



## **THERE IS NO RECOVERY WITHOUT INFORMAL WORKERS**

### **COVID RECOVERY AND POST-COVID REFORMS: DEMANDS OF INFORMAL WORKER ORGANIZATIONS**

*“The current COVID-19 pandemic has become a wake-up call for every country, big and small, rich or poor, developed or developing. It has opened our eyes to the fragility of our health-care systems, the instability of our economic structures, rising communal hatred, and to the vulnerabilities of our society. How well we cope with this crisis will depend on how we respond to local – not only global – realities, and how well we recover from the crisis will depend on how willing we are to reorganize our priorities when we rebuild.”*

– Ela Bhatt, Founder of SEWA & Co-Founder of WIEGO

The COVID-19 crisis has focused attention on informal workers around the world. There is growing recognition that the pandemic and associated government restrictions have had a disproportionately negative impact on informal workers and their livelihood activities; that many informal workers provide essential goods and services; and, conversely, that many essential frontline workers are informally employed, without health insurance or paid sick leave. The COVID crisis has also exposed and exacerbated many of the pre-COVID inequities and injustices faced by informal workers and their families.

However, while many governments have targeted informal workers for COVID relief, few governments are building informal workers and their livelihood activities into COVID recovery plans and budgets. And yet full recovery without informal workers is neither desirable nor feasible.

Globally, 60 per cent of the workforce is informally employed; 90 per cent in developing countries, 67 per cent in emerging economies, and 18 per cent in developed economies — for a total of 2 billion informal workers worldwide ([ILO 2018](#)). Considered another way, informal workers generate well over half of employment worldwide; and as much as 90 per cent in developing countries. Therefore, investment in informal workers, their activities and businesses, is essential to economic recovery, and to making recovery faster, better and more equitable. As an essential first step, governments should put a moratorium on the harassment, fines, confiscation and evictions of informal workers and their livelihood activities. Adhering to this “Do No Harm” principle will require little (if any) financing.

This document provides a framework and concrete examples of the relief, recovery and longer-term reforms called for by organizations of informal workers that took part in WIEGO’s

[COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy study](#).<sup>1</sup> This “Summary of Demands” is intended to support these and other organizations of informal workers in their on-going struggles — their advocacy and negotiations — for a full and just recovery and for a “better deal” in the future for informal workers.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles	Examples of Worker Organization Demands
<p><b># 1 – Do No Harm</b> Local governments and the police should stop harassing, extorting, evicting and otherwise penalizing informal workers. They should not use the crisis or public health concerns as an excuse to demolish the homes and workplaces of the poor.</p>	<p><b>Delhi, India</b> The Delhi Municipal Corporation should prohibit eviction of street vendors as mandated in the 2014 Street Vendor Act. The Delhi Municipal Corporation should prohibit harassment of waste pickers and street vendors by police and municipal officials.</p>
<p><b># 2 – “Nothing for Us without Us”</b> Membership-based organizations of informal workers should be invited to help design, implement and monitor relief, recovery and reform efforts. They have the ground level knowledge and experience to ensure that these efforts are targeted to and appropriate for the poor, including the working poor, and to assist in channeling the resources.</p>	<p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> Government at all levels should invite informal worker representatives to serve on task forces or committees for recovery plans and social protection policies.</p>

*“The greatest fear that we are facing as recyclers is police harassment and that we cannot easily access recyclables [...] Most of the areas where we access our recyclables do not allow us to collect waste anymore. When we try and collect somewhere, police take our recyclables away and say we are littering”. –Waste Picker, Durban*

<sup>1</sup> **The COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Study** is a WIEGO-coordinated 12-city longitudinal study that assesses the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on specific occupational groups of informal workers and their households in Accra, Ghana; Ahmedabad, India; Bangkok, Thailand; Dakar, Senegal; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Delhi, India; Durban, South Africa; Lima, Peru; Mexico City, Mexico; New York City, USA; Pleven, Bulgaria; and Tiruppur, India. This Summary of Demands accompanies [Fact Sheets](#) developed for each study city and which provide city-level results in greater detail.

