

Partnership Policy

Date of Adoption: 27th August 2026

Approved by: Executive Council

1. Purpose

The partnership policy sets out how the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) will assess, approve, manage, conduct, and review partnerships with trade unions, civil society organisations, companies, company-funded foundations, philanthropic institutions, academic institutions, public agencies, and other external actors.

The partnership policy includes principles that set out IAWP's expectations for its relationships with partners.

The partnership policy aims to ensure that all partnerships uphold IAWP's values, protect the autonomy of waste picker organisations, avoid reputational and political risks, and contribute directly to the collective interests of waste pickers.

The partnership policy is developed following the constitutional mandate outlined in Article 2 of the Constitution of the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, focused on Aims and objectives, specifically Article 2.16, 2.20 and 2.21:

"2.16 To work with affiliates, governments, and other organizations to facilitate the education of the children of waste pickers and to improve access to childcare to ensure child labour is abolished;

*2.20 To work in partnership with international federations and other organizations representing informal workers and **trade unions** on matters of mutual interest;*

*2.21 To work in **social partnership with NGOs, universities, and research institutions** that work with and in support of waste pickers and that support the goals and constitution of the Alliance;"*

2. Definition of partnership

A partnership is any formal or informal collaboration between IAWP and an external organisation, institution, company, foundation, or platform that involves one or more of the following:

1. Joint development and implementation of activities or projects;
2. Financial or in-kind support;
3. Shared advocacy or campaigning, including joint delegations for multilateral forums, joint side events;
4. Joint public statements, events or communications;
5. Research, documentation, or knowledge production;
6. Participation in governance, advisory, or steering committees, or relevant structures;
7. Use of IAWP's name, logo, and participation of IAWP leaders and staff in relevant partner-led events, processes such as steering committees, and others, or for gaining public legitimacy and/or fundraising;
8. Access to waste picker organisations, affiliates, leaders, members, or communities.
9. Worker education, training, and capacity-building programmes with IAWP or its membership in their respective countries.

A partnership may be short-term, long-term, project-based, strategic, funded or unfunded, formal or informal.

For clarity, formal and informal partnerships are explicitly defined below:

- **Formal partnerships** are defined as structured and officially recognised relationships with IAWP and another organization, institution, network, donor, government entity, trade union, academic institution, or social movement, and is governed by a written agreement that establishes shared objectives, roles, responsibilities, reporting, and accountability mechanisms, including grievance redressal, joint communication (branding), safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection, and, where applicable, financial or resource commitments. The formal partnerships may include resource sharing, staff time, and joint programming, joint representation (where relevant), and typically extend beyond a one-time activity to involve ongoing collaboration.

- **Informal partnerships** are defined as collaborative relationships for coordination in messaging, communication, advocacy, organising, or participating in meetings, mutual support, or knowledge exchange that do not require a written agreement and do not create legal or financial obligations between the parties. The informal partnerships are generally short-term or event-based. In informal partnerships, either party may discontinue the collaboration without following formal termination procedures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all partnerships entered into by IAWP at the global, regional, national and local levels, including partnerships involving:

1. Fellow civil society organisations;
2. Trade Unions, member-based organisations, worker and labour-focused organisations and social movements;
3. Philanthropic foundations;
4. Company-funded foundations;
5. Private companies;
6. Multi-stakeholder initiatives;
7. Multilateral and international organisations;
8. Academic and research institutions;
9. Governmental or public institutions;
10. Coalitions, campaigns, networks, and platforms.

This policy applies to partnerships involving fundraising, fund management, advocacy, education, research, communications, technical support, events, capacity building, pilot projects, joint project design and implementation, and/or public endorsements.

Note: This partnership policy does not govern IAWP's relationship with our affiliates, which are guided by the constitutional framework, except where IAWP partners with a relevant affiliate to implement a specific project, campaign, research, or capacity-building.

4. Principles for partnership

The principles below articulate IAWP's expectations for establishing partnerships, and both current and potential partners will work with IAWP to embed them into partnership arrangements, as listed in Section 3: Scope, when engaging with IAWP. The IAWP Secretariat is authorised to share these principles directly with partner organisations during planning discussions or to develop agreements such as "Terms of Reference (ToR)," "Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)," or other partnership documents with these organisations.

