding signed between them and Pikitup but they are owner workers marking the absence of the standard employment relationship. From this perspective, it shows that there is no guarantee for continued employment worsened by the absence of collective bargaining agreements and inadequate coverage by labour laws. On top of that the scarcity of recyclables due to overcrowding is a symptom of the grave unemployment problem in the country due to insecurity resulting from labour market flexibility, hence there are very little prospects for the guarantee of job security (Standing, 2011). Another reason for pessimism is reduced demand and consumption due to precarious forms of work associated with meagre incomes hence fewer waste especially in the high density suburbs like Diepsloot. Lack of an employer makes the job highly disposable since one can leave at any time while for those operating at the landfills, continuous harassment from the municipality police and reduced waste due to the separation at source programme is becoming a real threat to their future.

Given the absence of protective clothing, pension contributions, medical aid coverage and complete obscurity from the labour laws for informal waste pickers, hopes for the future are dampened because they lack social protection. According to the World Bank social protection buffers against risk, vulnerability and reduces poverty for individuals, communities, nations and regions and the world at large. It is a basic human right under the ILO conventions and United Nations charters. It is also part of the decent work agenda which seeks to "promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity."(ILO, 1993: 3 quoted in van Ginneken, 2003). van Ginneken (2003) sees the need for government and civil society to intervene to extend social security to the informal economy which to (Gallin, 2001) is problematic to unions unless it fundamentally changes its operation. The reclaimers in South Africa find themselves in a difficult position in that they are not being attended to legally while the government is too aloof to their needs regardless of the fact that it is a basic

human right. Cynics who see no positive future in the sector have seen the general disdain with which the government treats them in comparison to other informal sector workers who have gained collective bargaining rights under sectoral determination laws like the service industry for example.

Budlender (2013) has found it possible for the informal sector to establish bargaining forums if the political environment is enabling either through use of existing labour legislation or establishment of new ones though they are not permanent due to their establishment on an ad hoc basis. As of now there has not been a bargaining council for informal reclaimers though through the Buy Back Centre and Pikitup their grievances are being attended to. Whether this will succeed or not depends on attitude change both on part of society and the state in acknowledging the functionality of reclaimers as part of the informal economy and their contribution to cleanliness and environmental sustainability.

SECTION TWO: COOPERATIVE RECLAIMERS

The cooperative reclaimers are differentiated from informal reclaimers by working for the cooperative whereas the latter group is self employed. The cooperative members earn salaries at the end of the month, which is not the case for their counterparts who either get paid daily, weekly or fortnightly. The monthly income for cooperative members could not be obtained but there is a difference between board members and the employees.

Working hours also differ as cooperative members follow the standard nine hour day inclusive of lunch and breaks making it strictly eight hours. Even though they are located in the informal economy, they are compliant with labour requirements which points to some degree of security and social protection. One board member gave the following response:

> Per day we work eight hours from seven to four which is equivalent to forty hours per week. I can say forty five because it includes one hour-forty five minutes lunch and fifteen minutes break. (Respondent 2 21/08/14).

There is a stark difference between them and informal reclaimers who do not have an employer, an employment contract, union membership and a fixed tenure of employment and they operate at their own time. In contrast, the cooperative members belong to the cooperative, and work with Pikitup which is an assurance of permanence of employment unless Pikitup goes broke. As a cooperative, they are able to make negotiations with relevant authorities about issues like working hours, safety and health matters, protective clothing, machinery and equipment as well as financial support because they are registered and recognised by the state. They sometimes advocate for the informal reclaimers who do not have a cooperative of their own in Diepsloot (because most of them prefer to work individually). The deplorable working conditions for informal reclaimers can be attributed to their lack of collective voice in comparison to their fellow industry mates working for the cooperative with protective clothing, gazetted time and monthly assured incomes.

In asking them the same questions as the informal reclaimers, the idea was to find out their perceptions on the issue of challenges because they are both reclaimers differentiated by working environment and collective organisation.

5. 2. 1 Importance of Reclaiming

A. Environmental Education

What emerged from the research is the fact that cooperative members see the importance of reclaiming because they first gained knowledge, then they followed the provisions of the Cooperative Act and all the necessary procedures that should be undertaken to register as a cooperative with the DTI. Had they not been educated and knowledgeable, they could not have been able to convince sponsors and relevant authorities on the pertinence of the environmental cause, therefore education is important from this perspective. One female board member and another male board member gave these remarks:

> At first I did not know about the environment when I came to Joburg until we met a group called Buyisa iBag. It took us around Free State, since then my love for the environment started. My eyes really opened and I began to see what we were living in a dirty environment ... we started the buy back centre from there (Respondent 8 10/09/14).

> Actually from the start as a group of young people we organised together and then we had a trip around Free State where they teach us about the environment a company called Buyisa iBag and then after they assist that in terms of the opportunity about the environment to do recycling and start the project. (Respondent 4 26/08/14)

For the informal reclaimers lack of education and knowledge about the environmental contribution of their labour is affecting the attainment of job security and social protection. The majority are concerned about individualistic gains at the expense of collective organisation. It could be argued that it is this illiteracy that leads to an individualistic approach to their work unless someone shows them that they can fight for a fair deal in terms of improving their conditions of services. However on a different note, the environmental campaign can be seen as selective because the youth underwent comprehensive training but the informal reclaimers were only told the required or marketable materials needed by the buy back centre.

B. Cooperative Formation

The formation of Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited and other cooperatives run buy back centres confirm the importance of recycling from all dimensions. According to Barbalace (2003) recycling and waste minimisation are important as they save land, reduce emissions, save natural resources, create value, employment and money. This cooperative was formed to create employment for both the unemployed youth and for unemployed Diepsloot and surrounding areas. On the environmental front, founding members knew the potential for their work to make a contribution to environmental sustainability, saving of natural resources and most importantly making money. The cooperatives are formed to increase representation and voice for the reclaimers and in the absence of representation by traditional trade unions due to neoliberal policies, they take that role. Taking Bottle-Ke-Tlhago as an example, it has the chance to negotiate with municipality officials and other government departments including the private sector for funding and improved conditions of service. In contrast to the experiences of the unorganised reclaimers discussed in the previous section, they work under the standard employment practices in terms of time, protective clothing and a workplace which landfill and street reclaimers do not enjoy. Landfill reclaimer cooperatives do not have the same entitlement to the same rights as they are not considered by authorities (Samson, 2008). Street reclaimers in Diepsloot do not have their own cooperatives in Diepsloot but their activities and the emergence of Bottle-Ke-Tlhago both confirms the importance of reclaiming and its potential for the achievement of decent work.

C. State Input

The state has played an instrumental role in promoting the recycling sector by engaging Buyisa iBag in the formative stages of buy back centres through environmental training and education. Only after Buyisa iBag became insolvent did PPC and Pikitup come to its rescue with the help of CoJ's Department of Environment and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality in the provision of land for the construction of the buy back centre in Diepsloot. The separation at source programme was then initiated by Pikitup for separating recyclable materials at the source of production. Two separate bags that contain paper, card box and newspapers on the one hand and the other for glass, metals and other materials are provided by Pikitup to households and public places. This makes collection easier for both the reclaimers and the buy back centre to whom Pikitup offers free transport. However, the limitations associated with this programme are that the assistance is only promotive of the business interests of Pikitup and the buy back centre without considering issues like PPE, trolleys, representation, remuneration and formalisation of the reclaimers' activities

(Dias, 2009, groundWork). As it stands, the importance of reclaiming is only seen from one dimension in which the buy back centre is acknowledged and operates in compliance with labour standards, hence providing decent work for those it services, while the most important constituency in the recycling production chain (the unorganised reclaimers) are left unattended or suffer a 'decent work deficit'.