## COMMON DEMANDS

### 1. Financial Assistance to Pay Off Debts & Restore Savings and Assets

Policy Demands	Examples of Worker Organization Demands
Short-term recovery cash grants	<p><b>New York City, USA</b> New York State should pass the Excluded Workers Fund (NYS8277B/A10414A), which would impose a billionaire wealth tax in New York State and redistribute the revenue to workers who have been excluded from government relief programs.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) should provide immediate support to offset massive losses in earnings through extension of cash grants and food aid.</p>
Payment moratoriums and debt forgiveness: e.g. utility bills, rent, tuition, fines and fees	<p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The NBSSI, relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should enact a full moratorium on rent for market stalls, and forgive tolls and fees.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Delhi, Ahmedabad</i></p>

“We need financial support from the government. We need financial support from somewhere. We are late on rent.” –Street Vendor, New York City

### 2. Recovery Support for Work and Livelihoods

Policy Demands	Examples of Worker Organization Demands
Recovery cash grants, including an informal workers fund	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> The Ministry of Labour should provide grants of THB 100,000 to one million for registered organizations or cooperatives of informal workers.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Ahmedabad</i></p>

<p>Recovery stimulus packages including zero or low-interest loans and reduced taxes</p>	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> The Ministry of Labour should provide no-interest loans of THB 50,000 to 300,000 for individual informal workers to restart their livelihood activities, without requiring a guarantor.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The NBSSI, relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should help workers build back capital through access to small business support, including interest-free loans.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Ahmedabad</i></p>
<p>Reopening of natural markets of street vendors and sorting areas/spaces for waste pickers</p>	<p><b>Pleven, Bulgaria</b> The City of Pleven should provide free retail space in the downtown area to home-based workers and street vendors (<i>this demand was met by the City of Pleven in 2020</i>).</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Ahmedabad, Bangkok, Delhi, Lima</i></p>
<p>Government procurement quotes for goods and services from informal workers</p>	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> Government agencies at all levels should procure at least 30% of goods and services from informal workers.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Pleven</i></p>
<p>Employment guarantee schemes: statutory right to employment for specified number of days at specified wage rates</p>	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> The Government of Thailand should guarantee 10 days of work per month at minimum wage to all workers, by providing urgently needed services such as: care services for children, elderly, and infirm individuals; public works such as upgrading civic infrastructure; administrative support for public agencies, schools, and health facilities; and “green” services, such as home retrofitting and ecosystem restoration to mitigate and adapt to climate change.</p> <p><b>Tiruppur, India</b> The national, state and municipal governments should provide alternative employment schemes, especially for migrant workers.</p>

<p>Skills and business training and certification</p>	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b>  The Ministry of Labour should provide trainings and professional certification for informal workers to improve their capacities and earning power, for instance as skilled professional caregivers for children, elderly, and people with disabilities.</p> <p>The Ministry of Labour should provide digital technology trainings, including for online sales and marketing.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Accra, Ahmedabad, Dakar</i></p>
<p>Safe and decent work conditions and provision of protective gear and protective measures</p>	<p><b>Ahmedabad, India</b>  The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation should provide protective gear (e.g. masks, gloves and sanitizer) and protective measures (e.g. water points and safe-distance layouts) in street vendor markets.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b>  Municipal governments must invest in infrastructure improvements in street vendor markets, built markets and other worksites of informal workers to allow for better ventilation, sanitation and fire protection and an overall safer and more secure working environment.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar, Durban</i></p>
<p>Elimination of red tape: Simplification of procedures to obtain licenses and work permits</p>	<p><b>Mexico City, Mexico</b>  The city government and the mayor's office should streamline and simplify procedures for obtaining a license or work permit as an incentive for more informal workers to apply; and to be captured in government registries and, thereby, more likely to benefit from government programs.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b>  The NBSSI, relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should permit informal workers to apply for cash grants in-person and without excessive document requirements and procedures.</p>
<p>Vaccination for informal workers, prioritizing those who are deemed essential workers</p>	<p><b>Dakar, Senegal</b>  The Health Ministry and Social Action should recognize that waste pickers are essential service providers who help clean the city, and should prioritize vaccination of these workers in order to reduce their work risks.</p>

