

# COVID-19 and Gender in Waste Management

---

International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC)

---

Presented by Misato Dilley, IETC

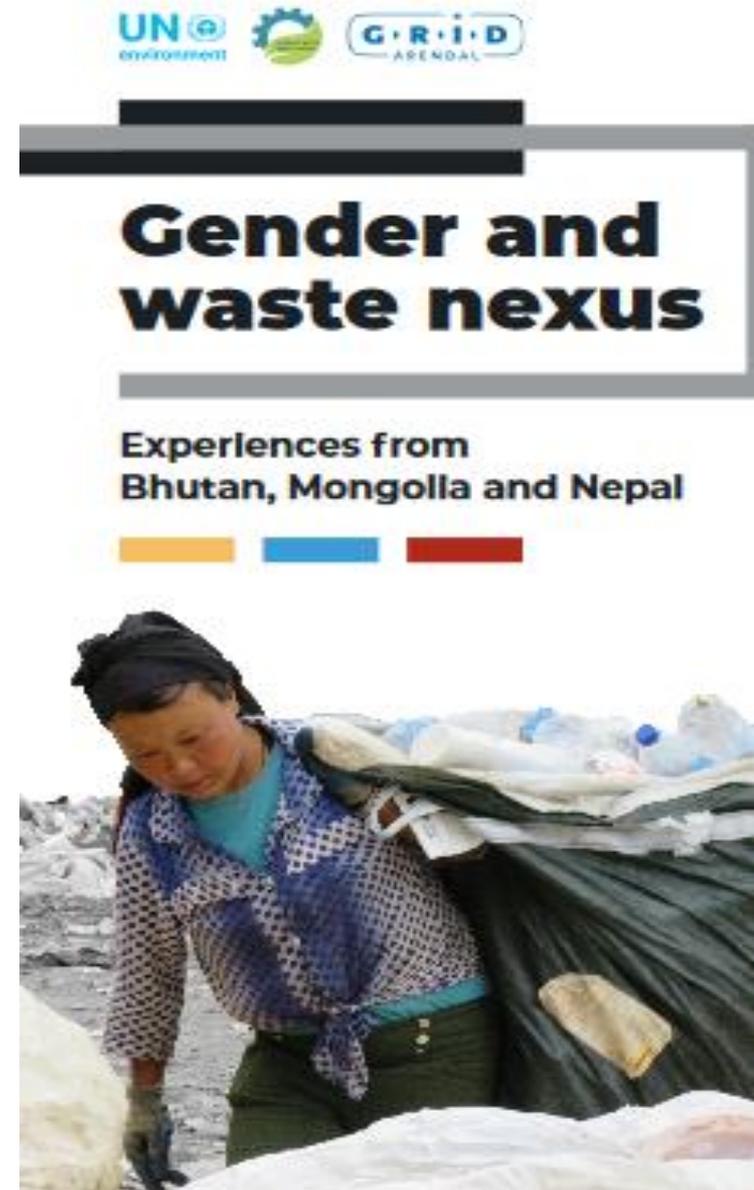
# Sex vs. Gender

<b>Sex</b>	Natural and biological	<b>Gender</b>	Social and cultural
 Visible differences in genitalia and in procreative function	Universal term	 Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes	Variable

(Source: UN Environment's training, 'Gender Mainstreaming in Environmental Project Management' by UN Environment')

# Gender and Waste Management

- Waste management – often regarded as gender-neutral.
- However, women and men are **affected by** and are **involved in** waste management **differently** due to existing **gender roles and responsibilities**.



# Division of Labour

- **Women** – usually confined to **lower paying** (waste picking, sweeping and separation of waste) **or unpaid tasks** (e.g., voluntary community clean-ups, street sweeping and primary collection of waste).
- **Men** – usually taking **upper-level decision-making positions** (city managers and planners to landfill operators and managers of waste collection companies) and taking control over waste materials **with higher value for reselling / recycling**
- These different responsibilities may expose **women to higher risks of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic**, a serious economic threat to women and could increase gender gaps in livelihoods.



(Photo: AIT  
2015)

# Informal Sector



(Photo: AIT 2015)

- More **women** than **men** tend to work in the informal sector in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal. where they often perform duties with limited or no safety equipment, and for low remuneration, such as waste picking at landfills.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **women** may be put at a considerable risk when infectious waste is dumped at disposal sites. If the COVID-19 continues, it may pose a serious challenge both socially and economically.

## *Gender Blind Policies and Guidelines.*

- Many existing guidelines fail to address specific needs and issues related to gender.
- Mainstreaming gender in the waste sector could be an opportunity to improve waste management in a more resilient and sustainable manner.
- For example, appropriate segregation of waste at household level, women as well as men can play a valuable role not only to ensure safety, but also in accelerating waste reduction, segregation, composting and recycling in general.

# Way Forward

- **Collection of gender–disaggregated data:**

Help in understanding the gendered differences.

- **Women’ s representation**

Support women to be part of the decision–making process

- **Health and safety**

Access to information on safety measures (using PPEs) and health services and insurance.

Thank you

---



Presented by Misato Dilley  
International Environmental Technology Centre  
Economy Division  
Osaka, Japan

---

[www.unenvironment.org/ietc](http://www.unenvironment.org/ietc)