

# COMPENDIUM OF WIEGO AND SEWA CASE STUDIES

Secretary General's High Level Panel on  
Women's Economic Empowerment

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**Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing**



**SEWA**

Self Employed Women's Association

# LEGAL BARRIERS

1. Advocacy and Progressive National Legislation: StreetVendors in India
2. Market Traders and Legal Victories in Warwick Junction, Durban, South Africa
3. Legal Change for the Adoption of an Inclusive Recycling Model in Bogotá, Colombia
4. Social Mobilization and a New Legal Framework for Inclusion of Informal Recyclers in Solid Waste Management in Brazil
5. Global Standard Setting and Advocacy for Domestic Workers

# 1. Advocacy and Progressive National Legislation: Street Vendors in India

Street vending is an age-old occupation in India that continues to grow in numbers. Today, there are estimated to be 12 million street vendors in India, of which about 25 per cent are women. In cities and towns across India, street vending is an important source not only of employment but also of affordable goods and services at convenient locations. Yet, despite the benefits street vendors bring to Indian cities, they are considered illegal and are constantly harassed by local government and the police; they are seen as a burden and hindrance to urban planning and renewal.

In this context street vendors in India, face many unfavourable conditions: displacement from vending sites and natural markets due to infrastructure projects; penalization from the city authorities and the police including eviction, confiscation of goods, violence, or imprisonment. This results in irregular income, lack of social security, lack of basic services like drinking water, toilets, drainage, lights, and solid waste collection; occupational health and safety risks; and barriers to entry into the profession.

Women vendors earn less than men and their profits are meagre, depending on location, mobility, and type of goods. In order to obtain space to sell, they often have to bribe authorities or other vendors. They also lack access to capital to expand their business and are dependent on moneylenders who charge exorbitant fees.

## Advocating for a new law

To address some of the most prevalent problems street vendors face, including inadequate organization, exclusionary policies, lack of legal protection and the absence of social security, SEWA adopted a strategy of advocacy, struggle, and development. The objective was for women vendors to develop and lead organizations of their own to bring forward the issues fellow members face.

At the national level, together with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), SEWA helped draft and successfully advocate for the first national legislation to support and regulate street vending-- the 2009 National Street Vendors Bill and the landmark 2014's The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act. One of the first steps in this process was to conduct a survey of street vending in six cities of India in 2002. The report of this survey, led by NASVI, served to highlight the increasing harassment of street vendors by local authorities and the growing exclusion of street vendors in city plans. The report generated a good deal of discussion and was presented at a national workshop organized by the Ministry of Urban Development in 2000. At that workshop, the Minister for Urban Development announced that a National Task Force on Street Vendors would be set up to frame a national policy with and for street vendors. These efforts ultimately culminated in the 2014 Street Vendors Act.

The act mandates that local vending committees should be set up in each local jurisdiction and that the cities have to negotiate with these local vending committees to determine where best to locate and how best to regulate street vending in each locale.

SEWA has also worked with vendors and cities on the ground as it has fought to protect natural markets. SEWA fought the eviction of vendors in markets especially in Ahmedabad and Delhi, winning cases in the High Courts and even in the Supreme Court.



*This vendor is in the minority of women vendors because she sells from a pushcart. Most women vendors sell from a fixed spot on the pavement. Photo: L. Vryenhoek*

## National Legislation: Street Vendors Act

Until the enactment of The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, there was no common law regulating street vending and hawking in India. Various other laws and acts determined the nature of street vending. The National Policy on Street Vendors in 2004 and 2009 led to the introduction of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2012, in Parliament. The salient features of the act include registration, town vending committees, restrictions around eviction and relocation, maximum fines for violation, dispute resolution processes, and the provision of civic facilities like solid waste management, electricity, drinking water, storage, protective cover, parking, and cleanliness.

## On the ground interventions

SEWA Delhi has also created an innovative new market—the Mahila (women’s) market—for 200 women vendors, who pay vendors fees to the city. Here, SEWA liaises with vendors, city officials, resident welfare associations, and other stakeholders to run and publicize the market.

Through its years of work in Ahmedabad, SEWA has built strategic relationships with important stakeholders: street vendors, other street vendor unions, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), the city police, lawyers, judges, Resident Welfare Associations, and Government Ministries. While they have not always been positive, these long-standing relationships have at least provided the street vendors of SEWA with opportunities for dialogue.

Finally, SEWA offers a holistic approach to worker empowerment. Through a co-operative, SEWA provides loans to vendors and helps with savings and deposits. It has provided health camps and conducted non-formal education classes. SEWA also links members to government programs such as old age and disability pensions.

## Results

As a result of these multi-pronged efforts:

- By 2014, nearly 100,000 women street vendors were organized in various cities.
- Trade committees, market committees, and market associations were formed.
- Because of advocacy efforts, five lakh vendors will not fall under the “illegal” vendor label, which will prohibit unscrupulous middlemen from functioning in the markets.

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

- A commitment to organizing, to strengthening unions and leadership, and increasing bargaining power with authorities.
- Working with municipal authorities collaboratively, but not fearing pointing out deficiencies.
- Emphasizing the needs of women vendors, who are most disadvantaged, and lobbying for Mahila Markets for them.
- Using legal measures to advocate for vendors’ rights.
- Taking an integrated approach that includes health, education, and other services like linking to government benefits.
- Advocating through media.
- Bringing together like-minded organizations to form a National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI).



*A street vendor prepares vegetables for sale. Photo: J. Luckham*

SEWA Bharat has demonstrated mechanisms through which the informal economy can be included in city planning and development.

## 2. Market Traders and Legal Victories in Warwick Junction, Durban, South Africa

### Background

Warwick Junction is Durban's largest transportation node and trading hub, located on the outskirts of the inner city. It hosts between 5,000-8,000 informal workers in various trade/sectors in nine distinct markets that are often collectively referred to as the Markets of Warwick. The products sold at these markets vary from beadwork, traditional arts and crafts, traditional cuisine, fresh produce, music and entertainment merchandise, clothing, accessories, and traditional medicine. In addition, 300 buses and 1,550 minibus taxis depart from the junction daily, and 38,000 vehicles also pass through daily (Dobson and Skinner, 2009).

Since the mid 1980s', a membership-based organisation called the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) had been in many negotiations with the city council for favourable policies for street traders in an attempt to reverse the negative policies of the apartheid era. Results have been mixed. For example, the City's commitment to traders, evidenced by the 1995 Durban Informal Trade bylaws, which generally legalized trading in public spaces was limited as the bylaws also allowed for continued criminalization of street trading instead of allowing for a more developmental approach. In 1996, in an attempt to manage these challenges, the City also launched an Area Based Management (ABM) initiative: the Urban Renewal Project (now known as the iTRUMP Project), which allowed the City to cooperatively tackle urban management challenges and diminish contentious relationships between urban managers and informal traders, leading to more appropriate interventions for the informal traders (Dobson and Skinner, 2009).

