

# No Inclusion Without Work

## A Study on Andahuaylas Street Vendors with Disabilities in historic Downtown Lima



Teresa Velásquez is a member of UNITRADIS and works on Andahuaylas Street, around the 5th block  
Photo Credit: WIEGO Lima Team.

By Carmen Roca and Themis Castellanos

In October 2023, WIEGO<sup>1</sup> conducted a comprehensive survey and interviews with 152 highly vulnerable street vendors with disabilities who work in historic Downtown Lima, on Andahuaylas Street. This research project was proposed by four street vendor organizations: UNITRADIS, DEUP, Santa Catalina and ASEMDIS.<sup>2</sup> The study focuses on the living, social, and working conditions of these street vendors to inform and support the livelihood protection proposals that their organizations are developing and presenting to city officials.

## Key Findings



**Street Vendors with Disabilities Are Extremely Vulnerable:** 61 per cent of respondents are themselves persons with disabilities that may not be easily recognizable, whether physical, auditory, mental, or intellectual. Beyond the inherent risks of street trading,<sup>3</sup> this population faces added hardships, including family responsibilities, chronic illnesses, and lack of support.



**Some Street Vendors Are Care Givers and Share Similar Challenges:** 39 per cent of the surveyed vendors do not have an impairment themselves but work to provide care to a dependent disabled person, often a child with severe disability in their household.



**Andahuaylas Street Is a Strategic Location:** This street is crucial for vendors with disabilities due to its proximity to (i) densely populated areas that rely on it as a key thoroughfare, (ii) their homes, which allows them to work and provide care, and (iii) the only sanitary facility they can access in historic Downtown Lima.



**Street Vendors with Disabilities Seek Work, Not Handouts:** 84 per cent of respondents expressed willingness to invest in a relocation project to secure their own trading stall. They showed the ability to save and repay debt regularly. Their primary demand is not for government aid but for the opportunity to work without harassment, in a stable location and with fair treatment from municipal authorities.



**Livelihood Protection Proposals:** Street vendors with disabilities have developed two proposals to safeguard their livelihoods, the *Alameda de la Inclusión* [Inclusion Avenue] and the *Mercado Inclusivo* [Inclusive Market], both of which are detailed at the end of this document.

1 *Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing* (WIEGO) is a global network dedicated to analyzing public policy and promoting dialogue to secure the inclusion of informal workers, who comprise more than 60 per cent of the world's employed population.

2 UNITRADIS: *Unión de trabajadores con discapacidad de Lima* [Union of workers with disabilities of Lima]. DEUP: *Discapacitados emprendedores unidos del Perú* [United disabled entrepreneurs of Peru]. Santa Catalina: *Organización social de personas con discapacidad Santa Catalina* [Social organization of persons with disabilities of Santa Catalina]. ASEMDIS: *Asociación de madres emprendedoras con hijos con discapacidad* [Association of entrepreneurial mothers of children with disabilities].

3 Risks include low income and instability, exposure to extreme weather, harassment, evictions, seizure of goods, threats, extortion, violence or theft by non-government actors, lack of capital, and other similar challenges.

## Informal Employment, Street Trade, and Urban Poverty

By 2023, 74 per cent of Peru's workforce remained outside the scope of labour regulations and social protections, as they were engaged in informal employment. In Metropolitan Lima, where a third of the country's population lives, 60 per cent of employment is informal (ENAHO<sup>4</sup> 2023).

Given this context, how does most of the population earn a living? For many Peruvians, informal trade is their primary economic activity, second only to agriculture. Informal trade employs 19 per cent of the national workforce and 27 per cent of those working in Metropolitan Lima. Poverty is most prevalent among citizens working in trade and services, just behind agricultural activities.

In 2023, 31 per cent of Peru's workers were classified as "self-employed" (i.e., in informal employment), meaning they report having no employer or employees. These individuals have created their work, hence the 'self-employed' category, with street trade as their main occupation. Notably, 45 per cent of the country's 'self-employed' workers live in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Nationwide, there are an estimated 1.6 million street vendors, with half a million in Metropolitan Lima.<sup>6</sup>

Street vendors' destitute situation has been exacerbated by a significant rise in urban poverty that began in 2019, even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2023, urban poverty had surged from 14 per cent to 26 per cent in Metropolitan Lima.

