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Valuing waste as resource: Mechanisms of change in developed and developing countries

The total municipal solid waste (MSW) generated worldwide in 2012 was approximately 1.3 billion tonnes [1]. Were all countries to continue to generate waste at the current rate of high-income countries, total waste generation could reach 5.9 billion tonnes by 2025 [2]. While reuse remains best practice to turn waste into a resource, recycling is key to sustainable waste management. However, large differences exist in its objectives and in practice between developed and developing countries. In developed countries, MSW generation should be decoupled from economic growth [3]. Currently, recovery is seen as an alternative to expensive waste disposal, and as a response to more stringent environmental regulations. In developing

countries, recycling is largely a private valorization, income-generating activity including the commercialization of recycled material for the actors in the value chain [4]. For example, the recycling value chain starts with source segregation after waste is produced. While raising awareness and economic incentives such as direct household payments may be useful in developing countries like Egypt to promote source segregation, legal enforcement and taxes may have positive, long-term impact on the production of MSW and source segregation in developed countries like Switzerland [4, 5]. Using case studies, we show the dichotomy between effective mechanisms used to value waste as a resource in developed and developing countries.

Biography

Rémi Jaligot is a PhD student at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, Switzerland. He has conducted various work on waste management and the informal sector in Egypt, Jordan, Switzerland, etc. He worked for the German development agency (GIZ) and a consortium of NGOs on informal waste management near refugee camps in the Middle East.

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