*"[The most important support we need going forward] are alternatives for women waste pickers that provide greater work security, even if outside waste picking; have technical training so that we can better sustain our families by developing other income-generating activities aside from our work in waste picking". –Waste Picker, Dakar*

### 3. Social Protection

Policy Demands	Examples of Worker Organization Demands
Expansion and upgrading of existing social assistance programmes by increasing benefit levels and expanding to cover new groups of people	<p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection should permanently extend the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme to informal workers and other vulnerable groups in urban areas.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar, Delhi, Durban, Pleven</i></p>
Reforming of contributory social protection systems to be more inclusive of informal workers	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> The Thai Ministry of Labour should reform Social Security, extending benefits to informal workers to be equal to those of formal workers; and should reform the Social Security Office as an independent agency, with workers as members of the governing body and equal representation from all enrollees.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The NHIS Secretariat of the Ministry of Health should remove all financial and administrative barriers to registering for the National Health Insurance System (NHIS).</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar, Delhi, Durban, Pleven</i></p>
Childcare services and school feeding programs for children of informal workers	<p><b>Durban, South Africa</b> The municipal government should provide affordable and accessible childcare facilities, near places of work.</p> <p><b>Mexico City, Mexico</b> The city government must design and implement a public childcare system, as mandated in Article 9.B of the Political Constitution of Mexico City.</p>

*"Domestic work is not a recognized occupation. We have employers, but domestic workers cannot register Article 33 Social Security. Domestic workers can only enroll in Article 40 Social Security as freelance/self-employed persons who do not have an employer. Social Security Article 40 has inferior benefits." – Domestic Worker, Bangkok*

#### 4. Enabling Policy and Legal Environment: Urban

Policy Demands	Examples of Worker Organization Demands
<p>Regulated access to –and right to work in – public spaces, including moratoriums on permits and fees</p>	<p><b>Bangkok, Thailand</b> Bangkok Metropolitan Authority should allow vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers displaced by recent evictions to return to their original places of work.</p> <p><b>Ahmedabad, India</b> The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation should reopen and protect all natural markets of street vendors and all wholesale markets.</p> <p><b>Durban, South Africa</b> The eThekweni Municipality should institute a moratorium on permit fees, irrespective of whether informal workers are in arrears or not.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> The NBSSI, relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should expand markets to create space for street vendors.</p> <p><b>Lima, Peru</b> Local governments must comply with Ordinance 1787 that regulates commerce in public space and promotes formalized relocations.</p>
<p>Basic infrastructure services at workplaces, including water, sanitation, and protective equipment</p>	<p><b>New York City, USA</b> New York City Council should use its Capital Fund to create a land trust for sustainability work and to ensure that worker-led sorting and depot spaces can continue to exist.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> Municipal governments must invest in infrastructure improvements at places of work to allow for better ventilation and sanitation and an overall safe and secure working environment.</p> <p><b>Durban, South Africa</b> eThekweni Municipality should reactivate public bathing facilities.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Delhi, Dakar</i></p>

Transport between home, markets and workplace	<p><b>Ahmedabad, India</b> The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation should provide affordable and accessible public transport for informal workers to transport their goods between their residences, wholesale markets and vending sites/markets.</p>
Decreased harassment & evictions	<p><b>Durban, South Africa</b> eThekweni Municipality should stop harassment as well as confiscation and impounding of goods.</p> <p><b>New York City, USA</b> The Mayor of New York City should remove the New York Police Department from any activities related to the enforcement of vending regulations (<i>this demand was formally met in February 2021</i>).</p>
Decriminalization of informal workers and their livelihood activities, with legal protections against abuse by police, local authorities, and employers	<p><b>New York City, USA</b> New York City should implement City Council Intro 116, adopted in February 2021, which mandates an increase in food vending permits, establishes a single vending enforcement agency to harmonize regulations, removes New York Police Department permanently from vending enforcement, and establishes a multi-stakeholder Vending Advisory Committee.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Accra</i></p>

*"We need policies that go hand in hand with our situation on the ground and must be fully implemented as such for the benefit of informal workers." – Market Trader, Durban*