D. Private Sector Input

Pretoria Portland Cement was very instrumental in the realisation of making Bottle-Ke-Tlhago operational as was acknowledged by one female board member: " Because Buyisa iBag no longer had money, PPC provided the structure, machinery and initial capital of R183 000." (Respondent 1 27/07/14). The reason behind the support here might have been for business rather than reclaimer empowerment because the donation was selective. By the time of the research, no private sector company had come to Diepsloot specifically to assist the street reclaimers in improving their working conditions.

5. 2. 2 The Making of a Cooperative Reclaimer

A. Unemployment

Unemployment was cross cutting for both groups of reclaimers as the reason behind taking up the job as the following statements by cooperative members confirm.

> Lack of employment in your country, pollution, we wanted to keep the environment clean and the main objective was to contribute to climate change issues whereby the ozone layer is damaged. (Respondent 2 21/08/14).

> One of the reasons for doing this job is because I am attached to cleanliness and I am attached to the environment. Obviously the second reason will be unemployment, the unemployment rate in Diepsloot is very high hence we ended up taking up this kind of initiative by saying let's go green and let's go environmental. (Respondent 3 26/08/14).

The reasons for doing this are associated with labour market flexibility resulting from the adoption of neoliberal policies that emphasise efficiency through restructuring of the production process

through lay-offs, out sourcing, a limited state, privatisation etc. (Chang, 2002; Bieler et al, 2008; Webster, 2005). Once the restructuring has been embarked upon, the labour market has been severely affected either by casualisation or retrenchments pushing people to the periphery characterised by informality (Theron, 2003). The informal economy where the reclaimers are found is a result of the growth of the "surplus population" which moves to this sector because they have been laid off (Bauman, 1998). Lack of PPE and formalised operations confirms the unregulated nature of the informal economy as a source of income due to low barriers to entry as (Chen, 2004) asserts. Statistics also point to its continued prevalence especially in low income countries where 80% of the working population is found in the informal economy (Gallin, 2001). What is left wanting is the improvement of this sector in terms of regulation and standardised working conditions that are compliant with the ILO decent work agenda.

B. Requirements

Low barrier to entry is a motivating factor for reclaiming but coop members saw education as relevant especially knowledge on the environment. The requirements can be discussed as cooperative or DTI requirements and personal requirements which generally differ with those of the street reclaimers although there were points of similarity. In the view of one of the male board members, these are the requirements:

> From a personal point of view, one of the requirements should be your passion, you should be a person in love with the environment. Secondly, you should be a group of five or more sharing the same sentiments and DTI will help in this regard. Education is very crucial as most households are not aware of global warming discussed at most summits. Thirdly we cannot leave politics aside as you are aware that the government is active. The gender issue is very crucial as it should be well balanced as women are given preference than men. (Respondent 3 26/08/14)

> … they require a business plan, tax clearance certificate, a couple of things ---. (Respondent 8 10/09/14)

> There is a guide from DTI you have a minimum of six members, you also register R5000 for registration, register with SASOL, open a bank account, contribution by members for transport cost. (Respondent 2 21/08/14).

These requirements show a difference between the cooperative reclaimer requirements and the street reclaimers who through interaction with them during field work are not very literate. Some of them could not speak in English which necessitated translation services while those who did did not master it proficiently. Therefore when the differences between their working conditions come to the fore, the importance of education has to be considered. The street reclaimers saw little need for education hence this militates against their organisation due to lack of knowledge and possibly fear to assert their rights but their counterparts enjoy relative job security and social protection due to their possession of education. They went to all the offices necessary for them to come up with a registered cooperative with funding from the state and the private sector. Low barriers to entry in the informal economy reduce the quality of work relations and standards and that is why it is sometimes called "unofficial" or "black market" as (Sindzingire, 2004) shows. This can also be explainable by the dual thesis in which one is formal and regulated and the other unregulated though there comes a point when education becomes necessary to register a cooperative.

5. 2. 3 Concerns

There are several concerns that were raised by the cooperative reclaimers that they encounter among themselves and in their dealings with reclaimers and those they anticipate to be solved by higher authorities.

A. Operational Concerns

They identified access to households, industries and shops as difficult for waste pickers especially at household level where people fear criminals. This problem is more inclined to business than to organisation or decent work as the centre expects to see its tonnage increasing. As a way of improving rapport between the households and the reclaimers, the registration of reclaimers in Diepsloot is ongoing, and intended to give them uniforms and identity cards so that it will be easy for them to have access to households. Training is also meant to address this problem as well as improve the quality of waste that is collected to minimise sorting.

Cheating is a worrying operational challenge as what one board member said, "At times our reclaimers try to rob us by pouring water, stone, sand in the material to make it weigh more." (Respondent 8 10/09/14). This requires double checking before and after scaling. Again this is a business challenge but to me this cheating is an indication that the reclaimers are unhappy about the money they get after selling their materials otherwise they would not do it. Training and double checking are ways of arresting these problems.

Baled materials are heavy to lift manually onto the trucks so acquisition of a fork lift will lessen the problem. It is a financial assistance related difficulty confronted by cooperatives. If acquired the fork lift will reduce the amount of manual labour required to lift baled materials. On the other hand, the use of technology will further displace people from their jobs as they are replaced by machines. In this regard, technology stands as a threat to job security.

It was also discovered that some reclaimers are not educated enough to know the basic safety requirements.

> "Another challenge is the education part of it, people don't know about their safety because while collecting they might be some hazardous stuff and they might be exposed to chemicals, cut by bottles so they need protective clothing." (Respondent 2 21/08/14).

At least this challenge is directed towards the promotion of decent work conditions for the reclaimers because the landfill reclaimers are not given such considerations by municipal officials (Medina , 2007, Schoeman and Sentime, 2011). The provision of training for the reclaimers is part of the journey towards their inclusion and formalisation but the time is not ripe as yet to make a conclusion that this will materialise.

B. Organisational Concerns

In as much as the cooperative members represent the reclaimers, source funding and provide needs analysis the greatest limit to organising the reclaimers is lack of sufficient funding. The organisation element is perceived in the sense of making them bring more materials and the provision of PPE and materials as second placed. Organisation was perceived as making the reclaimers accountable to the cooperative more than improving their working conditions and representation. For example one of the members gave this remark,

> We are trying our level best with the string budget to do that so that we can incentivise them, not only that, give them trolleys, run competitions like reclaimer of the month etc. to motivate them (Respondent 2 21/08/14).

Generally speaking, the informal sector faces the problem of organisational space due to its location in the periphery of the mainstream economy (Webster, 2005). However the existence of the reclaimer cooperatives that run buy back centres and work closely with Pikitup, CoJ and other key

stakeholders in the recycling economy presents a ray of hope for street reclaimers if their concerns are given due consideration. If this succeeds, there will be an integration of the first and the second economy as was advocated for by Mbeki (2003).