But despite these progressive post-apartheid policies, the City's approach in the last decade has begun to shift. There is a disjuncture between the intent of the existing legislation and the implementation on the ground. While the policies were intended to be inclusive and protect traders' rights, in reality the traders are becoming marginalized. The 2004 Public Realm Management Project, for example, is intended to stop "illegal unlicensed street trading." Tensions have also been growing between the various Warwick Junction stakeholders over proposed developments in the area for "urban renewal" projects that have threatened traders with eviction and the loss of livelihood. In particular, in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the City proposed to replace the Early Morning Market (EMM), one of the largest and oldest markets in Warwick Junction, with a mall.

The City's approach to the redevelopment of the EMM was combative, exclusive, and in complete contradiction of its own guidelines. The City did not consult the traders about the redevelopment, nor did it complete an environmental impact assessment. There was also no evidence to suggest that the interests of informal traders and those of the community of people that purchase goods from the market were ever considered when redevelopment decisions were made.

In addition, in August 2009, traders complained of harassment by the municipal market officials, particularly in the form of the confiscation of the goods off their table, if whatever reasons a trader was not physically at his or her stall.

### Capacity building and advocacy

In 2008, the non-profit organization Asiye Etafuleni was formed, guided by the conviction that supporting the provision of viable public spaces with income-producing potential for both street and market informal traders should be integrated into the city's planning and budgeting priorities with the aim of creating urban environments that are both supportive of informal workers' livelihoods and that create vibrant and culturally important urban spaces for the entire city.

From its founding, AeT has worked to develop strong relationships with local and international stakeholders and to create new opportunities for research, design, advocacy, and education around informal work and urban environments. AeT's advocacy efforts always focus on inclusivity and building capacity among informal workers, empowering them to become their own



*A street vendor from Warwick Avenue, Durban holds her produce. Women comprise the majority of Warwick's vendors. Photo: A. Buckland*

### Policy and Legal Environment

**Bylaw 7 of the eThekweni Municipality's Street Trading Bylaws (Kwa-Zulu-Natal Provincial Gazette MN 29, 1998 of 23 April 1998), Section 2(A)**, which stipulates that no person shall carry on the business of a street trader at a place or in an area declared under section 6A 2(a) of the Act as a place or area in which the carrying on of street trading is prohibited.

**Business Act 71 of 1991: Section 6A Powers of Local Authority**, which says the authority could prescribe a penalty of a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months should a street vendor trade where trading is restricted or prohibited and stipulates the authority may remove goods, receptacles, vehicles, or other moveable structures that the authority suspects are being used or intended to be used in or in connection with the carrying on of the business of street vendor, pedlar or hawker.

**Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977**, which allows for search warrants, entering of premises, seizure, forfeiture and disposal of property connected with offences.

advocates, and on promoting environments and processes that embrace workers' voices and engagement.

While supporting market traders in the Early Market Traders case, AeT realized that legal education and advocacy were crucial components of building informal workers' capacity. In 2011, AeT developed a comprehensive legal framework that was rooted in three strategic premises: sticks, rules, and tools (figure 1).

As part of growing the "tools," AeT developed a Street Law programme in conjunction with the traders and in partnership with Students for Law and Social Justice (SLSJ), a South African students' organization dedicated to protecting human rights, preventing discrimination, and promoting social justice and the rule of law. The programme developed street law seminars conducted by the law students. These seminars were used as practical and participatory methods of creating awareness of legal rights, responsibilities, and engagement in democratic processes. As part of these seminars, AeT held training sessions on negotiations, mediation, and dispute resolution for market leaders and MBO representatives. By 2013, six seminars were conducted with a total of over 120 informal worker participants

In partnership with the Legal Resource Centre (LRC), SLSJ, and various trader organizations, AeT also developed a "Trader Know Your Rights" campaign, which provided Warwick Junction traders with information about traders' rights through information sessions. In addition to exploring the process behind accessing the Small Claims Court to resolve minor civil claims for damages, and with support from the LRC and the SLSJ, AeT initiated a significant number of cases on behalf of traders, cases that were in turn supported by various legal institutions.

### Saving Early Morning Market

A challenge to review the decision of the municipality to grant the lease for the Early Morning Market was filed in August 2009. The applicants were fresh produce sellers, barrow operators; chicken sellers and bovine head cooks. The review of the city's decision was based on administrative law and constitutional principles, ranging from aspects of procedural fairness in terms of the requirement to consult with a party likely to be adversely affected by an administrative decision; to arguments on the importance of preserving the site as a heritage landmark. Perhaps most importantly for the traders and barrow operators, was the argument that closing the market represented a violation of the principles of fair administrative decision making, in that no rational justification exists for taking away the livelihoods of so many.

To date the municipality had not filed any opposing papers, nor sought to refute or clarify the allegations leveled against its administration. The matter is now in the process of being settled, which will bring to an end one of the more important victories for civil society in the last 10 years in South Africa.

WIEGO provided research, technical and strategic planning support to AeT throughout this process. Caroline Skinner, Director of Urban Research for WIEGO, had just completed a detailed documentation of the Warwick Junction project at the time the mall proposal was first touted, as a case of inclusive planning for street traders. This documentation in part informed campaign materials and court papers.

### Precedent Setting Court Ruling

In 2014, again with support from AeT, WIEGO and the Legal Resources Centre filed another successful case against the Durban/eThekweni municipality, this time to challenge the power of the municipality to confiscate and impound street vendors' goods. The Legal Resources Centre and AeT decided to file a test case in the Durban High Court, challenging the power of the city to confiscate and impound the goods of vendors/traders and seeking appropriate compensation for John Mackwicana, the street vendor whose goods had been confiscated. Caroline Skinner served as an expert witness in this process. In the High Court, the Legal Resources Centre lawyer argued that the provisions in the eThekweni Municipality's Street Trading Bylaws which authorize confiscations are in conflict with the constitutional right to equality, the right to choose one's trade or occupation, the right to property and the right of access to courts.

In February 2015, a judgment and an order from the High Court were made in John's favor. The presiding judge also ordered that the municipality compensate John 775 rand (\$62) with interest for the confiscated goods and also compensate him for his legal fees. The judge declared the clause in the bylaw that allows for impoundment and confiscation of street trader goods "unconstitutional, invalid and unlawful" and ruled that the city needed to redraft this section of the bylaws, which it is currently in the process of doing. In addition the court also ruled that the city is no longer exempt from liability for the loss of the goods. This means that the police can be held liable if trader goods "disappear".