## Persons with Disabilities and Street Trade

According to the most recent National Census from 2017, 10 per cent of Peru's population lives with a disability—57 per cent of whom are women and 43 per cent men. A third of the people with disabilities live in either Metropolitan Lima or Callao.

Despite existing regulations aimed at promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities, compliance is exceptionally low. The law mandates that the government allocate 10 per cent of the budget for temporary employment promotion programmes to persons with disabilities. Additionally, public agencies must have 5 per cent of their staff be persons with disabilities, while the private sector must meet a 3 per cent quota. Local and regional governments must also assign one per cent of their budget to Regional Offices for the Attention of Persons with Disabilities (OREDIS, by their acronym in Spanish) and their municipal counterparts (the OMAPEDs).<sup>7</sup>



Augusto Gatica is a member of UNITRADIS, works on Andahuaylas Street, around the 5th block, where he sells various small items. Photo: WIEGO Lima Team.



Elar Carajulca is affiliated with the Santa Catalina organization, works on Andahuaylas Street, around the 5th block, where he sells various small items. Photo: WIEGO Lima Team.

4 National Household Survey (ENAHO, for *Encuesta Nacional de Hogares*).

5 National Institute of Statistics and Data Processing. 2024. *Perú: Evolución de la pobreza monetaria 2014-2023* [Peru: Evolution of Income Poverty, 2014-2023].

6 Calculations based on the 2023 ENAHO. Activity codes among self-employed workers in informal employment who reported income that year and answered the question about their workplace. Prepared by WIEGO.

7 Law N° 29973, Articles 46 and 49, along with the Public Sector Budget Law of 2012.

According to the 2023 National Household Survey, of the estimated 500,000 street vendors in Metropolitan Lima, 19,000 are living with a disability.

## Main Actions Taken by Municipalities in Metropolitan Lima Against Street Trade Over the Past Decade

- Municipalities have spent millions of Peruvian soles on evictions rather than investing in purchasing commercial buildings or land plots, which could then be sold to the thousands of street vendors, with payment facilities.
- There has been a lack of engagement with street vendors in discussions or collaborative planning efforts.
- Lacking foresight, municipalities have failed to support the relocation projects started by street vendors' organizations; vendors have drawn on their own savings to move off the streets.
- Evictions have been conducted by destroying stalls, roads, and sidewalks, and by impounding vendors' working capital.
- Municipalities have progressively reduced the number of street-work licences or permits or have refused to renew them.

