

How to transform recycling systems by empowering waste-pickers and waste cooperatives

Cartoneros project



DANONE
·ECOSYSTEM

Waste-pickers in Argentina



200.000 tons/month

of **material** are recovered

by **waste-pickers**

generating a significant impact on the environment, urban hygiene and the circular economy

Yet...

waste-pickers face **challenges**

- Unsafe and difficult working environments
- Low recognition of their activities
- Insufficient prices for the materials they recover and sell to intermediaries
- Lack of coordinated recycling policy



Leading to...



Difficult livelihoods

- Low incomes: most of them are below the poverty line
- No access to social benefits



To address these challenges, a coalition of public and private partners decided to join forces to support waste-pickers as they organize **into formal cooperatives**, to help cooperatives **structure their activities** and to **strengthen the collection of recyclable waste**, reducing its disposal into landfills and open dumps while reducing plastic leak into nature

The **Cartoneros project** was born

How it works



The Cartoneros project supports the **development of waste management ecosystem** through



Professional Empowerment

- Assist urban collectors to organize into formal cooperatives
- Provide trainings



Awareness

- Advocate for better policies
- Increase recognition of waste-pickers among citizens and the government
- Raise awareness among citizens about the importance of recycling



Operations support to 62 cooperatives

- **Legal formalization:** help cooperatives formally register with the government
- **Internal capacity building:** provide trainings, equipment and structure governance
- **Market access:** connect cooperatives directly to recycling facilities to bypass intermediaries; link cooperatives to one another to create negotiation advantages



Waste-pickers receive comprehensive support from the Cartoneros project





Trainings

Environment Health

Safety

Entrepreneurial skills



Stability

Assistance organizing into formal cooperatives
Receive a fixed salary
Access to more stable prices than the informal market



Government support

Cooperative members receive access to government benefits including health insurance and social security



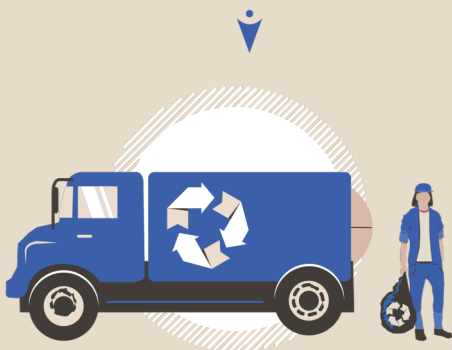
Access to Market

Recycling Partnerships:

The team has established a partnership with a PS recycler and is supporting the strengthening of its operational capacity.

Exploration of second-life alternatives for PS/PP:

Different options are being assessed to integrate recycled PP, to facilitate market access.



Enhanced growth and better income for waste-pickers

- Securing social benefits
- Increasing their income
- Incentivizing PS, PP, PE, cans and bricks collection via access to best possible prices in the market



Transformed recycling value chain

Reinforcing the circular economy
Increasing the availability of recycled material

Where the Project Operates

Scaled from 5 pilot cooperatives to 52 nationwide, driven by strong cross-country collaboration.



Leading to a positive impact on the whole ecosystem

social



+6K

waste-pickers empowered,
gaining access to social
benefits across 56 cities



waste-pickers' **family
members and broader
community positively
impacted**, representing
4.6% of the global
Argentinian population



increase in income
for waste-pickers
benefiting from the
project

Economic

**+100K
Tons**

**of recyclable materials
collected and diverted
from landfills from 2016
to 2020**, representing
the equivalent of 10
Eiffel Towers

Environmental



« I worked in the streets of Buenos Aires. It was very hard, I used to sleep beside the railway tracks, which was very cold. Until I started working at the Cooperative El Alamo 10 years ago. With this job I can keep my children safe, I can pay their education and medicines. I could also build my own house after many years, after so much struggle and hard work. »

– Omar, Waste-picker

Partners & roles



DANONE ARGENTINA

Played a key role during the initial phase of the project:
Ensuring activities follow-up
Following the project sustainability
Ensuring public pledge and project visibility

FUNDACION AVINA

Implements the project

DANONE ECOSYSTEM

Brings co-creation spirits
Provides expertise & guidance
Brings systemic and sustainable approach
Provides project funding

LATITUD-R

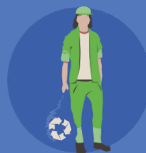
Provided additional funding to the project during 1st and 2nd stage (2020-2023)

CCU

co-leads the project with Danone Argentina

CTP

Runsthe commercial node between cooperatives and buyers of recyclable material



COOPERATIVA DE ALAMO

Waste-pickers are the key actors



FACCYR (Federación Argentina de Cartoneros, Carreros y Recicladores)

Provide insights and support within Cartoneros activities

Local Governments

Insights and support within Cartoneros activities

IRR

Ensures project scale up.
Provides technical assistance
Influences on private-public policies

Reteplast

Ensures valorization of PS and PP

Sources:

La Nación (2020) - Cartoneros: un trabajo aún poco reconocido, pero clave para el cuidado del medio ambiente [Online] <https://bit.ly/3Tp8DHL> Global Alliance of Waste Pickers (2021). Law Report: Argentina - Waste Pickers in Argentina [Online] <https://globalrec.org/law-report/argentina/> Cartoneros y Cartoneras - Movimiento de los trabajadores excluidos[Online] <https://mteargentina.org.ar/ramas-cartoneros-cartoneras/>