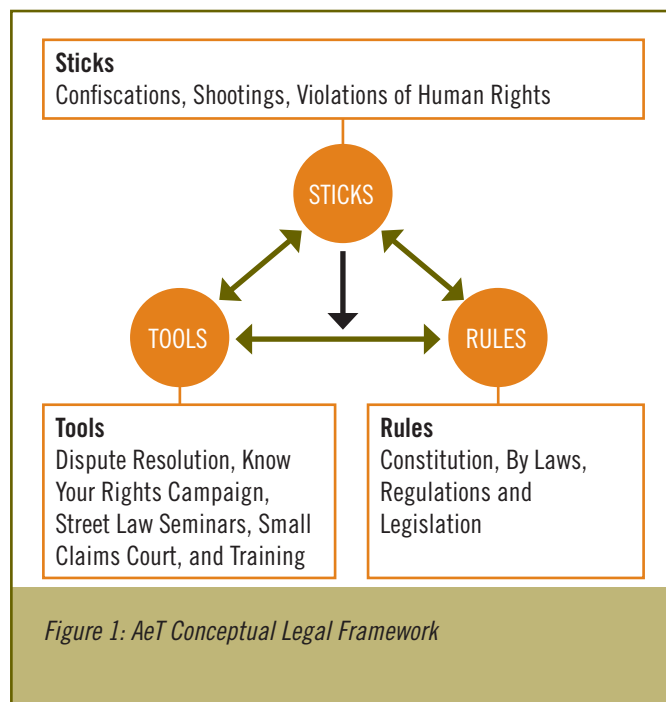


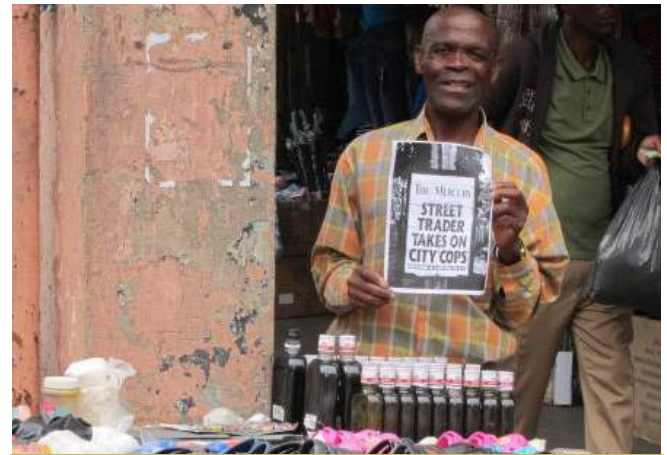
Figure 1: AeT Conceptual Legal Framework

This judgment represented an enormous victory for John and his fellow street vendors/market traders across South Africa, since the judge acknowledged that street vendors are engaged in legitimate activities but remain vulnerable to unfair practices by local authorities.

The judgment is precedent setting; its legal arguments can be used by street vendors around the world in their struggle for economic justice. It sets the precedence for shifting street vendors from being treated under criminal law to being treated under administrative law with clear rights and responsibilities.

## Built Environment

AeT has also spearheaded a nationally and internationally acclaimed effort to implement innovative urban design solutions in Warwick Junction to improve conditions for market traders. These have included opening up new pedestrian routes, widening walkways and easing congested trading conditions. These changes impacted on traders in important ways: the trading environment improved as the number of possible routes for pedestrians meant that traders did not need to congregate around a few exit points; the opening up of congested areas made cleaning easier and health conditions improved; and canyons were removed which reduced opportunities for criminals.



*John at Warwick Junction holding the cover of the newspaper stating "Street Vendor Takes on City Corps"*

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

AeT has been instrumental in achieving outcomes that have made a lasting impact on the work and lives of workers in Warwick Junction. New policies and city bylaws have been reviewed and, in some instances, Warwick traders influenced changes to policy and regulations. The traders have a great desire to engage and negotiate with the City, especially since access to legal assistance and support has given traders confidence in demanding protection of their rights as workers.

These achievements have also provided learning opportunities for other trader and trader-support organizations, particularly in developing countries:

- Legal education is important for informal workers as it gives them the confidence to fight for the implementation of enabling policies and legislation.
- Workers who undergo legal education are more able to influence policy and are able to monitor and challenge a lack of implementation.
- It is important for community legal support institutions and organizations to partner with grassroots trader organizations in order to build their capacity to organize and recruit more members.
- Engaging with authorities and city and government officials is generally a complicated issue. Informal workers require constant guidance to build their skills and knowledge on how to engage with these authorities.

# 3. Legal Change for the Adoption of an Inclusive Recycling Model in Bogotá, Colombia

Colombia's waste pickers have traditionally faced multiple risks and barriers. Often they are migrants and displaced people driven from their homes by the country's armed conflict. They have low levels of education and few employment alternatives. On average, their daily income is less than US \$4 a day, and only 5 per cent of these workers can afford to make contributions to social security. As waste pickers, they face harassment, discrimination, abuse, and even violence.

For decades, if not centuries, recicladores (waste pickers) in Colombia's capital, Bogotá, have earned a living by recycling metal, cardboard, paper, plastic, and glass and selling the recycled material through intermediaries. Today there are an estimated 12,000 recicladores in Bogotá. Waste picking is a difficult job, and workers are subject to arbitrary pricing by middlemen and to harassment and discrimination on the streets.

These low wages and abuses arise from a system that favours models of privatization and from a changed perception of waste from worthless to valuable material. This has meant that in many cases waste pickers have lost access to their source of livelihood- waste. They have also lost regulatory and policy battles to private interests that have the capital and political influence to define governance practices in their favour.

## What Changed?

Since the 1990s, the Asociación Cooperativa de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB) has been defending waste picking as a profession, encouraging the upward movement of waste pickers in the recycling value chain, and working towards the integration and remuneration of their activities into the public service. It has 1800 members, 58 per cent of which are women.

Under WIEGO's Inclusive Cities project, ARB opted to overcome the challenges waste pickers face through four strategic, simultaneous approaches: legal defence of waste pickers' fundamental rights, social mobilizing, forging alliances, and developing policy proposals.

The use of legal defence has been ARB's most visible approach and has produced a series of Constitutional Court pronouncements upholding the waste pickers' rights to:

- Participate as independent service providers in the waste management system in the components of recycling and transportation.
- Benefit from affirmative actions to guarantee a level playing field vis-à-vis other tenders for procurement contracts and to be able to integrate more effectively into the waste management system.
- Have legislation on waste management that does not affect their right to work and to earn a livelihood.
- Be recognized as public service providers and be compensated for their work, which benefits the city.

The recicladores achieved a landmark victory in 2003 when the Constitutional Court ruled that the municipal government's tendering process for sanitation services had violated the basic rights of the waste-picking community. In making its case, the association and its pro-bono lawyers appealed to the Constitution's provision of the right to equality, arguing that waste pickers should be allowed preferential treatment and judicial affirmative action in the tendering and bidding process for government contracts to manage waste.



*A waste picker sorts plastics in a recycling centre. Photo: J. D. M. Mulford*

## Legal and Policy Environment

The legal and policy issues surrounding waste in Bogotá are complex. In general, the regulatory framework for dealing with waste at the national and district level has been designed to favour burying garbage rather than introducing systems for recovery or reducing waste. This approach has emphasized the role of private corporations to the detriment of waste pickers. However, since the Constitutional Court passed Order 275 in 2011, a systemic change towards a model of waste management with greater emphasis on recycling has been happening. This model recognizes and rewards the work of waste pickers and has started to materialize: 1) at the municipal level with the District Decree 564 launching of "Zero Waste" program in 2012; and 2) nationally with the addition of a waste recovery component in public cleaning services.



Subsequent cases have appealed to constitutional provisions, including the right to survival as an expression of the right to life (article 11 of the Constitution), which was used to argue the right to pursue waste picking as a livelihood, and the right to pursue business and trade (article 333), which was used to argue that cooperatives of waste pickers – and not only corporations – can compete in waste recycling markets. The most recent ruling, in December 2011, halted a scheme to award US\$1.7 billion worth of contracts over ten years to private companies for the collection and removal of waste in the Bogotá City.