**5. Enabling Policy and Legal Environment: National**

<b>Policy Demands</b>	<b>Examples of Worker Organization Demands</b>
Promotion of a labour-intensive economic growth strategy that is inclusive of informal workers and their livelihood activities	<p><b>Delhi, India</b> The Government of India should recognize and support informal workers and their livelihoods by promoting labour-intensive growth.</p>



<p>Integration of informal workers and their livelihood activities into economic planning for recovery and beyond: at the national, provincial/state and local levels</p>	<p><b>Delhi, India</b> Government at all levels should recognize migrant workers and facilitate their access to government relief programmes and schemes.</p> <p><b>New York City, USA</b> The NYC Small Business Services and other state agencies should extend small business loans and other support services to vendors.</p>
<p>Extension of labour and commercial rights to, respectively, informal wage workers and informal self-employed</p>	<p><b>Delhi, India</b> The national government should bring all informal workers, including those who work in homes and informal spaces, under the ambit of national labour laws and regulations which mandate the right to decent work and pay.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar</i></p>
<p>Registration of informal workers in social registries and labor force registries</p>	<p><b>Accra, Ghana</b> Relevant government ministries should register informal workers in regularly maintained registries (or databases) to better ensure relief and recovery measures are targeted to informal workers during and beyond crisis periods.</p> <p><b>Tiruppur</b> The state Ministry of Labour should recognize and register home-based workers under the state Manual Workers Welfare Board schedule of “unorganized” workers.</p>

*“We do an individual job in the waste collection. But that allows us to cope but we don’t have control in the waste management and in the determination of prices. We need to be involved in everything that is done related to the landfill”. – Waste Picker Leader, Dakar*

**6. Fair Terms of Employment and Trade**

<b>Policy Demands</b>	<b>Examples of Worker Organization Demands</b>
<p>Regular work and work orders</p>	<p><b>Lima, Peru</b> The Ministry of Labor should ensure that domestic workers gain access to jobs with fair remuneration, work schedules and working conditions, as well as worker benefits.</p>

<p>Fair wages and piece rates, with regular on-time payments</p>	<p><b>Tiruppur, India</b>  The Employers Association of Tiruppur should promote increased work orders and higher piece-rates for home-based workers.</p> <p>The state Ministry of Labour should support fair wages/piece-rates for home-based workers through tripartite negotiation mechanisms.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar</i></p>
<p>Fair prices for goods and services</p>	<p><b>New York City, USA</b>  New York state should increase and expand its existing bottle bill through Senate Bill S2129A, which would 1) increase the redemption fee to 10 cents per bottle to promote redemption and compensate canners for their critical recovery work; and 2) increase the handling fee to 5 cents per bottle to strengthen the redemption infrastructure.</p>

*"During this period, the boss tells you he has no money, so you have to wait to be paid your salary". – Domestic Worker, Dar es Salaam*

**7. Fundamental Demands**

<p><b>Policy Demands</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of Worker Organization Demands</b></p>
<p>Recognition and dignity as legitimate economic actors who provide essential goods &amp; services</p>	<p><b>Ahmedabad, India</b>  The national, state and city governments should recognize informal workers as essential workers who provide essential care and household services; goods and services in domestic and global supply chains; food and other household goods; and waste management services.</p> <p><b>Accra, Ghana</b>  The national government should declare waste picking, processing and recycling to be an official occupational category, and registration as a waste picker should include the right to government social welfare benefits and to emergency relief during crises like COVID-19.</p> <p><i>Similar worker demands in: Dakar</i></p>

Freedom from harm by the state or by the owners of capital	<p><b>Durban, South Africa</b> Chambers of Commerce should not exert pressure on local governments to act punitively against informal workers operating in public spaces.</p>
Access equal to that of formal workers to worker rights and benefits	<p><b>Bangkok</b> The Thai Ministry of Labour should reform Social Security, extending benefits to informal workers that are equal to those of formal workers.</p>
Access equal to that of all citizens to public goods and services	<p><b>Accra</b> National and municipal Governments should lift restrictions on public access to waste materials, including through the closure of dumpsites; and source segregation schemes should protect the livelihoods of informal waste pickers who lose access to materials.</p>
Representative voice in policy-making & rule-setting processes	<p><b>Accra</b> Government at all levels should involve informal workers and their organizations as key stakeholders in all decision-making processes that impact on their work, including inviting informal worker representatives to serve on recovery-related task forces or committees.</p> <p><b>Bangkok</b> The national and municipal governments should guarantee participation and monitoring by the Federation of Informal Workers, other civil society organizations, and academics to ensure that the policy and legal implementation process is effective and efficient.</p>