## Historic Downtown Lima Master Plan and Street Trade

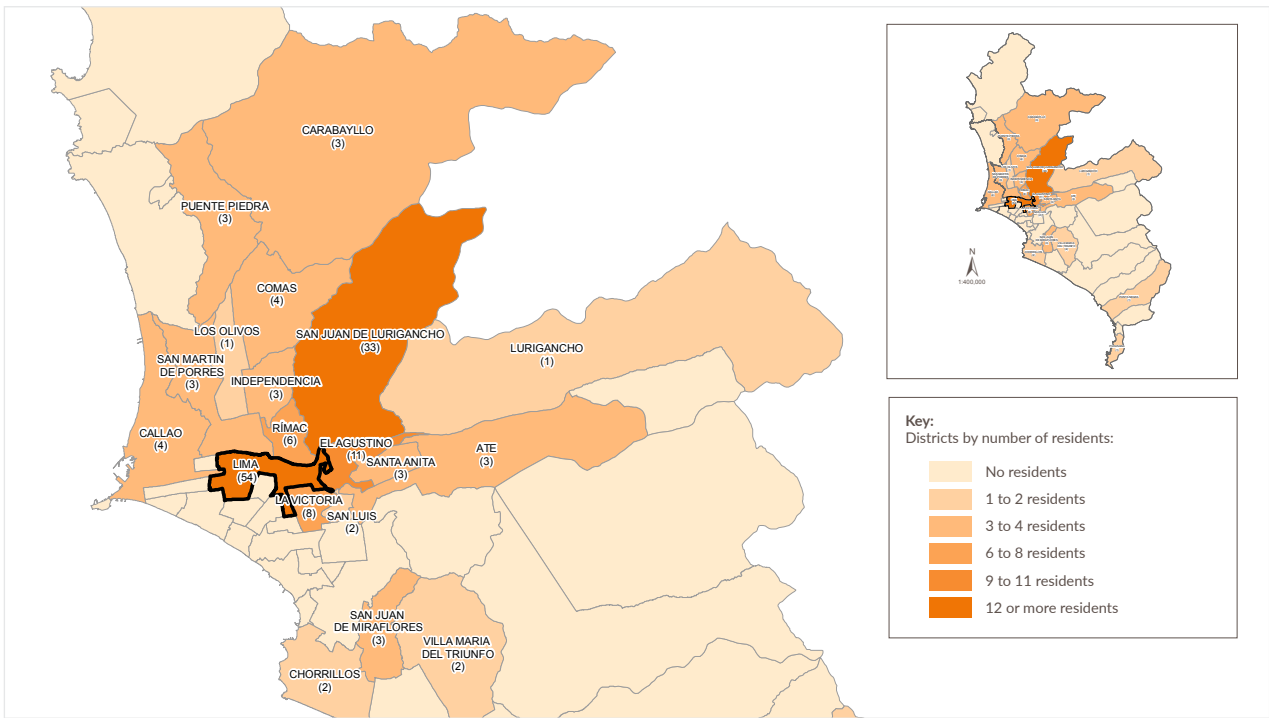
PROLIMA, the authority responsible for implementing the historic Downtown Lima Master Plan, has focused on reclaiming and restoring the urban landscape and historic monuments. The goal is to give them back their original authenticity and to encourage private investment in the area, including housing (currently impoverished) and businesses such as restaurants and hotels. PROLIMA has now joined the Municipality of Metropolitan Lima as a managing entity.

As part of its efforts, PROLIMA has reduced the number of the so-called “regulated” street vendors—those with work permits—allowed in historic Downtown Lima, as well as the number of locations where they are permitted to operate. This filtering process was conducted to assess the area’s capacity to accommodate both vendors and pedestrians. Additionally, the registration of regulated vendors has ended and the street vendors with disabilities who were already without permits before PROLIMA’s filtering process were excluded. Their associations were formed after the closure of permit granting by the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima in 2014.

## “No Inclusion Without Work.” A Study on Andahuaylas Street Vendors with Disabilities in historic Downtown Lima: Key Findings

### Why Vendors with Disabilities Work on Andahuaylas Street

- The blocks along Andahuaylas Street, where the surveyed vendors have settled, create a natural pathway for foot traffic that connects the bustling “Ramón Castilla” Central Market with wholesale or retail stores. This route also serves the densely populated districts of San Juan de Lurigancho and La Victoria nearby. Buyers often visit Andahuaylas Street, particularly for special holidays like Mother’s Day or Christmas but also throughout the year.



Source: National Geographic Institute (2020). "A Study of Organized Street Vendors with Disabilities in historic Downtown Lima - Andahuaylas Street." (WIEGO 2024). Prepared by Miguel Valderrama (2024). Scale: 1:8000.

- Most of the surveyed vendors live in the District of Lima, while the rest come from bordering districts. Proximity is crucial, as many persons with disabilities face significant challenges in travelling. This strategic location enables them to balance work (including purchasing supplies, warehousing, and transporting goods) and care responsibilities.
- Public sanitary services are located right outside the central market, on the sixth block of Andahuaylas Street, and are easily accessible to street vendors with disabilities. Although these services are not inclusive, they remain the only available health choice in the area.