The court mandated that the cooperatives of waste pickers had a right to compete for the city tenders and gave the ARB until March 31, 2012 to present the municipality with a concrete proposal for solid waste management inclusive of the waste picking community.

In response to the court order (275), ARB worked to form a Recycling Pact with other organizations. In March 2012, in alliance with the Pact, ARB presented a proposal for the inclusion of waste pickers into the waste management system. Though some differences remain, the city adopted many points for this proposal in its own waste management plan. For example, the city developed a programme to compensate animal-traction vehicles, and it started a process to provide waste pickers with ID cards.

ARB played an important role in the negotiation and set up of this payment scheme, including a tariff methodology and incentives for end users to promote the concept of recovering recyclable materials. ARB also negotiated that payment be made directly to individuals and that all waste pickers would be the beneficiaries of the payment scheme, not just ARB members. WIEGO assisted the ARB with research, technical and policy support throughout the process of preparing the bid to the city.

## Results

Bogotá's payment scheme was launched in March 2013, and by January 2014, the scheme covered about 5,000 waste pickers, of whom 35 per cent were ARB members. To participate in the payment scheme, waste pickers had to comply with a number of requisites: they had to be included in the census of waste pickers, have an ID card, and have a bank account.

Waste pickers within the payment scheme receive \$87,000 Colombian pesos (about US \$46) for each ton of recuperated materials that is weighed at authorized weighing centres. Payments are bimonthly and are additional to the money received for the sale of recovered material.

ARB's efforts to document, analyze, and elaborate proposals enabled the organization to identify threats and opportunities facing waste pickers. It has also allowed the organization to develop information needed to effectively negotiate with

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

- ARB's strong organizational capacity and relationship with waste pickers.
- Clarity on goals and positions.
- Ethical leadership.
- Informed proposals and strategies based on research and analysis.
- Partnerships with national and international organizations and networks (i.e., ANR, Red Lacre).
- The primacy of basic human rights within the political constitution of Colombia and the existence of channels for legal recourse to individuals whose rights are abused by the actions or omissions of authorities.
- A government willing to change the model to include WP in the system.
- Informed use of legal mechanisms.
- Partnership with support organizations, which is key in effective negotiations.
- A high degree of cohesion within the organization as well as organizational strength.
- Continued resources to develop entrepreneurial skills and a business model.
- Recognition that change only happens with time.



*Colombia's waste pickers are considered pioneers for their experience in organizing.*  
Photo: L. Tuttle

“If the people, the leaders, our compañeros, do not understand that the outcomes are made by us, we will always be dreaming of, and hoping for, something that will never happen because we are not working towards it.”

– Nohra Padilla

# 4. Social Mobilization and a New Legal Framework for Inclusion of Informal Recyclers in Solid Waste Management in Brazil

During the last two decades, Brazil has moved to replace repressive policies on waste picking with new inclusive policies that give legal backing to redistributive measures and social recognition of informal waste picker organizations. As a result, Brazil has become one of the most progressive countries worldwide in its inclusive policies regarding waste pickers.

The first pieces of legislation in Brazil recognizing the role of informal waste pickers (known in Brazil as *catadores*) occurred at the municipal level in the early 1990s when the first partnerships between waste picker cooperatives and municipal recycling programs were formed, a process which subsequently moved to the state and national level.

An excellent example that illustrates effective strategies to coordinate and push progressive legislation at the local, regional and national levels is the social mobilization that led to the approval of the State Policy of Solid Waste in Minas Gerais in 2008 described below.



## Precedent setting legislation in Minas Gerais

In 2003 the Minas Gerais State Parliament responded to the demands of the waste picker movement and the Minas Gerais State Waste and Citizenship Forum by organizing a series of debates, public hearings and seminars where the need for an inclusive state policy on SWM was put forward. During these events, waste pickers not only participated in the round table discussions but also organized marches and sit-ins. Debates on the issues also occurred at the second Waste and Citizenship Festival in 2003, where waste pickers targeted the Minas Gerais Environmental State Secretary with their demands. As a result of this mobilization, in late 2003 the state government altered Resolution #52 (which forbade access of waste pickers to open dumps) with Resolution #67, which included the stipulation that when closing a dump, municipalities should create labour and income alternatives for displaced waste pickers. This was the first step towards recognizing the need for social inclusion that was eventually drafted into law.

- In 2005 the State Parliament organized a legislative seminar focusing on solid waste. The proposals of various working groups (on themes such as social inclusion, technology, etc.) were discussed and incorporated in the Law Project that informed the state policy. The working groups included representatives from various civil society organizations (waste pickers were represented not only as a national movement but also as members of the Waste and Citizenship Forum), and from the private and public sectors. The waste pickers organized a sit-in at the final public hearing that closed this process.
- In 2007 the State Governor sent the Project Law #1269/2007 to the State Parliament during a parliamentary public hearing that was part of the official program of the 2007 Waste and Citizenship Festival. Law #18031/2008, which instituted the Minas Gerais State Solid Waste Policy, was approved in December 2008, and sanctioned in January 2009. It contains articles dealing explicitly with the social inclusion of waste pickers and contains economic incentive mechanisms for municipalities that abide by the law.

The Popular Participation Committee of the Minas Gerais State Parliament chose a member of parliament to act as a representative at the State Waste and Citizenship Forum. It is worth mentioning that this committee has been a strategic partner for the waste pickers; its representative advises both the Forum and the state representatives of MNCR on matters regarding legislation. Having members of Parliament sympathetic to the cause of social inclusion has played an important role in opening up channels in the political system. This, combined with the strategically organized activism and advocacy of the waste pickers, accounts for most of the advancements in furthering systems for waste management and inclusion of informal workers in Brazil.

## Evolution of a national framework

At the same time that progressive legislation was being developed at a municipal and state level, a new national framework began to emerge. First, in 2001, *catador de material reciclável* (collector of recyclables) was included as a profession in the Brazilian Occupation Classification (CBO). Listed among the identified activities were functions relating to the collective labour of a cooperative, demonstrating that the profession reached beyond the street collection of recyclables. With this legal recognition as a profession, waste pickers began to appear in official databases, making it possible for researchers to monitor the evolution of several aspects of the activity within the profession.

In 2007, Law #11.445/07 was passed which established the national guidelines for basic sanitation. Article 57 of this Law (which modifies article 24 of Law #8.666/93), makes bidding unnecessary for the hiring of membership-based organizations (MBOs) of waste pickers. This means that waste picker associations and cooperatives can be hired directly by municipalities to perform selective waste collection. Waste pickers thus can be paid for services rendered, similar to the example of the municipality of Diadema (discussed above), but with a different legal framework.

A further legal instrument that promoted waste picker social inclusion at a federal level was the Presidential Decree #5940/06, which was presented at the Fifth Annual Waste and Citizenship Festival held in Belo Horizonte in August 2006, with the participation of waste picker representatives. This decree determined that materials generated in source segregation schemes from all federal public buildings in Brazil, was to be delivered to waste picker organizations. The main objective of the decree was to recognize the labour of waste pickers, and to enable income generation for these workers. The Inter-ministerial Committee for the Social Inclusion of Waste Pickers (CIISC)<sup>7</sup> is responsible for the implementation of the decree, and work has since begun in 12 metropolitan regions identified as priority areas for investment in the management and treatment of solid waste by the federal government's Growth Acceleration Plan (PAC). Agreements have been established between the waste picker organizations and public institutions whereby access to recyclables is guaranteed. As generators of significant amounts of solid waste, public buildings can greatly increase the income of the members in the MBOs. In addition, the solidarity decree provides for the promotion of socio-environmental actions that can contribute to the improvement of the cooperative's productive structure.