In addition to the specific principles outlined below, all partnerships shall acknowledge and respect the commitments set out in the IAWP constitution, specifically the Preamble and Articles 1 (Mission) and 2 (Aims and Objectives), and the partnership is not in conflict with the principles and constitutional provisions.

Note: It is necessary to distinguish between: 1) The principles governing the partnership between IAWP and the collaborating organisations, which are reflected in this document; and 2) how these principles will specifically be applied in each instance of a partnership (i.e. through the project, activities, and other relevant collaborations mentioned in Section 2: Definition of Partnership). The principles in this document may be expanded, clarified, or added to in future partnership agreements, as needed and in line with the substance of the partnerships.

Principles:

4.1 Waste pickers leadership: IAWP, its affiliates and partners will ensure that the leadership, voice and agency of waste pickers and member-based organisations are central to all partnerships. External partners must not speak on behalf of waste pickers unless explicitly authorised by IAWP.

4.2 Waste pickers' role in material management and in reducing plastic pollution is recognised, respected, and addressed: Waste pickers' role in the material management system, i.e., reuse and recycling, is recognised and taken into account. Waste pickers are engaged respectfully. Unequal power relations between waste pickers and municipal authorities, civil society organisations, companies, and others, as well as those rooted in gender, race, class, nationality, and so on, are recognised and addressed.

4.3 Waste pickers' expertise valued: Partners, existing and potential, will respect waste pickers' expertise and experience. Partners cannot presume to know what waste

pickers want, how IAWP's constituents are affected by changes in the reuse, refill, refurbishment, recycling and waste management systems, what the best form of integration would be, or how waste pickers work. Successful recycling and reuse collection programmes are based on waste pickers' in-depth knowledge of how best to extract recyclables and reusables from the waste stream, and successful integration programmes are based on waste pickers' needs and interests, as communicated by waste pickers.

4.4 Meaningful engagement with waste pickers: Legitimate platforms are created to meaningfully include waste pickers as equal partners in decision-making on all programmes and initiatives that may affect their lives and livelihoods. Waste pickers are supported in organising to better represent themselves and are provided with the resources required to represent themselves in decision-making processes.

4.5 Waste pickers representation: The IAWP and its affiliates follow their internal decision-making process and nominate their own representatives to partnership bodies, committees, meetings, conferences, and other processes. The partners are mandated to refrain from intervening in waste picker representation and nomination processes.

4.6 Waste pickers are recognised as right holders: All IAWP partners must recognise waste pickers as right holders, and all partnerships work for advancing the rights, recognition, livelihoods, dignity, occupational health and safety, social protection, gender justice, and collective bargaining power of waste pickers.

4.7 All partnerships ensure 'Do no harm': IAWP's partners will not engage in activities that may harm waste pickers, undermine our affiliates, create divisions among affiliates, expose leaders to risk, exacerbate challenges, and weaken existing struggles, or legitimise exploitative practices.

4.8 Gender justice: All partnerships must respect IAWP's commitment to gender justice, inclusion, and the leadership of women, non-binary and trans workers, and other historically marginalised groups within the waste picker movement.

4.9 All partnerships with waste pickers are partnerships of equals: All partnerships must recognise IAWP and its affiliates as equal partners. This means IAWP must be fully involved in, and sign off on, all decisions related to the collaboration, including the development of project proposals, the allocation of budgets and resources, and the addition of new parties to the partnership. All parties' reporting requirements are to be transparent and respected. IAWP, its affiliates and the

partner will agree on a mutually acceptable approach to project governance and associated meetings. All decisions related to waste pickers should not be discussed in the absence of representatives of IAWP and its affiliates. All proposals, plans, and documents must be shared with all parties as they are developed and completed, with input from IAWP representatives received and incorporated from the start.

4.10 Grievance redressal mechanism: All formal partnerships, especially those that require consortium-like structures for campaigns, projects, research, and other relevant activities, require a grievance redressal and resolution mechanism. The grievance redressal process and resolution mechanism must be outlined in the TORs, MoUs, or other partnership documents, including an explicit guarantee of the IAWP's or its affiliates' right to terminate a partnership when collaboration is deemed to undermine the rights or collective interests of waste pickers.

4.11 Communication: All communication regarding IAWP and its affiliates' involvement, including the use of IAWP and its affiliates' logo, joint press statements, and the submission of proposals and reports, requires review and formal sign-off by representatives of IAWP and its affiliates before it is made public.