*"We have to unite, to support each other because the government doesn't support us. We have to do our best [for] institutions to recognize us as workers. Subcontracted workers [need] to have labour rights, self-employed [need to have] access to markets and premises at local level. Domestic workers have to insist that our government should ratify Convention 189. Street vendors don't have any rights. We all should unite and place demand on our government to recognize us as workers and that we are visible. Only in this way we will have access to social schemes." – Home-Based Worker, Pleven*

## SECTOR-SPECIFIC DEMANDS

In addition to the common core demands outlined above, each occupational or trade group among informal workers has sector-specific demands.

### Domestic Workers

<b>POLICY DEMANDS</b>
Recognition as essential workers during the COVID lockdowns and other such crises
Recognition as workers with worker rights
Ratification of ILO Convention 189 – and implementation of related legislation

*"We are permanently trying to convince the government to have very positive policies towards domestic workers. And that's why we have been able to have the domestic workers formalize their employment. Now, they are formal in terms of the law. They have the salary structure put by the government. The minimum wage has been set, and we're still convincing the government to ratify Convention 189."* – General Secretary of CHODAWU, Dar es Salaam

### Home-Based Workers

<b>POLICY DEMANDS</b>
Recognition as essential workers producing essential goods and services
Rebuilding of supply chains in which home-based workers are engaged, including fair terms of employment and trade for home-based workers who are employees, dependent contractors or self-employed
Recognition as workers with worker rights – as self-employed, wage workers or dependent contractors
Market access and commercial rights for self-employed home-based workers
Ratification of ILO Convention 177 – and implementation of related national legislation
Basic infrastructure services for homes and workplaces

*"I just feel like the lockdown has opened up so we must get work now, now everything has returned to normal. Yes, the cases are increasing, but work is going on as usual, so at least now they must give us work. People are wearing masks, they're trying to stay safe from the virus, so now we must get work"* – Home-based worker, Delhi

### Street Vendors

<b>POLICY DEMANDS</b>
Recognition as essential workers who provide food and other essential goods and services
Reforms and implementation of legislation protecting and regulating street vending

Recognition and protection of natural markets of street vendors
Reduced harassment, bribes, confiscation, evictions, relocations
Basic infrastructure services at natural markets – water points, toilets, sanitation services and lighting

*"Because this pandemic is going to persist, we would like to have a space to work in peace, without being scared of being expelled, hit or stripped from our merchandise. We want to be safe". – Street vendor, Lima.*

*"A post-COVID reality will be related to fixing the existing system. A post-COVID reality will look like vendors are out there operating their business legally, not being harassed. Resources should be allocated to support [vendors]... resources like cash assistance, like small business development trainings, like financial education trainings. A lot of these resources need to be invested in these communities moving forward." – Mohammed Attia, SVP Director, New York City*

## Waste Pickers

<b>POLICY DEMANDS</b>
Recognition of waste pickers as essential workers who provide waste collection and recycling services, thereby helping to clean cities and reduce carbon emissions
Reforms and implementation of legislation to protect and regulate waste pickers' role in the recycling chain
Right to waste and right to bid for solid waste management contracts
Provision of space, warehouses and equipment to transport, store, sort, bundle and process reclaimed waste
Reduced harassment and confiscation of goods
Fair prices for waste collection and recycling services and for recyclable waste materials
Support to organizations of waste pickers
Support services for waste pickers
Recognition of waste pickers as service providers, who should be provided with contracts, salaries, social security, uniforms and PPE.