As described here, in recent years Brazil has seen the enactment of laws supporting the social inclusion of waste pickers. Integration of this sector of the informal economy depends on organization of these workers in cooperatives and associations. However, most waste pickers continue to work in informal situations, with low levels of organization and poor working conditions. Given that many waste pickers resist organization, what can be done to encourage membership of MBOs? Will an increase in the amount of financial and technical assistance to MBOs create incentives for new membership in cooperatives and associations? Since all legislation states clearly that support will be given only to cooperatives and associations, how can autonomous waste pickers who prefer to remain outside the cooperative movement be protected from further social exclusion? These questions represent some of the main challenges now.

The ongoing implementation of progressive, inclusive legislation will depend a great deal on organization among waste pickers, and on the level of social mobilization of their MBOs and supporting NGOs.

## What made it work?

- The body of legislation relevant to waste pickers in Brazil came about because this group of workers and their advocates – including sympathetic government officials – took advantage of strategic openings in the political system to push for progressive legislation.
- Social mobilization of the MBOs of waste pickers was an important driver. Waste pickers in Brazil have been very successful in combining public protest (demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins) with strategic activism and advocacy (e.g. taking part in committees, liaising with sympathetic public officers).

## 5. Global Standard Setting and Advocacy for Domestic Workers

Domestic workers perform work in or for a household(s) within an employment relationship, carrying out a range of tasks such as cleaning, cooking, gardening, childcare and elder care. Although there are no precise statistics on the number of workers, the ILO estimates a minimum of 52.6 million domestic workers worldwide, but with the true figure being closer to 100 million. Women, generally from the poorest sections of society, make up 83 per cent of domestic workers. Many are migrants, internal or international, and child domestic labour, especially for girls, is common.

Despite the extent of domestic work and its significance as a source of employment, especially for poor women, in many countries labour and social protection laws completely or partially exclude domestic workers. Their isolation and invisibility, long hours, restrictions on movement, and low incomes have all served to limit the extent of organization and representation amongst domestic workers, and access to collective bargaining. Attaining recognition, rights and protections through legal change at local, national and international levels therefore assumes great importance. Crucially, legal change and the struggle to achieve this can provide not only for rights, standards and protections, but can also act as a catalyst for organizing, and thus a means to gain representative voice.



### What Changed?

Despite these organizing obstacles, domestic workers have a long history of struggle for recognition as workers and thus inclusion in the labour laws of their respective countries. However, often their organizations are fragile and operate in isolation from other domestic workers' organizations. It was only in November 2006 that this began to change when around 60 representatives from domestic workers organizations worldwide, met for the first time in Amsterdam at a conference hosted by the Dutch Union Confederation, FNV. Their main demand was that domestic work be recognized as work and that domestic workers be recognized as workers – with all the rights that go with it. They also expressed a need for an international minimum standard, an ILO Convention for domestic workers. With support from WIEGO and the global union federation International Union of Food Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) was formed and began a vigorous campaign. WIEGO subsequently facilitated delegations of domestic workers to three consecutive international labour conferences. The beginning of this international movement of domestic workers was a push factor for the Workers' Group in the ILO and ILO ACTRAV, together with supportive governments, to fight for a standard-setting item at the ILC for domestic workers. Ultimately, these efforts led to the adoption of two international standards, Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (C.189) and Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (R 201) at the 100th Session of the ILC, June 2011.

IDWN (now International Domestic Workers Federation, IDWF), and allies organised and participated in numerous activities in many countries. A key strategy of the IDWN was to get domestic workers' representatives included into the trade union delegations of their respective countries, so that they could speak for themselves and negotiate, on equal terms, their own instrument. The importance of this strategy is that, whilst observers from NGOs (including global union federations, GUFs) can attend the ILC and provide background support, voting rights and most speaking rights are the preserve of official delegates. In 2010, some 20 representatives from domestic workers' organizations were sitting side by side ILO-experienced trade union representatives from their countries. There was an even larger number in 2011. The domestic worker delegates participated actively in the Workers' Group, influencing negotiations by putting forward their views and demands. The tri-partite negotiations process is highly structured, and for workers and employers in the tri-partite committee, only their official spokespersons can speak. The worker spokesperson (Vice-Chair of the Tri-partite Domestic Workers' Committee) therefore appoints a group (Bureau) to advise her. As an official delegate, the Chairperson of IDWN was nominated to serve on the Bureau. Some domestic workers delegates were able to speak on behalf of their national trade union delegation in the ILO Plenary Sessions.

## Results

The main achievement of the Convention is that domestic workers are unconditionally defined as workers. With this international treaty (if ratified by national governments), they enjoy the same protection by national labour laws and regulations, including inclusion into social protection schemes, as any other workers. Some articles provide special protection for certain categories of domestic workers; for example, live-in domestic workers or migrant domestic workers.

The Convention and Recommendation will not directly, or immediately, change the situation for domestic workers, but they provide a normative framework for organizations to work with governments and other partners legislate for their protection. If applied, it would lift millions of domestic workers out of the informal economy.

In addition, the process of achieving the ILO Convention was itself a catalyst for global organizing and for gaining representative voice at the global level. It contributed to building the capacity of organizations, and individual leaders, especially women; enhanced the status of domestic workers associations with formal trade unions; and created the preconditions for recognition and enforcement of rights in countries. Whilst the campaign for ratification is a long term process, legislative changes are taking place as a result of the adoption of the Convention. For example, in March 2012, the Government of Singapore announced that it would require employers to grant one day off per week for the over 200,000 domestic workers in the country, mostly immigrants from India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.



## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

- Direct participation by those workers who are the subject of, or affected by, the discussion impacts positively on the attitudes and positions of potentially hostile governments and employers. It also builds the confidence and capacities of worker leaders, especially women, and helps strengthen their organizations.
- Building a strong relationship and collaborating with the trade unions at international and national level, including the ILO-ACTRAV, in order to gain support, influence and access is critical. A structured relationship with a GUF such as the IUF can be particularly helpful.
- Well managed collaborations and alliances with a range organizations allows for a pooling of resources, skills, knowledge, including that of domestic workers themselves. They extend points of influence and leverage, raise awareness more widely, and potentially increase pressure on those with power to influence the outcome of the negotiations.
- As the Campaign for an ILO Convention demonstrates, it was only through the nascent international movement of domestic workers joining forces with the broad trade union movement and other allies that this successful outcome was achieved. Now, an even stronger movement is needed to put the ILO Convention into practice widely.