C. Internal Concerns

Poor management and technical skills, limited trust and social cohesion, low democratic decision making and limited cooperation and compliance with legislation are the major problems that affect the proper functioning of cooperatives. Simple problems associated with poor time management and other such basic skills were also cited by members as challenges. Amongst members, absenteeism and lack of motivation might also lead to the expulsion of others.

Lack of a shed is a problem that affects job security and social protection for the cooperative members. This is seen to be a challenge as bad weather affects workers' efficiency especially when it is raining, because the cold, heat and the dust all affect their operations.

The lack of a shed affects a safe working environment as dust, the sun and cold affect the workers and their health. When it rains, business is brought to a standstill as operations are completely stalled hence this is an area which needs improving. In sharp contrast to the prevailing working conditions in the streets, dumps, landfills etc., the cooperative reclaimers are actually clamouring for coverage under the Occupational Health and Safety Act which calls for the insurance of safety in the work place which ironically ignores informal reclaimers.

D. Business Concerns

As a buy back centre, the cooperative constitutes middlemen and as such they tend to buy at a lower price than other recycling companies. The reason for paying lower prices which affects their competitiveness is because they do not manufacture but resell the recyclables. Otherwise the only way they can offer higher prices is contingent upon manufacturing the materials into finished products. For example PET is bought at R1, 50 at the centre but elsewhere it goes for R3. Low prices drive away customers, they also discourage would be reclaimers as they find nothing enticing due to the prices. The low prices offered by the centre is the same problem experienced by the reclaimers at the landfills of middlemen who buy in order to sell to recycling companies for a profit. The only difference is that the centre says it is not manufacturing although future plans to manufacture are there.

There are underdeveloped networks and economic value chains as well as limited market access for cooperatives (DTI, 2012). For Bottle-ke-Tlhago, it is a monopsony which buys recyclable materials in and around Diepsloot but it is not strong enough to compete with established giant recycling companies like Honey Dew for example and acts as a middleman since it resells these materials at a higher price to gain profit. This makes the market a contested sphere. One cooperative member highlighted this state of affairs when he said:

> Pricing is a challenge as the prices are very low so nearby companies/recyclers offer higher prices so some go to them as you know we are still a crawling company. (Respondent 3 26/08/14).

This view was echoed by other respondents. The business concerns reflect the challenges that the informal economy faces in competition with formal sector companies but suffers due to limited access to financial resources and information (Webster, 2005). Based on the argument that people in the informal sector failed to find secure employment, seek to evade registration, taxes and minimum wage requirements (Chen, 2004; Hart, 1973), the low prices being offered may not be due to lack of funds but a form of exploitation. In as much as they justify the low prices through the lack of manufacturing, they can be justified but the intentional breach of labour legislation is a cause and not a consequence of informality in most cases where profit is the rationale. The reasons for engaging in informal business may be due to lack of employment in the formal economy but the limited application of labour legislation becomes a motivating factor. More often than not, most informal sector establishments operate in the sector due to this advantage to make profit rather than because they were denied access to the formal sector.

Registration and access to funds are business concerns that affect the cooperative reclaimers and these point to greater difficulties for other informal reclaimers especially if their operations will run parallel to municipal structures. Failure to register means being invisible while lack of funding cripples the operations of the cooperative. Among the issues are limited support from existing enterprise development agencies, low recognition, accessibility of registration, limited access to finance, technology and business structure (DTI, 2012). The need for a business plan, tax clearance certificate and other documents makes the procurement of needed machinery problematic; however one positive benefit is employment creation.

Based on the legalist school of thought, it has been argued that registration constraints lead people into informality as the informal entrepreneurs intentionally seek to evade taxation and minimum wage responsibilities (De Soto 1989). However given this scenario, it becomes difficult

for unregistered reclaimers to make official deals with the municipal authorities like Metro Police and the City of Johannesburg. It seems that making the registration process difficult, long and expensive is a deterrent measure designed to limit the number of cooperatives with the greatest effect felt on street reclaimers who do not possess enough education yet it is a pre requisite if they are to achieve decent work. Poverty also incapacitates them since they cannot afford to contribute their meagre hard earned cash for purposes of collective organisation. In other words, the legalist school of thought can be used to explain the predicament of informal reclaimers as they totally fail to gain visibility and improvement of their working conditions. This is exacerbated by their poverty, lack of education and works to the advantage of the authorities through failure to observe labour legislation.

5. 2. 4 Stakeholder Input

A. Government Input

The government, through the Department of Environment of the CoJ, Pikitup, the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Public Works, has tried to ensure that the concerns raised by the cooperative reclaimers on their own behalf and that of the street reclaimers are addressed. Lack of PPE, lack of space, trolleys and transport, stigma and overcrowding are challenges that relate to the central question as issues of social protection and job security are affected. Without protective clothing, they are exposed to hazardous substances and objects that affect their health yet every job should be assured of safety under the OHSA and COIDA so this points to lack of social protection.

The Department of Environment has been identified as a stakeholder who will conduct training for the street waste pickers in Johannesburg where they would be given a training allowance and the protective clothing afterwards. This training will be conducted under the EPWP at national level with funds provided by the Department of Economic Development. Pikitup and CoJ were also identified in the training programme. This was confirmed in interviews with members of the cooperative.

There is the problem of access to households, businesses, workplaces etc. as people are suspicious of people who come at any time without proper identification given the high precedence of crime. However the problem is being tackled through the training programme as one cooperative member explained that this would bring credibility in the recycling economy after registration and provision of uniforms or PPE. This is meant to legally register them to end the suspicion and

professionalise the job and the training will also include issues of personal health and safety, road signs, hazards and rights. Once this is done, the jobs will be created under the Extended Public Works Programme.

It is envisaged that households will open up as reclaimers are regulated, contributing to job security and the minimisation of stigma and suspicion. The lack of a shed has been on the tables since the inception of the centre. During the field work conducted for this report, it was observed that construction was in progress at the centre and the researcher was informed that the goals included a pavement and a shed where the materials will be sorted. With this already almost done, safe working conditions will be ensured at the workplace for the cooperative, a very different experience from that of unorganised reclaimers who are still largely invisible. The informal street reclaimers' apparel speaks volumes about their working conditions notwithstanding the rough hands which have blackened due to collecting without gloves in comparison to the employees at the centre who have all the required kits. If one visits the centre it is easy to differentiate the informal reclaimers from the coop members who are clad in blue work suits with yellow reflectors, industrial boots and heavy rubber gloves which is in compliance with health and safety requirements under labour law.

B. Buy Back Centre Input

To solve the operational and internal concerns, the buy back centre has not relied on the assistance of other players but devised internal mechanisms to minimise or end them. Pertaining to the cheating problem, the solution is through double checking of materials before payment and weighing. On the low prices, it is only through manufacturing that the centre can afford to pay higher prices.

Punctuality is also a big problem within the cooperative as some members come at their own time and sometimes fail to explain the reasons why they are late. The problem has been solved internally to ensure continuity of employment for the cooperative members as well as to minimise misunderstandings.