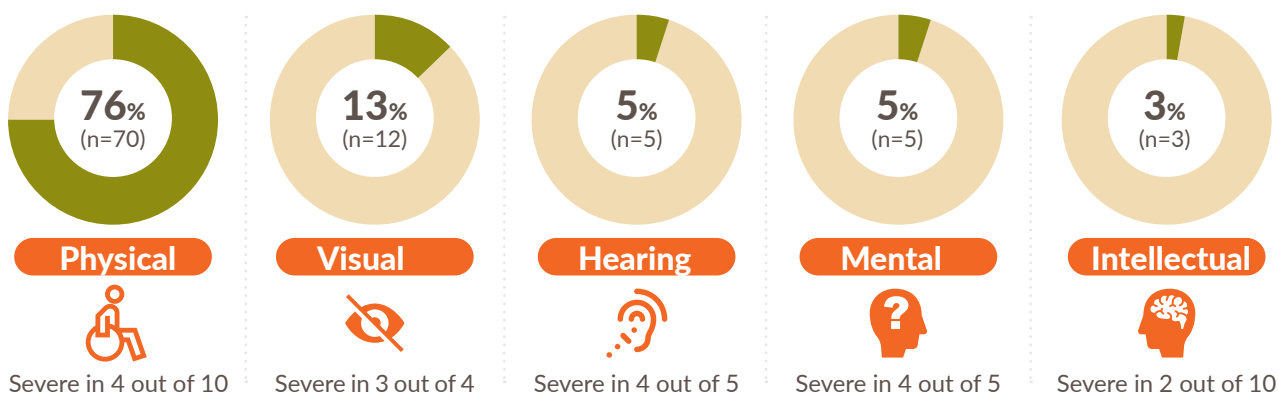


Source: National Geographic Institute (2020). "A Study of Organized Street Vendors with Disabilities in historic Downtown Lima - Andahuaylas Street." (WIEGO 2024). Prepared by Miguel Valderrama (2024). Scale: 1:8000.

- Protests and demonstrations near the Congress of Peru often lead to street closures, significantly affecting vendors' livelihoods. For many, "a single bad sales day can result in losses that do not even cover basic expenses."

## What Findings Show About Street Vendors with Disabilities

**Severe Disability Prevalence:** A significant majority of respondents (61%) are themselves persons with disabilities, and over half of this group experience severe impairments. This includes disabilities that are not easily recognizable by sight. The distribution of disabilities is as follows:



**Care Responsibilities:** The remaining 39 per cent of respondents work to provide care to a person with a disability in their household. Among these care givers, 58 per cent have a dependent child living with a severe disability. This means that, when they return home, they manage feeding, cleaning, carrying, and assisting their child with mobility, as well as overseeing catheters and changing diapers. Most care givers are women, half of whom are in frail health. Several local and national media reported that vendors in the area had “fake disabilities” without considering that some disabilities are not easily recognizable by sight or that many vendors work to provide care to dependent, severely disabled family members.

**No Alternative Income:** Street vendors with disabilities are unable to tap into alternative income streams, and their numbers have increased since COVID-19. Notably, 60 per cent of respondents migrated to Lima from other regions of the country due to a lack of opportunities at home. Half of the respondents reported having either *no schooling or incomplete secondary education*. Significantly, 42 per cent of them began trading less than four years ago.

**Long Working Hours and Heavy Responsibilities:** Most respondents work long hours to support their dependents, with 87 per cent responsible for persons with disabilities, school-age children, and/or elderly family members. In the sample, 65 per cent reported working 8-12 hours a day, and 78 per cent worked six or seven days a week.

**Women Are Majority and Sole Breadwinners and Lack Support:** Women are disproportionately represented in this group, comprising 64 per cent of respondents. A similar percentage reported lacking support from a partner. For 57 per cent of these women, their earnings are the sole source of household income.

**Disability Causes and Co-morbidities:** Disabilities among respondents have resulted from diseases, accidents, or congenital conditions, with 60 per cent also suffering from chronic illnesses that require ongoing care. Mobility aids include wheelchairs and walking sticks, with a lower number of respondents using crutches, prostheses, and glasses.

**Old Age:** One-quarter of respondents are aged sixty or older.

**Substantial Medical Expenses:** More than half of the surveyed street vendors currently undergo physical therapy, with one in three using private transportation to access treatment. Although 84 per cent of respondents have health insurance through the *Seguro Integral de Salud* [SIS, the government-subsidized health insurance scheme], the average street vendor in the sample spends 161 soles [1 USD 4 PEN] per month on personal medical expenses and 150 soles on family medical expenses.



Jacqueline Flores is a member of UNITRADIS. She works on the 10th block of Andahuaylas Street. Like many street vendors with severe disability, she was given a yellow registration card by the National Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (CONADIS). Photo Credit: WIEGO Lima Team.

