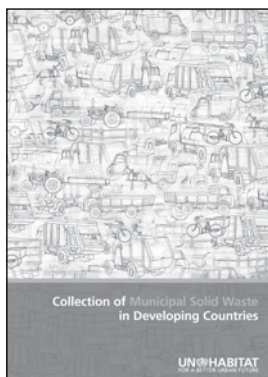


## Reviews and resources



### Collection of Municipal Solid Waste in Developing Countries

Manus Coffey and Adrian Coad  
2011, UN-HABITAT, 196 pages,  
ISBN 978-92-1-132254-5, US\$15,  
available for free download  
at <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3072>

Practitioners working on solid waste in low- and middle-income countries have been waiting eagerly for this publication, whose long-awaited release in 2010 was very welcome. Kudos to UN-Habitat as well, for daring to finance two books on solid waste management in 2010! The book is a key resource, and very modestly priced at US\$15 or for free download.

Manus Coffey is a pioneer in design and application of intelligent, innovative, modest-scale, adapted equipment for urban cleansing, street sweeping, waste collection, transfer, and disposal, and this book offers the reader the best of his nearly 50 years of experience. Technical information is contextualized, supplemented, and edited by Adrian Coad, whose writings about waste management in low- and middle-income countries have served

consistently to elevate the quality of written work in the global community of practice.

The book has the goal of describing and remedying the most egregious failures of formal solid waste management systems in low- and middle-income countries. As a resource it is unbeatable. The reader will want to read the first four chapters lightly, as there is a certain amount of repetition. But it is worthwhile to seek out a few small gems of information, such as Figure 3.1, Sections 4.3 and 4.5, and the pictures on page 38.

The best thing about the book is its authoritative voice on technology, its exquisitely informative illustrations, the technical figures on topics such as density and its impact on collection, and the tools and pro-forma analyses and tools at the end and in the annexes. This information from two such experienced practitioners is solid gold – and absolutely essential for anyone striving towards good and fair practices in low- and middle-income countries.

Chapters 5 through 8 on collection technology are the heart of the book, and these in and of themselves more than justify having it in your library. Chapters 9 to 12 on

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'Operation and Maintenance', 'Financial Aspects', 'Institutional Arrangements', and 'Management of the Workforce' provide a critical mass of really useful practical information with clarity.

The first four main chapters of the book suffer somewhat from the authors' pessimistic tone and their tendency to intersperse value judgements and anecdotal advice in the middle of technical explanations, a practice which unfortunately resurfaces in Chapters 9–12. The chapter summaries are the weakest part of the main body of the book: it is not clear how the authors arrived at their choice of wording and in this reviewer's opinion few of the summaries succeed in capturing the most important points in the chapter they summarize: a next edition would be better off without them.

The final six chapters of the book are placed in an Annex, which is confusing to the reader and appears to represent a compromise as to what the book does and does not cover: Annexes 4 on recycling and treatment and 5 on disposal are really Chapters 13 and 14 masquerading as annexes. Annexes A1, A2, and A3 are businesslike and essential, and include forms and spreadsheet templates (presumably also on the CD-ROM, which was announced but not supplied in the review copy). Annex 5 is of

the same high quality level of the other technical chapters.

Annex 4 is more problematic. The authors fail to understand the basic nature of recycling activity as supplying industrial value chains, and this causes them to make statements about differences between recycling in developed and developing countries which ignore the fact that all industrial materials are sold into the same global value chains in more or less the same ways.

There are more inaccuracies in these nine pages than in the entire rest of the book, which to this reviewer suggests that it would have been much better to leave this loose mixture of information out altogether. For example, labelling composting, vermiculture, and energy recovery as 'particular examples of recycling' is rather misleading, and the final catch-all section on reflections is a mix-and-match which detracts from the otherwise excellent quality of the overall publication.

In spite of certain flaws mentioned above, the book provides a rich harvest of information and insight. It represents outstanding value for money, and richly rewards the patience of those of us who have waited for it for years.

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