The cooperative functions both as an employer and union in dispute settlement and representation of collective interests of its members democratically more than an employer would. It is a worthy development in the current paradigm of precarious work. The advantages that a cooperative carry are that decisions are made democratically; tasks are done communally while the proceeds are shared equitably among the members. When formal employment is increasingly becoming scarce, it becomes mandatory that the people who belong to the cooperative engage in

standardised working conditions promotive of decent work.

5. 2. 5 Importance of Cooperatives

When South Africa attained democracy in 1994, the racial connotations that underpin the function of cooperatives have been maintained antithetically through black economic empowerment (BEE) as a tool for affirmative economic advancement for blacks, not as cooperative empowerment (Satgar and Williams, 2011). Satgar and Williams argue that cooperatives are meant to be egalitarian in nature through participation and sharing of proceeds but the model that has been used in South Africa during apartheid of making them apogees of the mainstream economy has reincarnated through BEE. Today, there is a state-led business oriented approach which has introduced worker ownership; a new form of work and property relations whereby worker cooperatives are a solution in dealing with economic crises, retrenchments and redundant workers (DTI, 2012). The South African state is very active in the cooperatives drive that seeks to empower youth, women, the disabled and the rural folk previously marginalised by the apartheid regime to the end that equal participation in the economy, employment creation and poverty alleviation are being addressed. Evidence to this empowering status is found through the number of cooperatives that have registered which stood at 38 898 by 2010 (DTI, 2012), although they have varying degrees of success due to limited funding and internal problems.

Cooperatives are found in the informal economy, part of which is occupied by waste pickers. Waste pickers have formed cooperatives to increase their incomes, to have a representative voice, to own, produce and distribute (Samson, 2008; Satgar and Williams, 2011). The growing number of cooperatives is due to the absence of the traditional employer-employee work relationship. This suggests that work has shifted into a collective representing a new perception of work through the cooperative. As more people leave formal employment due to restructuring, they resort to pool together their resources to become employer-owners thus transforming work into a collective as opposed to the traditional employer-employee relationship.

5. 2. 5 Importance of Cooperatives

A. The role of the State in Cooperatives

Due to the invaluable contributions that cooperatives make to GDP growth, economic and social transformation, the state plays a very crucial role in their formation, funding, regulation and sustenance (DTI, 2012). In South Africa, the state has been ever instrumental in promoting

cooperatives for human capital development, business management and technical skills development formerly under the Department of Agriculture to promote white agricultural cooperatives during the apartheid period. In December 2001, cooperative affairs were placed under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The idea was to cater for a plethora of other cooperatives in manufacturing, construction, transport, housing, services, information and technology, etc. under a specialised department. To further ensure the realisation of the development of cooperatives, the ILO Recommendation No. 193 on Cooperatives was signed while the Growth and Development Summit in 2003 resolved to create a fully fledged cooperatives unit within DTI before the launching of the Cooperative Development Agency between 2004 and 2006 (DTI, 2012).

The Cooperatives Act No. 14 of 2005 was amended in 2013 at almost the same time with the Cooperative Development Policy of 2004. The Act wants to use cooperatives as effective and dynamic business organisations that can empower communities and uplift their social and economic well being. The South African government has tried to emulate the global model of cooperatives as drivers for economic growth, for example the top 300 cooperatives net over $US 1 trillion, German and French cooperatives create 440 000 and 700 000 jobs respectively, and Kenya's 45% of the GDP is contributed by cooperatives and 31% of gross national savings. The structure of operation starts with the municipal and district level for Cooperative Implementation Plans which are integrated into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Local Economic Development (LED) as well as the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) and the Cooperative Tribunal (CT) (DTI, 2012). The provincial level deals with cooperative strategies with support programmes aligned with the National Cooperative Strategy (NCS), CDA, CT and the national departments formulate sector based legislation in line with the NCS. Cooperatives also work with the cooperative movement, apex council, CBOs, NGOs, International Organisations, financial institutions for the development and growth, training and education, advocacy, international expertise and funding of tailor made development projects (DTI, 2012).

The DTI seeks to promote non financial support services to cooperatives, create cooperatives for products and services, sustainability improvement and financial support, availability of information, research and communication outreach. The Cooperative Business Development Support Programmes (CBDSP) is responsible for this task under CDA. Bilateral and multilateral agreements will be made use of through the Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) for access to export market, primary market research and Foreign Direct Investment under DTI (DTI 2012). The Enterprise Network Programme (ENP), Business Infrastructure Support (BIS), Enterprise Network Programmes (ENP) will ensure the promotion of investment monitored by provinces while favourable taxation of cooperatives is made favourable

under the National Treasury, DTI and South African Revenue Services (SARS). Micro finance loans are provided by Small Enterprises Finance Agency (SEFA) to CDA, Cooperatives Incentives Scheme (CIS) and Cooperatives Special projects (CSP). All cooperative activity is subject to annual review, three years mid-term review reports and ten years comprehensive review report for the purposes of co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation (DTI, 2012). All these structures, agencies and networks point to an active role of the state towards to promotion of cooperatives which are generally perceived to be more durable and stable than private businesses

Alternatively, the model being advocated by Satgar and Williams (2011) proposes an egalitarian approach to cooperatives. It is a critique of the state led business approach which emphasises equal participation, empowerment, common ownership and democratic decision making. Despite the need for profit generation, the most important facet is economic participation, however this does not entirely invalidate the role of the state as a facilitator and creator of an enabling environment for the thriving of cooperatives. Self sufficiency and decentralisation are the ultimate eventuality after the provision of funding mainly through the state hence the profit motif will not cease to exist as the cooperatives endeavour to repay the loans they take.

B. Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited

Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative Limited is a cooperative which operates the Diepsloot Buy Back Centre which became operational in November 2012. Its founding members took advantage of the enabling environment necessitated by the Cooperative Act of 2005 after undergoing a training programme on environmental awareness run by Buyisa iBag, a Section 21 company created by the government to empower the youth, create employment, alleviate poverty and promote environmental sustainability. This resonated well with the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy which seeks to empower the formerly disadvantaged blacks and after having become conscious about the need for keeping surroundings clean, the youths in Diepsloot found it their duty to form a cooperative for waste collection as well as keep their community clean. Unlike other cooperatives for waste pickers that operate at landfill sites and struggle to get integrated formally within MSWM, this cooperative actually works as part of the separation at source programme in collaboration with Pikitup, hence better working conditions and relative job security and social protection for its members. Besides buying recyclables from the informal reclaimers, it is also trying to see to it that their working conditions are improved through lobbying for them in meetings convened by Johannesburg Reclaimers. Johannesburg Reclaimers caters solely for the interests of reclaimers who do not work in landfills and bring their material to buy back centres with an overall

vision to see them registered, trained and provided with protective clothing and trolleys as an integral constituency within MSWM.

The cooperative is made up of six board members (with two females and four males) and employs fifteen workers with a ratio of eight and seven respectively. It is structured into portfolios for the board members and designated job descriptions for the employees though job flexibility is a common practice within the cooperative.

