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Student Pages - Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability – The Story of Columbia's Recicladores

Center for Urban Resilience

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Lesson #1: Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability – The story of Columbia's *Recicladores*

Activity #1.1 The Plight of Scavenger Families – the *Recicladores*

In this activity you read about the scavenger families in South America who make their living recycling the city's trash. Known in the local settings as Recicladores, these families struggle to survive in a world where they are terribly mistreated and considered sub-human by many of the wealthier city residents. These are the same residents who actually depend on the recicladores to have their trash recycled. Consider how these people have been able to help themselves through organizing and working together to better their lives and the conditions in their neighborhoods. In addition, you will use the examples from the narratives to help develop your own environmental action plan for your local neighborhood.

1. Read the narrative, *The Recicladores, Columbia's Scavenger Families Unite to find their Identity*.
 2. While reading *The Recicladores*, consider these questions and write down some notes: What makes the scavenger life so hard and dangerous? What aspects of their lives could be improved? Where else did we see situations like this where poor families were exploited as laborers in trash heaps?
 3. Is there a group of people in your city who are similar to the recicladores? What
- Here are a few images from the narrative to get you started:



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/gusuval/187682799/>

Above left: A recicladores family sorting trash in Lima, Peru. Above right, hundreds of recicladores sorting trash in a Central American landfill.

Reflection Questions:

The Recicladores

How did the ANR in Columbia impact the lives of these families?

What social and environmental improvements were made as a result of the ANR and the local organizations that were started by the scavenger families?

How might these lessons be used to help local families in your neighborhood?

Based on your reflections above, write 2-3 research questions that you might be interested in exploring about the impacts of social change in the recicladores communities and in community action for environmental and social change? How does this story help you develop your own action plan?