4.12 Depiction of waste pickers: All visual, oral, and written depictions by partner organisations portray waste pickers as knowledgeable, active agents. Waste pickers will not be portrayed as passive recipients of charity. All visual, oral, and written representations of waste pickers by partner organisations will be jointly developed with and signed off by the IAWP.

5. Redlines and prohibited partnerships

IAWP will not enter into partnerships with organisations, companies, or institutions that:

- 5.1 Undermine waste picker livelihoods, organisations, or access to waste, recyclables, reusables, and other materials;
- 5.2 Promote the displacement, criminalisation, eviction and exclusion of waste pickers¹;
- 5.3 Promote incineration, waste-to-energy, or other technologies that threaten waste picker livelihoods and environmental justice;

¹ Governments at local, provincial, and national levels, as well as certain multilateral institutions, often implement policies and practices that the IAWP identifies as discriminatory and exclusionary. However, if IAWP abstains from partnering with these entities, their positions and practices are likely to remain unchanged. Consequently, IAWP enters into partnerships with such institutions with the explicit expectation of driving positive change. These partnerships require careful management, as complete non-engagement presents greater disadvantages for waste pickers than principled partnerships that seek to influence institutional behavior.

- 5.4 Require IAWP to weaken, silence, or change its policy positions;
- 5.5 Restrict IAWP’s ability to effectively advocate, campaign, protest or criticise;
- 5.6 Use waste picker images, testimonies, or names without informed consent²;
- 5.7 Seek exclusive control over IAWP’s relationships with affiliates, regions, or waste picker leaders;
- 5.8 Refuse to commit and give meaningful effect to the IAWP partnership principles.

6. Approval authority

The following approval process will apply.

Type of Partnership	Approval Required
Informal coordination with civil society allies, including joint delegations ³	With relevant information shared with the Office Bearers, the General Secretary can approve the partnership.
Joint statements or campaigns	With relevant information shared with the Office Bearers and with relevant subcommittee inputs received, especially the Communications (CSC) & Advocacy (ASC) Subcommittees for joint statements and campaigns, the General Secretary can approve this partnership, based on CSC and ASC inputs.
Capacity Building & training	With information shared with the relevant Office Bearers, and with inputs from the Worker Education Subcommittee (WESC), the General Secretary can approve this partnership, based on WESC's inputs.
Research partnerships	With relevant information shared with the Office Bearers, and with inputs from the relevant subcommittee; if the research partnership feeds Advocacy Work, then the Advocacy Subcommittee; if the partnership feeds the Worker Education vertical, the Worker Education Subcommittee inputs will be considered, and the General Secretary can approve this partnership based on the inputs of relevant subcommittees.

² IAWP will develop relevant guidance and form for taking informed consent.

³ Informal coordination with civil society does not require a formal MoU or a written partnership agreement. For informal coordination, the Office Bearers, Executive Council Members, Subcommittee Members, and Staff are encouraged to share IAWP’s principles and redlines with existing and potential partners.

Type of Partnership	Approval Required
Funded civil society or philanthropic partnerships ⁴	Office Bearers, General Secretary and Finance Subcommittee, with reporting to the Executive Council
Company partnerships	Office Bearers, General Secretary and Finance Subcommittee, reporting to the Executive Council
Company-funded foundation partnerships	Office Bearers, General Secretary and Finance Subcommittee, with reporting to the Executive Council
Partnerships involving public use of the IAWP logo or name	Office Bearers
Partnerships affecting a specific region or affiliate	Approval of relevant Regional Office Bearer and Regional Executive Council members shall be obtained, and affected affiliates must be consulted
Membership of other institutions, coalitions, consortiums	Approval of Office Bearers, with reporting to the Executive Council
Any new partnership not stated here	Approval of Office Bearers, along with General Secretary

Note: IAWP is currently in the process of registration and requires support from Women in Informal Employment Globalizing & Organizing (WIEGO) for managing its affairs. When a formal MoU, TOR, or any official partnership agreement is signed for projects, activities, or resource sharing, additional input and approval from WIEGO are required, including signing the agreements. This clause is temporary; once IAWP is registered, it will no longer be applicable.