*"We waste pickers used to sort waste alongside the roads but now the police do not allow us to do so. We waste pickers live in small houses in crowded neighbourhoods. The streets are very narrow so that we cannot sit there to do our work. If a waste picker leaves a bag full of garbage outside her home, the policeman or city officials will come and take the bag. Our government builds big parking lots but does not provide any place to waste pickers for sorting waste. The government must provide us space for our work as they have provided space to everyone." – SEWA Waste Picker Leader, Ahmedabad*

# ANNEX: WORKER ORGANIZATION PLATFORMS OF DEMANDS (BANGKOK, ACCRA, NEW YORK CITY)

## PLATFORM OF DEMANDS (BANGKOK): FEDERATION OF INFORMAL WORKERS OF THAILAND

### 1. Work and Employment Recovery

#### 7.1. Creation of Informal Worker Fund:

- 7.1.1. Provide no-interest loans of THB 50,000 to THB 300,000 for individual informal workers to restart their occupations, without requiring a guarantor.
- 7.1.2. Provide grants of THB 100,000 to THB 1 million for registered informal worker groups or cooperatives.

#### 7.2. Promotion of Homeworker Fund:

- 7.2.1. Provide no-interest loans of THB 50,000 to THB 300,000 for individual home-based workers to restart their occupations, without requiring a guarantor.
- 7.2.2. Support grants of THB 100,000 to THB 1 million for registered producer groups.

7.3. **Right to work in public space:** “Return the pavement” to street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers who were displaced by anti-worker policies, supporting them to return to their original places of work.

7.4. **Jobs guarantee:** Guarantee 10 days of work per month at minimum wage to all workers, by providing urgently needed services such as: care support for children, elderly, and infirm individuals; public works such as upgrading civic infrastructure; administrative support for public agencies, schools, and health facilities; and “green” services, such as home retrofitting and eco-system restoration to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

7.5. **Employment protection payments:** Provide co-payment for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) affected by the pandemic to guarantee workers half of their normal salary, to prevent formal workers from becoming informal workers.

7.6. **Informal worker goods and services quota:** Institute quota for government at all levels to procure at least 30% of goods and services from informal workers affected by COVID-19.

7.7. **Business platform development:** Help informal workers market goods and services, to increase their competitiveness.

7.8. **Equality in policy-making:** Guarantee that supportive economic policies for informal workers are inclusive of all informal occupational sectors.

## **2. Training and Skills Development for Post-COVID Economy**

**2.1 Care upskilling:** Provide trainings and professional certification for informal workers to improve their capacities and earning power, for instance as skilled professional caregivers for children, elderly, and people with disabilities.

**2.2 Technology and marketing upskilling:** Provide technology trainings, including for online sales and marketing.

**2.3 Free and subsidized training: Provide** all training for free, offer stipends equivalent to minimum wage, provide meals and transportation, and connect workers to jobs or directly improve their business models.

## **3. Equity in Social Security**

**3.1 Unemployment Insurance for All:** Guarantee that workers registered under Social Security Article 40 are entitled to unemployment benefits.

**3.2. Equality in Social Security:** Reform Social Security to guarantee that all enrollees of Article 33, 39, and 40 receive the same benefits. Reform the Social Security Office as an independent agency, with workers as members of a governing body, and equal representation from workers enrolled under Articles 33, 39, and 40.

**4. Stakeholder Participation:** For the above agenda (1 to 3), guarantee participation and monitoring from FIT, civil society, and academics to assure the implementation process is effective and efficient

## **PLATFORM OF DEMANDS (ACCRA): KPONE LANDFILL WASTE PICKERS ASSOCIATION, GREATER ACCRA MARKETS ASSOCIATION (GAMA), INFORMAL HAWKERS AND VENDORS ASSOCIATION OF GHANA (IHVAG) AND KAYAYEI YOUTH ASSOCIATION**

Local and national governments must act **now** to support Accra's informal workforce:

All sectors would benefit from the following measures:

- **Ensure universal access to social protection:** All informal workers need access to social protection – health care, child care and income security – that will prevent, protect and mitigate against risks to their incomes and help them cope after an event or shock like COVID-19. Although building out a comprehensive social protection system may take time, the government could take immediate steps in this direction in the following ways:

- The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) should provide immediate support to offset massive losses in earnings through extension of cash grants and food aid to informal workers.
- The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection should permanently extend the LEAP program to informal workers and other vulnerable groups in urban areas.
- The NHIS Secretariat of the Ministry of Health should remove all financial and administrative barriers to registering for the National Health Insurance System (NHIS); NHIS registration should be free and simple for all informal workers.
- Government support for more quality childcare services in and around markets for women informal workers should be included in the new Early Childhood Care and Development Policy.
- **Create a registry of informal workers:** A major barrier in providing immediate relief to informal workers during lockdown was the lack of data on informal workers and other vulnerable groups. As a result, where relief was provided it was often ad-hoc and often did not reach those who needed it most. Registration of informal workers and other vulnerable groups into a regularly maintained database would allow for channeling relief measures during and beyond crisis periods.
- **Provide immediate relief, de-linked from onerous requirements:** Relief that has been made available through the stimulus package (CAP) has included requirements which effectively exclude informal workers, including TIN and business registration certificates and online applications. Informal workers should be permitted to apply for cash grants, not credit, in person and without requirements which would exclude them.
- **Improve occupational health and safety:** Support is needed for informal workers to access PPE. Municipal governments must also invest in infrastructure improvements at places of work to allow for better ventilation and sanitation and an overall safe and secure working environment.
- **Commit to do no harm:** All levels of government must commit to put an end to measures that exacerbate the vulnerability of informal workers and which often violate their rights. This should include: ending all evictions (including from place of work or home) and ending harassment, confiscations and fines by Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) task forces. Where relocations from place of work are absolutely necessary, AMA must work with workers' organizations to find appropriate and feasible alternative places of work and trade. In addition, women informal workers should not face harassment for bringing children to the markets as they lack access to childcare services.
- **Decriminalize and promote informal livelihoods through supportive legislation:** Informal workers can gradually transition to the formal economy through supportive legislation which recognizes them as legitimate economic actors, and which promotes and supports, rather than criminalizes their work. See sector-based recommendations below for more information.
- **Include informal workers' organizations as partners in recovery:** Government should involve informal workers and their organizations as key stakeholders in all decision-making that impacts their work, including by designating informal worker representatives to serve on recovery-related task forces or committees and social protection policies such as the extension of cash transfers, registration, health care and childcare.



As this study has shown, different sectors in the informal economy have been impacted differently, and sector-based approaches are needed in addition to the general measures listed above.

**Kayayei:** Of all sectors covered in this study, kayayei were the most vulnerable pre-crisis, and have been the most severely impacted by the crisis, with unsustainably low earnings reduced further and many struggling to meet basic needs. The Ministry of Gender and relevant municipal assembly departments should act now to:

- Provide temporary child care measures in the Central Business Districts when schools are closed.
- Assign dedicated social workers to provide support to organizations of kayayei in the following areas:
  - Securing access to scholarships for kayayei to continue their studies where it is their desire to do so.
  - Counseling for expectant mothers on where to access relevant support and prenatal care.
  - Support to kayayei in enrolling children in school.
- Provide livelihood support to kayayei through:
  - Skills training in alternative livelihood areas.
  - Access to capital to start a new livelihood activity.

**Street vendors:** As this study has shown, street vendors have been effectively excluded from the small business support programme designed under CAP to provide relief to small and micro enterprises. At the same time, vendors have struggled to get back to work amid depressed demand and confusing and conflicting regulations about where and when they are permitted to vend. For years, street vendors' organizations like the Informal Hawkers and Vendors Association of Ghana (IHVAG), have been advocating for a simplified and clear regulatory framework which would support rather than penalize work in public space, creating benefits for vendors and pedestrians alike. Now, without clear and supportive regulations, vendors may not recover from this crisis. The NBSSI, relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should act now to:

- Provide support to build back capital through access to small business support, including interest-free loans.
- Provide PPE and clear health and safety guidelines, while allowing vendors to work free from harassment from authorities.
- Expand markets to create space for vendors.
- Revise the current vending by-laws in collaboration with street vendors' representative organizations, in order to create a more supportive and effective regulatory framework.

**Market traders:** Like street vendors, market traders have been left out of small business relief. Traders continue to earn a fraction of pre-crisis earnings as customer demand remains low and, in many cases, debts for market stalls, capital, and tolls and fees are mounting. The NBSSI,

relevant municipal assembly departments and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should act now to:

- Provide support to build back capital through access to small business support, including interest-free loans.
- Provide a full moratorium on rents for market stalls, and forgiveness of tolls and fees.