# **DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION**

1. A Bank of Her Own: Financial and Business Development Services in India
2. I Got Garbage: Digital Solutions towards Sustainability, Social Inclusion and Decent Work in Bangalore

# 1. A Bank of Her Own: Financial and Business Development Services in India

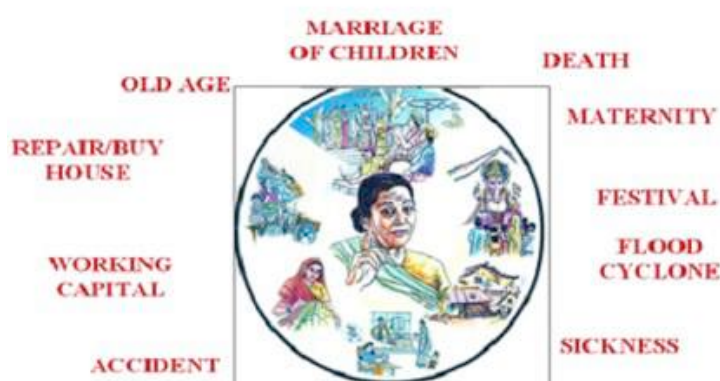
Many poor women in the informal economy are denied access to India's mainstream financial system; until recently, barely 25 per cent of women had bank accounts. Although in the past few years a widespread government push for increased access to banking services has increased this number to 80 per cent, it is clear that a bank account alone has not led to financial inclusion for women at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

Since many poor women do not have access to social safety nets in India, they tend to rely on savings or borrowing to meet their needs for health care, food or emergency funds during crises. With no pension schemes, they continue to work until they are no longer able, and subsequently become dependent on their children for support. Poor women are often faced with borrowing from predatory lenders to meet production or consumption needs, generally at interest rates anywhere between 60 per cent to 240 per cent per year. This predatory lending perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and insecurity.

## What Changed?

SEWA Bank was started by Ela Bhatt over three decades ago. The founding members of SEWA - poor women workers - came together and agreed that despite being excluded from traditional banks, if they were to pool their resources, they could start a bank of their own. After overcoming many barriers, SEWA Bank is flourishing today with over 400,000 women depositors and Rs. 3 billion capital. The bank is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (India's central bank) and provides many savings products along with a range of soft loans to women.

The SEWA Bank provides a holistic suite of financial services that goes beyond traditional microfinance to offer women products that support them over the course of their lives. For example, the SEWA bank offers Vimo SEWA, an insurance cooperative which collects premiums and provides health insurance, life insurance and property insurance to its 100,000 members. In addition, SEWA bank offers a pension scheme that over 70,000 women have joined, and through a new housing finance institution called the SEWA Grih Rin, women are able to access financing to build their homes or purchase new homes.



"The Banks do not allow us to cross their thresholds. We may be poor but we are so many, we can pool our money and start a bank of our own."

- Founding members of SEWA

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made it Work?

- **Trust and accountability:** SEWA Bank is built on a foundation of trust and accountability that allows women to have the confidence to invest in the bank and access the bank's services.
- **Rigor:** Prudent fiduciary systems led to high grades from the regulating agencies.
- **Leadership:** SEWA's different financial programs are all managed and run by women.
- **Holistic model:** Unlike other microfinance agencies, the products and systems are based on women's holistic needs over the course of their lives.

## 2. I Got Garbage: Digital Solutions towards Sustainability, Social Inclusion and Decent Work in Bangalore

The city of Bangalore has 8.5 million residents and produces thousands of tonnes of waste each day. In 2012, in an attempt to reduce the amount of recyclable waste filling the municipal landfill, Bangalore became the first Indian city to pass a law decentralizing waste management and making waste segregation at source (household level) mandatory. However, implementation issues made the law largely ineffective and recyclable waste continued to fill landfills. Like other Indian cities, Bangalore has historically benefitted from the services of informal waste pickers, who separate out recyclable and salvageable materials on the streets and from garbage dumps. However, without a designated mechanism for integrating waste pickers into the municipal waste management system, waste pickers are faced with extremely precarious working conditions and low pay, and their services go undervalued and underutilized by the municipality and residents alike.

### What changed?

The idea of a project to connect waste pickers with homes and businesses for door-to-door waste collection came from the local IT consulting firm Mindtree in Bangalore. Mindtree created a digital platform, called “I Got Garbage” to bring together waste producers, collectors and buyers into one streamlined waste management system.

The I Got Garbage Platform works towards two objectives—changing the culture of waste disposal from one to “use and throw” to separate at source, and changing the conditions and livelihood prospects for waste pickers by integrating them into a streamlined, safe and profitable waste collection process. In the process, the platform aims to eliminate stigma around waste picking, displaying the waste picker or “rag picker” as a public service provider, referred to as a “recycling manager.” This component of the project – changing mindsets about waste picking – was critical to the success of the project. Traditionally, waste pickers in Bangalore and other Indian cities have been stigmatized and denied access to waste directly from households. The transition from waste pickers to recycling managers was important for users to buy into the system, but also for waste pickers themselves to view their own work differently. Facilitating this transition was Hasirudala, a consortium of 10 NGOs that provide support to waste pickers and assist with their integration into the I Got Garbage system as official, uniformed service providers.

Once recycling managers are registered within the system, they respond to individual requests for waste collection by traveling (using cargo bikes or eco-friendly vehicles) to houses, businesses or apartment buildings to collect and sort waste. They subsequently transport the sorted waste to either composting centers for conversion into organic compost, or dry waste collection centers for recycling. Users are able to register for a membership online and pay a fee (only 100 rupees or \$1.60 a month) for weekly waste collection by recycling managers.

The I Got Garbage platform is a cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, that waste pickers are able to access using Android-based mobile devices. All recyclers are geo-tagged in the system and use an associated app to track their routes and activity. Whenever a service is needed in their surrounding area they are alerted. The app is heavily visually based to accommodate recyclers who may be illiterate.

In addition to increasing social inclusion through positive programming around the job of the recycling manager (with videos, infographics and photos on the website), the project has significantly increased earnings to approximately double



Recycling managers at work. Photo: Source #1 listed below

### LIVELIHOOD IMPACT

MAY, 2014



AVERAGE MONTHLY REVENUE  
PER STREET WASTE-PICKER

₹ 4828



AVERAGE MONTHLY REVENUE  
PER RECYCLING MANAGER

₹ 8834

Graphic showing increase in earnings from 4828 rupees (approx. USD 72) to 8834 rupees (approx. USD 132)

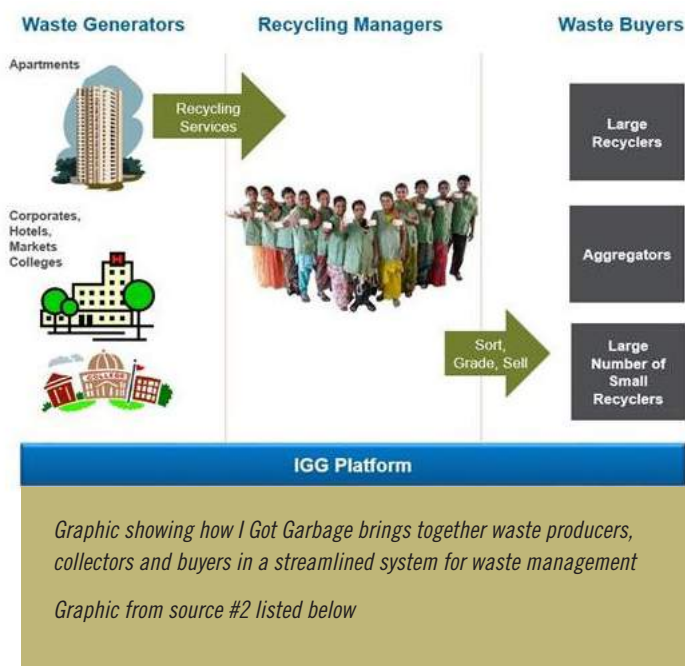
Graphic from source #3 listed below



Mindtree believes that the platform could be used to level the playing field for other own-account workers in India (who account for half of the working population of the country), by cutting out middlemen, creating more favorable conditions, increasing earnings and providing the worker with more control.