⁴ For the following partnerships: Funded civil society or philanthropic partnerships, Funded Company partnerships, Company-funded foundation partnerships following provision of fundraising policy applies: For grants below USD 25,000: The General Secretary is authorised to approve submission and must share the proposal with the Finance Subcommittee post-submission; For grants between USD 25,000 and USD 150,000: Office Bearers are authorised to approve submission and must share the proposal with the Finance Subcommittee post-submission; For grants above USD 150,000: The Finance Subcommittee must validate and approve submission, including a thorough assessment of potential conflicts of interest.

7. Partnership agreements

All written partnership agreements, including but not limited to TORs, MoUs and other formal partnership documents, shall have the following clauses:

- 7.1 Purpose of the partnership;
- 7.2 Principles underpinning the partnership, which include the principles outlined in Section-4: Principles of partnership;
- 7.3 Expected outcomes;
- 7.4 The roles and responsibilities of the different parties are clearly outlined, including the provisions of anti-fraud and anti-corruption policies;
- 7.5 Budget and financial arrangements, including the approval process if budget lines need to be changed;
- 7.6 Decision-making process;
- 7.7 Duration;
- 7.8 Reporting requirements;
- 7.9 Intellectual property rights
- 7.10 Data protection provisions
- 7.11 Communications and branding rules;
- 7.12 Consent requirements for images, stories, and testimonies;
- 7.13 Dispute resolution process;
- 7.14 Exit or termination clause;
- 7.15 Clause protecting IAWP's right to maintain independent advocacy positions.

No agreement should restrict IAWP from advocating for waste picker rights or publicly criticising policies, practices, or systems that harm waste pickers.

8. Use of IAWP name, logo, images, and stories

Partners may not use IAWP's name, logo, photographs, videos, testimonies, leader names, affiliate names, or community stories without prior written approval.

IAWP shall ensure that:

- 8.1 Waste pickers give informed consent before their images or stories are used;
- 8.2 Communications portray waste pickers with dignity and respect;

8.3 Partners do not use poverty, hardship, or informality for fundraising or promotional purposes in exploitative ways;

8.4 Partners do not present themselves as representatives of waste pickers;

8.5 All public materials acknowledge waste picker organisations appropriately.

IAWP may withdraw permission if a partner misuses IAWP's name, logo, or public legitimacy.

9. Termination of partnerships

IAWP may suspend or terminate a partnership if the partner:

9.1 Violates this policy, or its actions are identical to those outlined in Section-5: Redlines and prohibited partnerships ;

9.2 Misuses IAWP's name, logo, images, without due approval;

9.3. Undermines waste picker rights or organisations;

9.4. Breaches financial or contractual obligations;

9.5 Pressures IAWP to alter its policy positions;

9.6 Fails to respect consent, dignity, or data protection;

9.7 Creates serious reputational, political, or organisational risk;

Termination decisions shall be made by the Office Bearers, with relevant documentation prepared and reported to the Executive Council.

10. Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation

10.1 The General Secretary and IAWP Office Bearers will regularly update the Executive Council on the status of all partnerships.

10.2 At any time, IAWP affiliates, subcommittee members, Executive Council members, Office Bearers, and staff may recommend a partnership review by submitting a written request to the General Secretary. The Office Bearers will review and evaluate the partnerships and will provide a report to the parties who submitted the request.

10.3 Each year, the Executive Council members will evaluate the partnerships, identify their strengths and key lessons learned, and highlight any partnerships that may no longer be relevant or that may pose reputational risks. The Executive Council will share this evaluation with the Office Bearers, who will then take appropriate action.

11. Complaints and concerns

Any IAWP Office Bearer, Executive Council Member, Subcommittee Member, Affiliate, or staff member may raise concerns about a partnership. Concerns must be submitted in writing to the Office Bearers and the General Secretary. Within one month of receiving the concern, the Office Bearers are required to consult with the person who submitted it, as well as with other relevant bodies, such as Executive Council Members (including individual or group consultations), Subcommittees, and appropriate affiliates. After these consultations, they must take appropriate action and document the entire consultation and decision-making process.

12. Review of the policy

IAWP will review this policy every three years, or earlier if required by governance decisions, major partnership risks, or changes in IAWP's organisational structure.

The Executive Council may amend this policy based on recommendations from the Office Bearers, Executive Council Members, Subcommittees or relevant affiliates.