The chairperson is responsible for daily running of the cooperative with the decision making powers vested in him although he consults with members of the board including delegating some of the duties to members. The marketing manager liaises with buyers and reclaimers especially on prices as sometimes they switch to sell where there is a higher price as well as adjusting prices of PET when the supply is high. Finances are handled by the finance manager who is the paymaster for the cooperative, banks and withdraws the funds including preparation of financial reports. The safety manager makes sure that all members of the cooperative are working under safe working conditions and also writes minutes for the cooperative while the other two committee members alternate their activities between scaling, paying, washing bottles, engaging in public relations, etc. One male executive member attends weekly meetings with Johannesburg Reclaimers on behalf of the cooperative. The job descriptions of the employees are self explanatory. Sorting is very important as they sort materials by colour, type and category, a responsibility tasked to women due to their dexterity, baling is done by a machine though the technology is still backward because it is complemented by physical effort. Packing is easily done by women as well as the bottle washing. When the trucks are not on the separation at source round, the four truck assistants will be crushing bottles that are sold in granular form but the ones that are washed are sold as they are for reuse.

Overall there are more men than women although the female employees; those not on the board, outnumber their counterparts. The board members are all in their thirties and started the training, awareness campaigns and clean ups in their twenties until their efforts materialised in the registration and subsequent operation of the buy back centre. However, some left midway through the training, most likely because they were not getting any payment. Members recalled that they were close to 30 individuals coming together at their start.

The Cooperative Act of 2013 is of great benefit not only to the board members and the employees but has spill over effects that have been welcome in the entirety of Diepsloot and surrounding areas. Employment creation has meant equal participation in economic activities especially for the disadvantaged. However, this is insufficient without social protection and job security which is a flaw the Act failed to address. Despite the said benefits there are quite a number of challenges associated with the Cooperative Act in the form of government, cooperative

management, market challenges and challenges on organisational structures of cooperatives (DTI, 2012).

C. Challenges on Cooperative Organisational Structure

These are linked to the lack of strong and viable cooperative associations and organisations. Although the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) is one of those organisations in South Africa with the aim of bolstering support for cooperative development, collectively driven sustainable development achievement and self reliance, it may not be having an overall coverage countrywide. Its emphasis on food sovereignty might not be able to cater for other cooperatives in sectors like recycling due to the specialisation of the field.

Without these challenges, the poor and marginalised stand to benefit more from cooperative development due to the benefits. One member gave a very insightful contribution on the advantages derived from cooperatives by saying;

> Best developed economies globally are helped by coops so it is good because cooperatives form the nucleus of the economies of both developed and developing countries. If you look at countries like India, Brazil, China, Russia, these countries' economies depend on coops because they create job opportunities. 70% of the GDP comes from coops so South Africa has done research to do this but there are still challenges like red tape and funding.

According to the DTI (2012) countries with legislative instruments that promote cooperatives grow rapidly as there will be a strong state-cooperative relationship. However, when it comes to waste picking, there is the problem that it is generally treated with disdain though the South African government has through the Cooperative Act of 2005 tried to assert the importance of recycling. This act has carried out environmental awareness campaigns to create employment, promote active economic participation, alleviate poverty and the empowerment of the youth, the elderly and the unemployed. On another scale, this move to create cooperatives can be perceived as a cushioning measure by the state in response to privatisation and labour market liberalisation. This is a way of reducing the number of the economically inactive hence this needs to be taken note of.

There are several problems internal to the cooperative that are faced by its members which include members coming at their own time and others wait to be told to do work. In the same vein, members spoke of the issue of absenting oneself from work without justifiable reasons which derails work progress. Again this challenge is more attuned to internal democratic decision making

than with job security and social protection though it may lead to misunderstandings that lead to some being dismissed from work. The chairperson had this to say about the problem;

> A lot of things need to be discovered, cooperatives have group dynamics because some come to be spectators instead of being hands on ... It is very complex as there is no guideline as to who should do what and who should not do what because the most biggest problem we must be paid the same salary as we are equal ... (Respondent 3 26/08/14)

Although this was said there is a salary difference between board members and the employees such that cooperation is sometimes problematic.

Besides speaking to the reclaimers, the research also covered the major players in the recycling economy or sector in South Africa. The questions posed to these informants were different from those that were given to reclaimers. Pikitup and the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) and Department of Environment under City of Johannesburg were the only organisations that were interviewed through representatives. The Pikitup official works in the Cooperatives Department as the head of Department, the SAMWU official is the International Officer while the CoJ Department of Environment works in the Department of Reclaimer Affairs as an Officer. Linked to the overall research topic, the questions sought to find out the official positions of these organisations with regards to challenges in the industry particularly those affecting street reclaimers. It also wanted to find out if there is anything that these organisations are doing towards paying attention to or reducing these problems. From the responses given, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel towards the improvement of working conditions for waste pickers though most efforts are still long term plans if what is on the ground at present is to be taken cognisance of

5. 3. 1 Work Relations

Overall the fruitful relations outweigh the sour ones in the conduct between reclaimers and the three officials spoken to.

The separation at source programme being run by Pikitup was identified as a true mark of cooperation between Pikitup and the reclaimers. Under the programme, Pikitup provides free transport to reclaimers to bring their recyclable materials to buy back centres according to the official which has brought convenience to various localities where the programme operates. Pikitup endeavours to ensure the integration of reclaimers in the separation at source programme to minimise the loss of tonnage on materials collected from their sphere of influence.

> From Pikitup side, our relationship with waste pickers it is more of ensuring that they are being integrated into the separation at source programme. Our role is to make sure that they are part of the waste stream ... because if we don't we lose on tonnage. ... we want to know how many tonnages we are serving, so it is our interest to ensure that we formalise them and for the Buy Back Centre to work with them.... (Respondent 14 18/09/14).

The role of buy back centres is to make sure that they work with reclaimers, including formalising their operations to avoid loss of materials that are collected out of the Pikitup or buy back centre work environment. Training has been provided and is still ongoing, with reclaimers who are now on the Pikitup data base while in region F they have been provided with uniforms**.**

These efforts by Pikitup are noble as a commercial entity of the CoJ because the formalisation of reclaimer operations definitely leads to the achievement of social protection and job security. After training and registration, Pikitup intends to provide them with protective clothing which gives permanence to their work including safety and prevention against hazards during their work. Although it is still plausible to interpret this integration as a profiteering manoeuvre, it is still safe to credit it for its improvement on job security and social protection. Schoeman and Sentime (2011) have noted that the municipality has double standards in the treatment of waste pickers because those at the landfills do not get as much attention as their relationship with municipalities is always conflictual. Landfill reclaimers have to stand their ground or enter illegally into the landfills when the security is tight but for their counterparts operating in the streets of Diepsloot, there is very little conflict except for those operating in the inner city. The buy back centres are acting as agents who can negotiate on behalf of the reclaimers and the municipality to ensure that both sides achieve a 'win-win' situation. During the field work, reclaimers confirmed that they had attended several meetings where they registered and provided their sizes for boots, overalls and work suits.