## Results

- Within a year I Got Garbage prevented the disposal of more than a million pounds of waste into landfills and served over 100,000 users.
- Former waste pickers who have been integrated into the system as recycling managers have seen their incomes increase (estimates state that recyclers typically earn double what they earned previously), they are working in better conditions and they face less social stigma, as they are generally seen as public service providers.
- The I Got Garbage site reports in 2016 that over 8000 recycling managers are part of the system



## Sources:

1. CoExist. 2015. "This Clever Platform Is Helping Waste Pickers Solve India's Growing Trash Problem" Available at <http://www.fastcoexist.com/3044807/this-clever-platform-is-helping-waste-pickers-solve-indias-growing-trash-problem> (accessed July 11, 2016)
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# WOMEN-OWNED ENTERPRISES

1. Government Procurement: Door-to-door municipal waste collection in Pune, India
2. Basic Infrastructure Services: Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust
- 3.1 Direct Market Linkages: Increasing Livelihoods for Home-based Embroidery Workers in Global Supply Chains in Delhi, India
- 3.2 Direct Market Linkages: SAARC Business Associations
4. Transport Services: Home-based workers in Bangkok, Thailand
5. Sub-sector Development: Silk Production in Bangladesh

# 1. Government Procurement: Door-to-door Waste Collection in Pune, India

Waste pickers in Pune, India, have organized to define a legitimate work space for themselves in municipal solid waste management, in ways that improved their working conditions. Key to this was the unionization of informal self-employed waste pickers into the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) in 1993. Thereafter, KKPKP spearheaded the battle of waste pickers, itinerant waste buyers and waste collectors to be recognized as workers.

Their arguments were simple. Waste pickers recovered materials for recycling, reduced municipal solid waste handling costs, generated employment downstream and contributed to public health and the environment. The establishment in 2007 of a wholly worker-owned cooperative of waste pickers, itinerant waste buyers, waste collectors and other urban poor has been an important milestone in KKPKP's work. The cooperative is aptly christened SWaCH, an acronym for Solid Waste Collection Handling that also means clean, in the local language. Conceived as an autonomous social enterprise, SWaCH Seva Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, as it is formally known, provides front-end waste management services to Pune City, with support from the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).



## Waste management in Pune

In the early 2000's The PMC did not have a solid waste management (SWM) department. Using its own vehicles and labour, PMC could service only 7 per cent of households for door to door waste collection; 86 per cent of the municipal solid waste was collected from community bins placed in public areas. Fleet utilization was poor and just 42 per cent of the municipal community bins were emptied daily (All India Institute of Local Self Government 2005). Municipal operations were carried out by municipal employees. Typically garbage entered the municipal system in mixed form. No material recovery took place within the formal municipal system.

A parallel informal sector comprising waste pickers, itinerant waste buyers and traders operated, recovering some of the recyclables generated by households, shops, offices and other establishments. The high value items were purchased for reuse, repair, dismantling or sale by itinerant waste buyers. They sourced small capital and carts from their traders. Waste pickers engaged in free recovery recyclables from the streets and landfills. The informal system, although complementary and integral to the formal system, was not recognized as such.

## What changed?

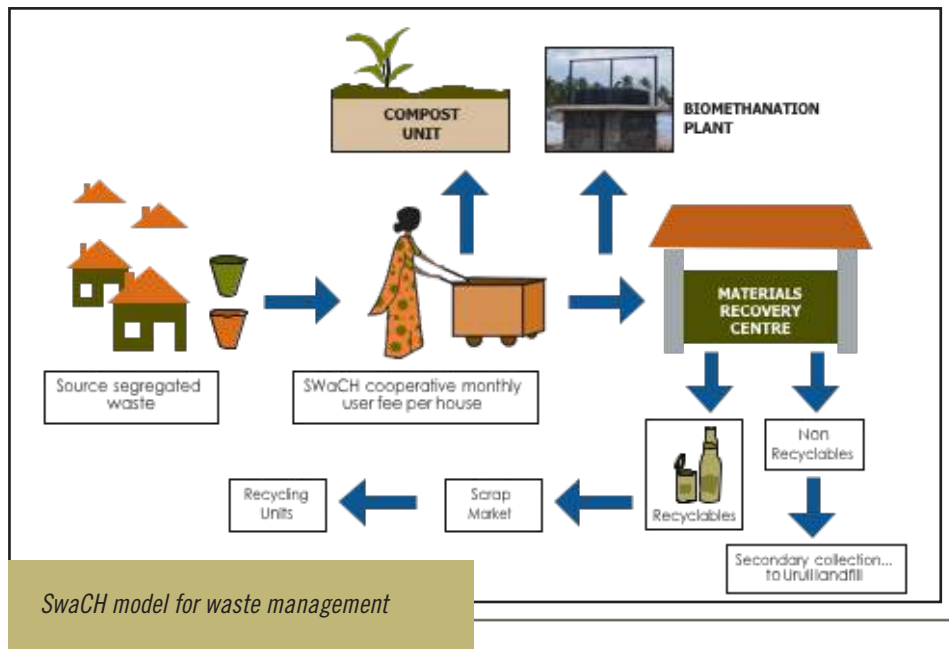
In formal municipal committees on which it was represented, KKPKP advocated for a more planned approach that treated recovery and recycling as integral to solid waste management. Using evidence, Waste Matters (a consortium of NGOs), pushed for source segregation of waste; separate collection of non-domestic wastes such as market waste, hotel waste, construction and demolition waste, garden waste and e-waste; decentralized waste management; diversion of waste from landfills into bio-processing and recycling; incentivizing recycling and creation of a separate Solid Waste Management Department within the PMC. These issues were taken to the municipal administration, bureaucracy, elected representatives, civil society organizations, trade unions and the media for discussion.

The threat of privatization of waste collection and processing was imminent. Demanding wage employment for registered waste pickers in contracted companies was one option. Contracting arrangements being what they are, secure employment and fair terms were not assured. KKPKP argued for non-financial PMC support for a user fee-based door to door waste collection pilot initiative. They received this authorization from the Municipal Commissioner, who addressed meetings of residents, municipal officials and elected representatives to promote the initiative. The waste workers, calling themselves Swachateche Warkari (harbingers of cleanliness), then commenced the collection.

A little over a year later in 2007, the municipal administration was willing to institutionalize the integration of waste pickers. The proposed vehicle was a wholly worker-owned autonomous cooperative of waste pickers, itinerant waste buyers and other urban poor that would provide front end waste management services to the city of Pune and recover user fees. The proposal went through a process of negotiation and iterations until it was approved by due process in the PMC.