**Daily Expenses Regardless of Sales:** Street vendors with disabilities face daily expenses, regardless of their sales performance. On a daily average, they spend 20 soles on helpers (to set up stalls), sanitation, transport, and warehousing. If they do not bring their lunch, they may spend up to 20 soles on food. On a good day, sales can range from 50 to 200 soles, while on a difficult day, respondents earn 40 soles or may as well end up empty-handed.

**Housing Costs:** Half of the respondents rent their homes, while one-third live in a house provided by family. Among renters, 83 per cent pay up to 500 soles per month in rent.

**Savings and Debt Management:** Despite financial challenges, 29 per cent of respondents can save, with half saving daily and the other half saving weekly. Additionally, 45 per cent are managing debts, either paying them down or keeping them under control.

**Interest in Ownership Projects:** A significant 84 per cent of respondents expressed interest in taking part in a project to build or buy their own premises, willing to contribute between 50 and 200 soles on a monthly or weekly basis.

**Limited Support from the Contigo Programme:** Only 7 per cent of respondents receive support from the government's Contigo Programme, which provides an allowance of 300 soles every two months for people with severe disabilities.

*I moved from Huancavelica 20 years ago. I have three daughters and a son who has cerebral palsy. One of my daughters was born prematurely at five months. She is now a year and a half old and attends therapy three times a week, costing 30 soles per session.*



*My son is 13 years old already and is unable to speak. Doctors told me he may live for 15 to 20 years. He cannot communicate verbally but he does recognize us. He is unable to sit up and must always remain in a horizontal position. I need some kind of pushchair that would allow him to lie down snugly while I work.*



Yngol Ramírez, Gloria Quispe, Luisa Lucero Iglesias Vda. de Lagos, Leonor Almonocid, Anatolio Vargas and Martín Bermúdez. Photo Credit: WIEGO Lima Team. Like most participants in the study, they were born in the Andean regions and sell small items that are easy to transport and store. They work on Andahuaylas Street, between the 3rd and the 10th blocks.



## Proposals by Street Vendors with Disabilities

Surveyed vendor associations have been actively developing proposals to create a more organized and regulated work environment that aligns with the historic urban landscape, as envisioned in the historic Downtown Lima Master Plan. This is an urgent need in the area. Vendors' proposals include the following initiatives:



Source: Google Maps. Prepared by Sebastián Méndez and Ayrton Vivanco (2024).

**Inclusion Avenue [La Alameda de la Inclusión]:** This project aims to provide temporary employment opportunities and savings options for street vendors, followed by relocation to dedicated premises. The initiative plans to use the blind walls<sup>8</sup> along Andahuaylas Street and the surrounding streets to reclaim public spaces and restore the historic urban landscape. The project will prominently feature messages advocating for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The project will also include ramps, tactile signage for visually impaired individuals, and audio-enabled traffic signals in this small area, as well as upgraded inclusive lavatories at the central market. The pavements will be equipped with readable codes for walking sticks, and there will be screens displaying information about prominent persons with disabilities, plus tactile artworks, and audio-enhanced maps. Additionally, the proposal includes training programmes for alternative trades that this population can engage in nearby, such as working with precious metals and handicrafts, restoring historical artefacts, or assisting tourists.