Although municipalities are central to municipal waste services**,** they are in contact with informal waste pickers organised in the waste picking sector. In the last five to six years**,** there has been an increase in the number of people engaging in waste recycling as well as within the municipal sector due to its concern about waste management. The South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) is committed therefore to the needs of the waste pickers since they fall under municipality jurisdiction. However, the problem is that waste pickers do not qualify to become members of SAMWU by virtue of being located in the informal economy. The best way to deal with the problems faced by waste pickers is for SAMWU, other unions and the government to provide resources for conducting workshops on how to make them organised with representatives at provincial and national levels. Community work projects, like the current EPWP for street cleaning, schools programmes etc. will also improve the sector, through participation and employment creation. The only weakness with the community projects is their short life spans largely determined by the budget allocation making the eradication of unemployment incomplete. According to respondent 16 who is an official from CoJ's Department of Environment**,** the Environmental and Infrastructural Services Development **(**EISD**)** has a good relationship with reclaimers which dates back to 2011 when the Department initiated a programme to empower reclaimers although they

were sceptical at first. The Johannesburg Metropolitan municipality with the reclaimers through its committee, Johannesburg reclaimers has trained reclaimers on waste management issues covering environmental and business aspects as well as safety through the issuing of proper protective clothing **(** boots**,** reflectors jackets contsuits**,** hand gloves and goggles**).** The same was said by the cooperative members in Diepsloot when asked although it appears that this gesture still awaits extension to the informal reclaimers.

The formalisation process is part of the fruitful relations between reclaimers and key stakeholders in the recycling economy which intends to register, train, provide PPE and recognise them as legalised people collecting waste in the city according to Johannesburg Reclaimers, cooperative reclaimers, Pikitup and CoJ's Department of Environment. Pikitup has a plan reserved for future adoption citywide and currently being experimented in the Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg whose intention is to incorporate, formalise, register and recognise waste pickers with CoJ, give them uniforms, etc. In the words of a Pikitup official:

> The new model will make them part of the community not just collecting but they will eventually run waste management. They'll provide services like street cleaning, bin collection, illegal dump management and will receive an allowance on top of reclaiming although this is still in the pipeline but already happening in Pikitup. (Respondent 14, 18/09/14).

If achieved, this model will go a long way in making the job decent in terms of full benefits befitting an employee, assurance of employment which encompasses both job security and social protection. Job security and social protection will be assured because they get employee benefits from the municipality on top of an allowance putting aside income from selling recyclables. The job will be formalised as they will now be covered under labour laws as regular workers with representational rights.

The inverse side of reclaimer-official relations is not harmonious. For example, the Pikitup official complained about the reclaimers stealing materials that are meant for the separation at source programme. Due to this reason, the formalisation process through registration has been embarked upon to create trust, to integrate the reclaimers and to avoid loss of materials. However, there is also a problem faced in that other reclaimers do not want to form or join cooperatives which are being encouraged by Pikitup and CoJ's Department of Environment. On another note, sour relations also exist when the reclaimers are chased away from landfill sites. For example Respondent 15 an International Officer with SAMWU said,

> … waste pickers appealed to us that managers of landfill sites and depots were restricting access to them to do their work. Argument brought by management was on health and safety, interference with transportation and full time municipal working. (21/09/14).

Although this is related to landfill site reclaimers, there is also the problem of harassment by Johannesburg metropolitan police in the inner city as was cited by interviewees from the Department of Environment and Pikitup respectively. Although in Diepsloot these problems are nonexistent because there is no landfill in the area and the respondents never talked about it, this revelation concurrs with previous literature in the field which shows that officials and waste pickers do not always engage peacefully (Medina, 2007, Samson, 2004, 2008, groundWork). Until this adversarial relationship is transformed, the possibility of coming up with constructive dialogue will not become a reality thereby reducing the prospects of the gaining of social protection and job security for the waste reclaimers.

Enhancing Networks

Through the Johannesburg Reclaimers, communication between reclaimers and the Department of Environment is being enhanced via buy back centre representatives who sit in the committee. Due to the efforts of the Johannesburg Reclaimers committee, the public is beginning to understand the utility of reclaiming and the role played by reclaimers in waste minimisation. The committee liaises with both the state and the private sector to ensure that all players in the industry are in a position to contribute meaningfully to and benefit from recycling.

The City of Johannesburg has begun to recognise waste pickers as a labour force, they have been registered and the process is still in progress as part of the network enhancing process. The acknowledgement of reclaimers as a labour force though in an informal capacity entitles them to coverage under Waste Management by Laws so that they are accepted within MWMS. There is a good working relationship with them as an industry and some have been given protective clothing and trolleys. Respondent 14 who works in the Cooperatives Department in Pikitup said,

> In terms of labour laws, municipality is doing a lot but at national level I don't know anywhere they are covered by the law. Every municipality has done a lot. (Respondent 14 18/09/14).

The enhancement of networks has been through integration in the waste stream, not chasing

them away and encouragement of cooperative formation. Reclaimers are also encouraged to partake in the separation at source programme where free transport is offered for collection of recyclables. By law it is illegal to chase waste pickers away from landfills although they are still often chased away for health and safety reasons.

Reclaimers at the landfills receive less waste so they are encouraged to form cooperatives for them to benefit from the separation at source programme. Waste pickers are not covered by contracts of employment hence they are not covered under social protection. Only once have forms of social protection for waste pickers been sought by SAMWU when one shop steward campaigned for their inclusion at certain landfill sites. This may point to the possibility of union's advocacy for informal workers though this seems remote due to their informality. According to SAMWU International Officer the best way for protecting reclaimers' workplace is for them to be organised to confront management as a collective based on trade union traditions. The Officer further mentioned that this makes monitoring agreements easy plus shop stewards are encouraged to interact with waste pickers for them to benefit from interaction. SAMWU intends to see recycling taking place in an organised manner in every municipality through integration of waste pickers as full time employees due to the importance of recycling at all levels of government. Once done, job security and social protection will be guaranteed including coverage under labour law particularly the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 which will entitle them to join SAMWU. The reclaimer empowerment project is still pilot which seeks to train, provide PPE and cover waste pickers under Waste Management by Laws. The inclusion of waste pickers in the Waste Management by law is for them to be recognised by all the role players in waste management.

After an EISD workshop held for purposes of identification of all stakeholder roles in the empowerment of reclaimers, ongoing efforts are geared towards identifying, registering, training and issuing them with protective clothing.

Waste pickers are encouraged to form cooperatives to enhance their chances of benefiting in decisions affecting MSWM since cooperatives are given first preference. Soliciting for funds both in public and private sectors is another way of expanding networks and so far through the Extended Public Works Programme, R3 million has been received from Economic Development and another R47 000 from Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as was cited by the CoJ Department of Environment Official. Home Affairs is being engaged in obtaining of permits for non South Africans and in collaboration with Pikitup, it is in the process of developing storage and sorting facilities.

5.3. 2 Grievances in the Recycling Sector

A. Working Space Related Grievances

Pikitup is prioritising the provision of sorting space to minimise litter dumping everywhere including storage facilities for those waste pickers who sell bulky orders which can also accommodate them. Currently, most of the reclaimers go home on Fridays after completing the whole week working in the city streets. Lack of access to landfills on the pretext that waste pickers interfere with transportation and full time municipal working including health and safety reasons also constitute some of the space related problems. SAMWU's investigations found out that they are not much of a nuisance but people asserting their working rights hence they are just bureaucratic problems. Bureaucratic problems like lack of access are more linked to procedures which can be solved if dialogue is engaged in between reclaimers and municipalities. The union is supportive of the waste pickers problems especially access to landfills because denial means enlarging 'the reserve army of the unemployed' and the right to a means of livelihood. According to CoJ's Department of Environment, reclaimers also lack proper residential places and don't have proper sorting and storage facilities for the recyclables which are vital for their operations because they sort anywhere and throw away anyhow whatever they don't need. At the end this defeats the purpose of making the environment clean.