**Waste pickers:** Waste pickers have continued to provide environmental services to the greater Accra region – diverting waste from overflowing landfills – without any relief or support from government for their services. Waste pickers have seen their supply chains stressed to the point of breaking during the crisis, as buyers stop purchasing materials or purchase at severely depressed prices. The national government should act now to:

- Provide tax incentives to recycling companies to stimulate demand for recyclables.
- Develop an Extended Producer Responsibility policy that supports the integration and formalization of the informal waste sector, which fully funds waste and litter collection for all residents, including low-income neighborhoods which are currently underserved, and which includes minimum recycled content mandates for producers.
- Coordinate with and support municipal governments to ensure full coverage of waste collection services, including and especially in low-income communities, and facilitate the transition of waste pickers from the informal to the formal economy through the provision of contracts, material recovery facilities and tricycles for doorstep waste collection.
- Provide PPE to protect against constant exposure to contaminated waste.
- Work with local governments and with informal waste pickers' organizations and allies to establish a clear policy framework for informal waste sector integration that outlines strategies and funding mechanisms for the integration of the informal sector.
- Ensure that any restrictions on public access to waste materials, including through the closure of dumpsites and source segregation schemes, should invoke livelihoods safeguarding processes for informal workers who lose access to materials. These processes should be developed in collaboration with informal workers and their allies.
- Ensure that waste picking, processing and recycling should be declared an official employment category, and registration under this status should include the provision of government social welfare benefits as well as automatic eligibility for emergency relief during crises like COVID-19.

## **PLATFORM OF DEMANDS (NEW YORK CITY): STREET VENDOR PROJECT AND SURE WE CAN**

- Immediate passage of City Council Intro 1116, which would raise the cap on food vending permits; establish a single vending enforcement agency to harmonize regulations and remove NYPD permanently from vending enforcement; and establish a multi-stakeholder Vending Advisory Committee.
- Passage of NYS6817A/NYA9782, which would eliminate all caps on vending permits or licenses in New York State.

- Passage of the Excluded Workers Fund (NYS8277B/A10414A ), which would impose a billionaire wealth tax in New York State and redistribute the revenue to workers who have been excluded from other government relief programs.
- Extension of small business loans and other support services to vendors by NYC Small Business Services and other state agencies.
- Increase and expansion of New York State’s existing bottle bill as an economic recovery and environmental measure. Senate Bill S2129A proposes to expand the types of containers covered by the current bill. In addition to what the bill currently proposes, New York should 1) increase the redemption fee to 10 cents to promote redemption and compensate canners for their critical recovery work, and 2) increase the handling fee to 5 cents to strengthen the redemption infrastructure.
- Recognition of canners as stakeholders in NYC’s urban waste management system and in emerging EPR systems: NYC must recognize the estimated 8,000 to 10,000 informal canners who play a vital role in the circular economy. By diverting renewable materials from landfills, and diverting redeemable materials from the (taxpayer-funded) recycling system to the corporate-funded) redemption system, this green army saves New York City money and contributes to zero-waste goals. City officials and the sanitation department (DSNY) should recognize canner rights of access to trash containers and bags, and contribute to efforts to dignify this work. Proposed Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation at the state level should include canners as stakeholders.
- Ensuring safety and health of canners: Low-income workers like canners often lack access to affordable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to keep themselves, their families and their communities healthy. NYC should continue to provide free PPE, education and testing outreach to the canner community through the NYC Test & Trace Corp Program. Beyond COVID-19, policymakers should support efforts to make the collection and sorting of returnable containers less hazardous for canners.
- Support for Sure We Can’s efforts to find a permanent home: The ability of Sure We Can to provide a safe space for canners and to advocate for their rights and well-being is jeopardized by the current lease agreement, which terminates in early 2021. An allocation from the NYC Council Capital Fund would be used to create a land trust for sustainability work and ensure that Sure We Can remains a long-term partner in the city’s efforts to build the circular economy and meet zero-waste goals while increasing access to green jobs for poor and marginalized workers.



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