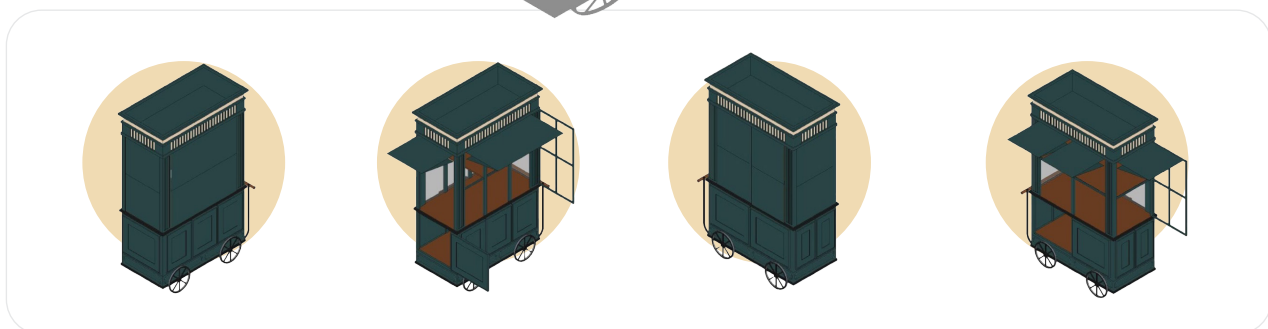
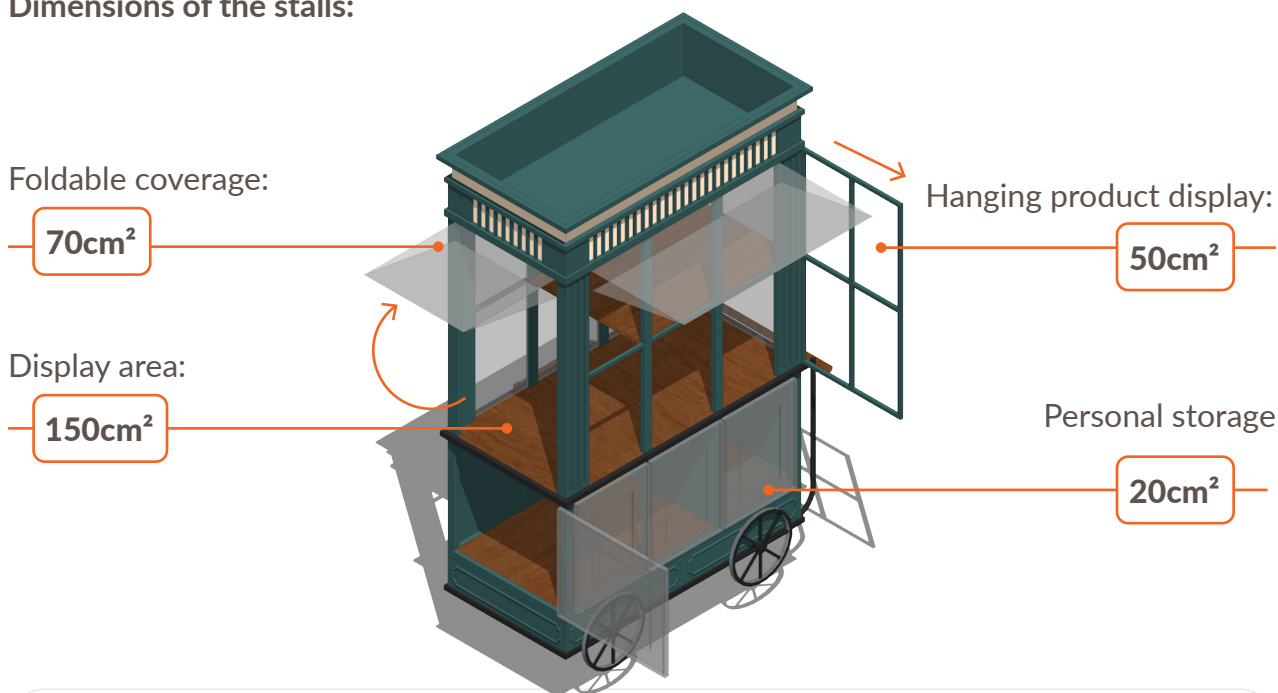
Drawing and Photography: Sebastián Méndez & Ayrton Vivanco (2024).

<sup>8</sup> Blind Walls: Walls without doors, windows, or other openings, whose surfaces have no access points that could be obstructed.