B. Working Resources Related Grievances

There is a similarity of the grievances cited by the reclaimers which include lack of trolleys, bags, PPE. Of the three respondents, Pikitup and Department of Environment pledged to provide and claim to have provided the materials to some reclaimers but among those who have not yet benefited from this programme are street reclaimers in Diepsloot. Funding is also a big problem which makes it difficult to implement some of the programmes such that reclaimers operate with inadequate resources and at times overcrowding also leads to inadequate resources from their sources.

C. Social Acceptance

Harassment and confiscation of their goods by Johannesburg Metro Police poses an acceptance problem for reclaimers who are seen as intruders regardless of their functionality and meaningful contribution within MWMS. Street reclaimers in the city are also harassed by road users as they are seen to be disturbing traffic regardless of the good they will be doing towards cleaning

the city. Another grievance is disrespect by public through calling them names which belittles and stigmatises them. For non South African citizens, incorporation is difficult hence acceptance becomes difficult as they become invisible and unheard by the responsible authorities due to lack of proper documentation. Lack of regulatory tools to support informal waste recovery business cripples any meaningful efforts towards their acceptance and formal operations.

D. Transport Related

Just like some street reclaimers in Diepsloot, inner city reclaimers have long distance travelling routes which creates problems in face of traffic. There are also some who lack trolleys making it very difficult for them to carry their merchandise to the market.

5. 3. 3 Acknowledgement of Reclaimer Input

A. Creation of Employment

The SAMWU official interviewed for this project saw the need for a bottom up approach to recycling, calling upon council to make concerted efforts at policy and practical level to ensure the creation of full time permanent jobs. If recycling operates in a structured manner, SAMWU believes it will be worthwhile because people with experience can apply for the jobs.

The Pikitup representative interviewed, on the other hand, saw the creation of self employment as an important facet of reclaimer activity. In his view, this benefits both the individual and the economy at large due to the reduction of the number of the economically inactive even though they are located in the informal economy.

B. Waste Diversion

The Pikitup position on the issue was very clear as the reclaimer centrality was acknowledged through the diversion of waste going to the landfills which prolongs landfill life as well as creation of self employment in the process. It is estimated that there are over 300 000 reclaimers in the City of Johannesburg by Pikitup.

The position given by SAMWU was supportive when the official said:

> They are not a danger to our members' jobs and their role in recycling is a positive one, it seems to be in line with union efforts that much time should be spent in

> recycling. They are playing a crucial role as the city has no space for the construction of landfills; they reduce waste that goes to the landfill through reclaiming as well as help reduce transport costs. Another contribution is environmental preservation. (Respondent 15 21/09/14).

C. Waste Recycling

There is no way Pikitup can function without the reclaimers and finds no justification in their being chased. In the words of one of the respondents:

> Waste industry is becoming a multinational, almost transnational production process as seen through the export of waste to different parts of the world and the government should begin to see this as a fixed feature of the working population not just an activity by poor people who want to survive. (Respondent 15 21/09/14).

Reclaimers are indeed a crucial constituency within MWMS because without them, the CoJ would be by now confronting several difficulties like land shortage for new landfill sites, transport costs and cleaner environments. For these reasons, it is not envisaged in the near future that they will be done away with justifying why reclaimer empowerment initiatives are being embarked upon. To prove this, the CoJ official expressed it this way:

> The reason for the initiative to empower the reclaimers was to tell everyone that the reclaimers are not going anywhere, they are here to stay. The reclaimers are the ones who started recycling, whatever programmes that are initiated must revolve around the reclaimers. (Respondent 16 31/09/14).

SAMWU sees the waste picker services as vital to the municipalities such that the waste pickers should be made public because right now they are an invisible part of the city that do miserable work in all weather. Through the COSATU climate change agenda**,** the environment and the green economy have been taken seriously**.** The goal is to save energy**,** natural resources**,** the environment and the improvement of working lives in communities. The COSATU alliance with NGOs is still a long way to reach implementation and results in collaboration with the department of health**,** environment**,** finance and labour. Although the climate change agenda has not been implemented, it is a clear indication that recycling is important and at the centre are reclaimers who make the sector

thrive. The engagement of other departments like health, environment, finance and labour suggest the need for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing waste picker problems that at the end of the day deserve good working conditions.

D. Striving for Improvement

The stakeholders within MSWM and the recycling economy are making efforts to improve the relations that exist between them and the waste pickers. This can be said for Pikitup and the the Department of Environment than for SAMWU since reclaimers are too remote to the union's scope of operation. SAMWU represents workers employed in permanent capacity within municipalities and even if reclaimers work within municipal services, they do not qualify due to their informality. Registration, training and the provision of protective clothing are notable efforts that are worthy of consideration as attempts at improving job security and social protection for the reclaimers. At least this goes a long way in formalising waste picking as a job and recognition of reclaimers legally.

Grievances cited are common among the informal reclaimers, cooperative reclaimers and the key informants although others like proper documentation, lack of funding and absence of regulatory tools to support the informal waste business recovery were unique.

All the organisations interviewed acknowledge the contribution of reclaimers to the recycling economy as crucial and this does not compel any feeling that they should be done away with. The reason behind is their reduction of waste going to the landfills, reduction of transport costs for municipalities, cleanliness and environmental sustainability. SAMWU proposed a structured operation of recycling in a bottom up manner aimed at creating permanent jobs on condition that municipalities seriously engage at policy and practical level. A structured way of operating recycling will be through the creation of structures from the smallest level like a cell to a ward, zone, municipality, district, provincial up to the national level. At each level, policies will be formulated to deal with waste management and create jobs that are labour law compliant in liaison with all the relevant authorities.

So far waste pickers are covered by the Waste Management bylaw at municipal level and both Pikitup and CoJ have recognised them as a labour force on top of registering, training and providing protective clothing though in an informal capacity. For SAMWU, lack of employment contracts for reclaimers makes it difficult to extend social protection and job security for them. If they form cooperatives, at least they will be assured of job security including not chasing them away from landfills while prioritisation will come their way as cooperatives than single individuals.

This will also improve representation and will ensure the monitoring of agreements made while operations will be based on the trade union tradition. Application of Medina (2007) that policy stance in MSWM ranges from repression which is the denial of reclaiming activities by waste pickers to neglect which ignores them, collusion which uses political patronage for reclaiming and stimulation which includes can be practically used with regards to South African informal waste pickers. In the case of Diepsloot, there appears to be a mixture of neglect and and repression especially for those operating at the landfill sites. On the other hand, the encouragement of cooperative formation, registration and training points to a move towards stimulation because they will operate formally with legal recognition on the production floor within the recycling chain hierarchy .