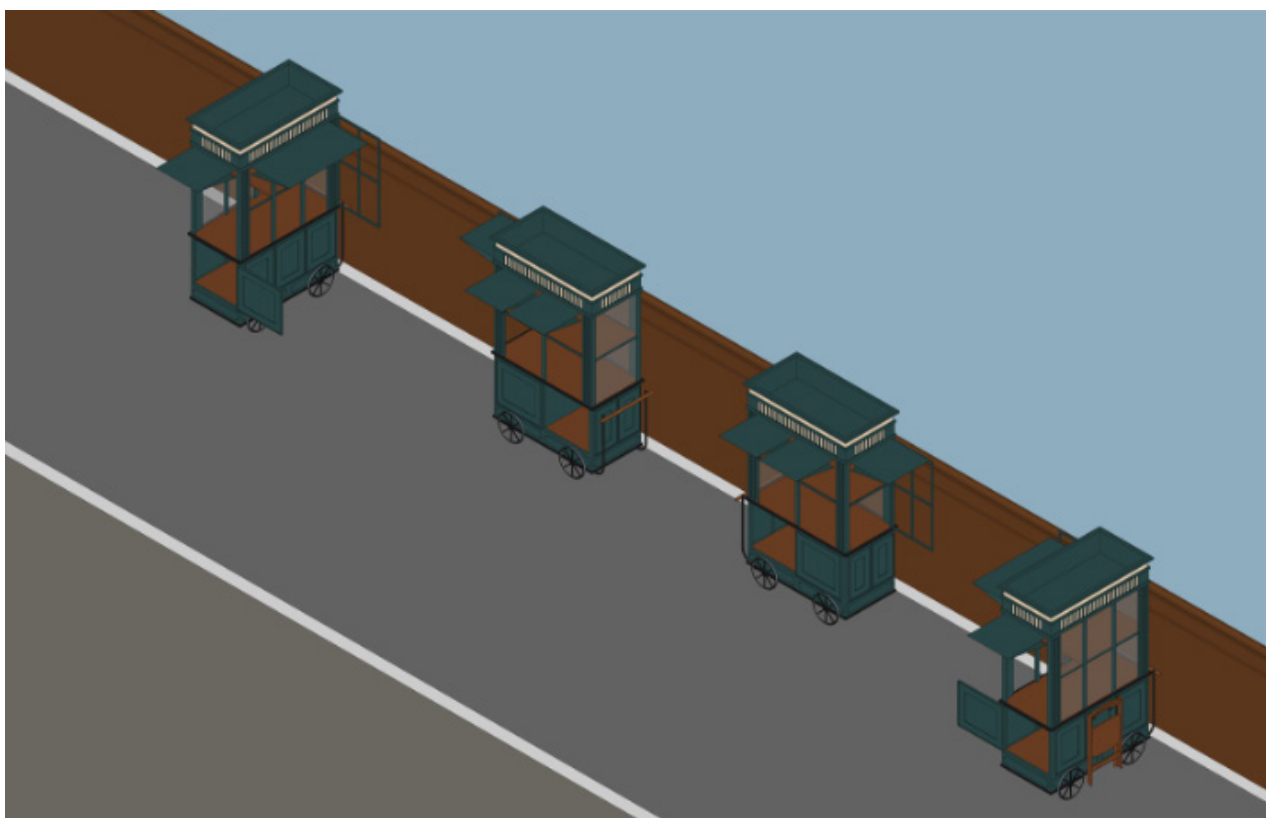


Illustration: Vending stalls for persons with disabilities

Dimensions of the stalls:



Drawing and Photography: Sebastián Méndez & Ayrton Vivanco (2024).



Drawing and Photography: Sebastián Méndez & Ayrton Vivanco (2024).

**Inclusive Market [*El Mercado Inclusivo*]:** This proposal envisions an extensive range of products and services for persons with disabilities, including prostheses, audiobooks, walking sticks, wheelchairs, and more. The project also incorporates banking services and other private investment opportunities, allowing street vendors with disabilities to finance the purchase of space and buildings through loans.

## What Street Vendors with Disabilities Need

- **Engage in Dialogue with Authorities:** A participatory process involving the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima and PROLIMA to implement the proposals designed by street vendors with disabilities, or to develop other mutually agreed-upon alternatives, is needed. For thousands, trading in the streets is a vital source of income by necessity, but it is crucial to prioritize and support the most vulnerable persons with disabilities.
- **Protect Livelihoods and End Harassment:** Safeguard the livelihoods of street vendors with disabilities by ending harassment, evictions, and property seizures, which negatively affect everyone involved.
- **Support and Enhance Savings Capacity:** Recognize and build upon the daily collective saving efforts of street vendors with disabilities, even if their funds are modest. This capability can empower them to amass savings and take on debt, eventually enabling them to own inclusive premises, improve their working conditions, and transition away from public roads.



## About WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).