The reclaimers have to be integrated in the separation at source programme to avoid loss of materials that should accrue to Pikitup. Another problem is littering everywhere during sorting due to lack of sorting space, foreigners are also difficult to register due to lack of proper documentation, some do not want to form cooperatives and general lack of funding. Again a commitment towards solving these problems is being undertaken especially by Pikitup and CoJ though SAMWU cannot directly intervene due to the fact that informal reclaimers do fall under its jurisdiction and the general apathy that exists between regular workers and irregular workers on the basis of different access to the means of production (Bieler et al, 2008). The provision of documents for foreign nationals stems from the realisation of the functionality of waste pickers in the recycling industry including the need to construct sorting facilities, sourcing of funding and the formation of cooperatives which enhance officialness, economic participation, employment creation, empowerment and poverty alleviation (DTI, 2012). In totality, this constitutes decent work with all its characteristics among them social and job security when the labour laws will cease to apply selectively.

Long term plans to formalise operations of waste pickers to ensure their coverage by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act are the ideal of the three organisations. Pikitup intends to universalise its model being used for street cleaning, CoJ intends to seek funds for provision of basics like trolleys, protective clothing as well training, availing necessary documents for foreigners including the construction of sorting and storage facilities. The current Pikitup model used in street cleaning by Pikitup has been copied from Brazil and India's unions ASMARE and KKPKP which have achieved the professionalisation of waste picking as over and above reclaiming they clean streets and get allowances that include among the medical aid and pension contributions (Dias, 2013). The difference with South Africa is that there are no unions for waste pickers but cooperatives, associations, close corporations, NGOs and CBOs and it is the municipalities that

actually intend to integrate them despite efforts by other organisations which advocate for those in the landfills. In other words there are two battles being fought and so far, those operating from the streets are close to attaining victory in comparison to their counterparts in the landfills who are not getting enough attention from the responsible authorities.

The official position and what the reclaimers said seem to be divergent. The officials have given and continue to give empty promises which have not materialised. However among the reclaimers, some are hopeful that the said promises will materialise. It might also mean that other street reclaimers who are not represented by organisations like Johannesburg Reclaimers with close proximity to the municipality are still largely invisible and far from realising decent work. The present situation shows that organised reclaimers are those who belong to cooperatives who stand a better chance of representation and visibility. Within this group, there is however a difference between buy back centre cooperatives and landfill site cooperatives of which the latter are not as visible and relatively secure as the former. Recycling companies support the sector through buying recyclables and the provision of trolleys, buildings and machinery for profit maximisation with very little regard for the welfare of informal reclaimers. In other words they assist the state by making recycling functional at industrial level without much concern on the labour front. At the end buy back centre cooperative reclaimers stand to gain at the expense of other reclaimers in this state-private sector pact. Generally, the officials interviewed were very sympathetic to the reclaimers and show commitment towards their improved conditions of service but the missing part of the puzzle is the implementation part.

CHAPTER SIX- CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The study set out to investigate what the waste pickers are doing to find redress for the challenges that afflict them as well as to find out the role of the government and other key stakeholders in the recycling economy. The extent to which decent work has been or is being extended to the informal economy or periphery at large was the main thrust using informal reclaimers as the unit of analysis. Informal street reclaimers were interviewed along with Bottle-Ke-Tlhago Cooperative reclaimers and officials from Pikitup, SAMWU and CoJ's Department of Environment to get a balanced view of the current state of affairs with regard to how they are gaining entitlement to job security and social protection. Several observations have been made, but generally, the study has produced results that corroborate the findings of a great deal of previous work in the field of waste reclaiming. For example, Samson (2004, 2008, 2009) and Medina (2000, 2007) have shown the absence of decent work among informal waste pickers in the landfills which is the same predicament faced by street reclaimers in Diepsloot. Schoemen and Sentime (2011) have shown that municipalities actually do not want to see reclaimers because they are a nuisance. In contrast, they actually acknowledged the centrality of waste pickers within MSWM, therefore this implies double standards by stakeholders as an inconsistency on their position is evident. Possibly this inconsistency might be the key explanation to stalled progress towards the improvement of working conditions for informal reclaimers within MWMS in South Africa.

In light of the above there are several challenges that street reclaimers face which by now are known by cooperative reclaimers who run buy back centres and key stakeholders in the sector. The channelling of theses grievances has, however, not received adequate attention despite promises to address them by both the cooperative reclaimers and other responsible authorities because none of the promised improvements have materialised so far.

The findings show that informal street reclaimers confront work related challenges which include overcrowding, scarcity of materials, exposure to hazardous substances, low income and unregulated working time as well as undefined workplaces. This therefore is antithetical to the ethics of decent work. Equipment related challenges pertain to lack of PPE, trolleys, bags and bins which are necessary for ensuring their safety and to be able to collect and transport more materials. This exposes them to risk and deems the job insecure. Organisational challenges stem from lack of

unity, information, poverty, illiteracy and a hilly legal framework with regards to registration and requirements ultimately denying them the opportunity to form cooperatives. As a result of the informal set up within which they operate, they are obscured from labour laws and fail to engage directly with the relevant authorities hence the lack of decent working conditions. Space related challenges are very common as they do not have sorting and storage space particularly, the existence of narrow streets which stifle their movement while denial of access to landfills is peculiar to landfill site reclaimers. Social challenges that affect them include harassment by the community, stigmatisation and harassment by the Metro Police though this affects inner city and landfill reclaimers. Low prices and the fluctuation of prices, middlemen and lack of negotiation mechanisms for the prices affect the reclaimers' chances of improving their living standards hence the persistent complaints.

Although these problems are almost banal, the responses they have received from the buy back centre cooperative reclaimers, Johannesburg Reclaimers, government stakeholders and the private sector are nothing to go by. Promises to formalise, register, train, provide PPE and other working materials have been made but by the time of the research had not yet been fulfilled. Actually, it is the cooperative reclaimers who have benefited instead of the street reclaimers and a possible explanation why the assistance has been biased may be that they are registered entities whereas the street reclaimers who sustain the recycling economy are not. The study seems to be consistent with other research on the topic and it is possible to conclude that there is no job security and social protection for informal street reclaimers despite the intent by relevant stakeholders to regulate and formalise the job.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Cooperative Reclaimers

1. Respondent 1 21/07/14 female 30 years
2. Respondent 2 21/08/14 male 37 years
3. Respondent 3 26/08/14 male 33 years
4. Respondent 4 26/08/14 male 31 years
5. Respondent 8 10/09/14 female 31 years

Informal Street Reclaimers

6. Respondent 5 26/08/14 female 41 years
7. Respondent 6 26/08/14 male 51 years
8. Respondent 7 26/08/14 female 30 years
9. Respondent 9 10/09/14 male 48 years
10. Respondent 10 10/09/14 male 30 years
11. Respondent 11 10/09/14 male 47 years
12. Respondent 12 17/09/14 female 37 years
13. Respondent 13 17/09/14 male 49 years

Officials from Key Stakeholders in Waste Management

14. Respondent 14 18/09/14 female Head in the Department for Cooperatives with Pikitup
15. Respondent 15 21/09/14 male International Officer with SAMWU
16. Respondent 16 31/09/14 female Officer in the Department of Reclaimer Affairs