## Enabling context

The enabling conditions for integration of waste pickers were the pre-existing credible organization of informal waste workers; the legal and policy framework; inclination of the municipal administration; support of elected representatives; and the presence of a strong, formal municipal employees union that opposed privatization.



The cooperative SWaCH, was born in 2007, pursuant to sanction by the PMC General Body. PMC and SWaCH entered into a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) for door to door collection of waste in 2008. The subsequent replication of SWaCH, a motorized waste collection model in Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal limits , was formalized in 2010 SWaCH now provides uninterrupted and reliable waste collection services to hundreds of thousands of households daily in Pune. Almost half the city voluntarily pays user charges for their services - a remarkable achievement in a situation where any additional taxation is resisted.

KKPKP and SWaCH exemplify that waste pickers can successfully defend their right to livelihoods and that they can also be architects of a better future for themselves and society. SWaCH came into existence on the bedrock of the years of organizational work and credibility achieved by KKPKP, which brought to the development of the cooperative an insider's knowledge of the realities of solid waste management.

KKPKP led the process of countering privatization in Pune. It proposed and pushed for an alternative that incorporated larger issues and processes that were consistent with its vision of operationally, financially and environmentally sustainable waste management that required the participation of workers and other residents.

## Results

- **Respect for waste pickers:** SWaCH works in a way that promotes thinking about waste pickers as valuable public servants. SWaCH members wear uniforms to establish their intent as service providers. SWaCH members are an entrepreneurial workforce, accustomed to being self accountable. Without losing their fierce autonomy, they have learned customer relations.
- **Service user fees:** Effectively, the user fee recovered by SWaCH members is the minimum amount that the municipality would have had to raise through taxes to pay for this additional service. The logic is quite simple: there is more direct accountability to the service user in this system.
- **Financial benefits to members:** SWaCH members have significantly higher incomes (approximately US \$1,296 annually) than other waste pickers in India, and work fewer hours. They are now paid consistently, whereas previously they relied only from the income from sale of recyclables. In addition, the PMC provides safety gear, raincoats, footwear, uniforms and collection equipment. Thus waste pickers now have a claim on some part of the municipal budget, whereas earlier they had none.

“What is most important is the respect of other people. Today, when I go to the department to collect my money, the lady there asks me to sit on a sofa. If she is drinking tea, she will ask for another cup for me. I can walk into the canteen and sit at a table and eat, no one even looks at me, I am like one of the University employees. That is what I value the most.”

-SWaCH member

## 2. Basic Infrastructure Services: Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust

SEWA Bank's focus on housing emerged two decades after its foundation, and as a result of members' increasing demand for credit. In 1994, the need to diversify loans beyond business became in fact quite apparent. A study of how SEWA members were using credit revealed that over 44 per cent of the money borrowed was being used for the single purpose of repairing or upgrading the family house: the tiling of a floor, the creation of storage space; roof repairs or rebuilding; the cementing of walls; the addition of a room or a toilet; and direct connections to running water, electricity and sewage.

In the vast majority of cases, housing improvements were explicitly linked to the members' desire to expand their productivity. For the home-based workers, better housing and services directly translates into more time at productive work, easier access to water, safer storage for stocks and better equipment. An individual electrical connection, for example, can make it possible to use an electric sewing machine, while a water connection quickens the production of food to be sold on the street.

### What changed?

To match the overwhelming demand – and as an off-shoot of loans meant to improve the productive capacity of home-based women workers or those self-employed workers who use the home to store raw material or finished goods such as street vendors and waste pickers – SEWA Bank developed two dedicated house financing products. The first supports interventions on the basic infrastructure of the house (the most popular being a roof, plastered walls and tiled floors), individual connections to essential services like piped water, electricity and the sewage network (including the creation of individual toilets) and, finally, house extensions (as in the case of an additional room or a covered porch).

The second, added in 2011, provides capital for the purchase of newly-built houses, at market prices. In the first case, the terms of credit evolved too with the evolving needs of SEWA members and market prices, moving from Rs 2,000-20,000 (USD 36–362) to 10,000-50,000 (USD 181–907) loans. Presently, SEWA Bank has hit the regulatory limits of Rs 100,000 (USD 1,814) imposed by the Reserve Bank of India for insecure loans. For loans on the purchase of new houses, instead, the level of formality of transactions and the availability of paperwork allows credit as large as Rs 800,000 (USD 14,512). The fundamental viability of lending such large amounts to self-employed women was confirmed by an unexpected 100 per cent repayment rate on new housing loans in the first year of this new product.

Realizing that supporting decent housing as a productive asset for informal sector workers could not be fully achieved through the offer of housing loans alone, SEWA Bank joined hands with SEWA and the Foundation for Public Interest (FPI) to promote the creation of the Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) in 1994. Also based in Ahmedabad, MHT is a women-run SEWA sister organization with a mandate to address issues relating to the habitat of poor self-employed women. Fully dedicated to supporting members' voices in urban planning processes and their efforts to improve their housing, MHT provides technical assistance and a wide range of support services, and strives to influence urban policies. It works with specialized organizations such as housing finance institutions or private contractors, with urban planning institutions at the municipal and state level, and with communities, where it offers extensive doorstep services and encourages and supports local mobilization on housing issues.

In this capacity, MHT has been able to support SEWA Bank's housing work. MHT maintains that the critical gap in credit availability for low-income households in India ranges between Rs 100,000 to Rs 800,000 (USD 1,814 to 14,512). Specifically for housing repairs and expansion, and against increasing costs of labour and raw materials, the regulatory limits imposed on microfinance institutions like SEWA Bank by the Reserve Bank of India are an insurmountable obstacle to the financial inclusion of a large majority of the economically active population.



*Individual piped-water connections are one of the highest priorities for SEWA members: they improve the life of the family and increase the productivity of its members. Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) a women-run SEWA sister organization is dedicated to supporting members' voices in urban planning processes and their efforts to improve their housing and infrastructure conditions.*

Two examples of this sustained integration of mandates and competences are MHT's involvement of SEWA Bank in slum upgradation programs, in partnership with affected communities and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), and its support in designing a low-income mortgage product for the purchase of new houses at market prices. In both cases, MHT has played a critical role in expanding SEWA Bank's perception of its mandate; it complements SEWA Bank's financial role with technical, advocacy and mobilization work. It also builds buy-in with communities by providing, among other things, legal and technical support to SEWA Bank members who take on large housing loans.

Through its own housing loan pilot in 2012 – started in cities other than Ahmedabad, such as Surat and Delhi – MHT has been also able to expand the offer of housing loans beyond SEWA Bank's own limitations. It did so in three critical ways: by offering a workable solution to the problem of lack of legal tenure on one's house; by expanding the notion of security of informal workers' income and offering accordingly larger loans; and by shifting the focus of housing interventions from single individuals to entire communities.

## Success Factors

- The success of SEWA Bank's credit lines for self-employed women is not just the result of fortunate product innovation (that is, the right combination between the amount loaned and the size and number of instalments). SEWA Bank's housing loans, in fact, reflect a broader institutional commitment to the flexibility of processes, accessibility for clients, and an ongoing adaptation to members' needs – all aspects that characterize SEWA organizations as member-driven institutions.
- As a community-based organization specializing in habitat issues, MHT is capable of understanding decent housing, tenure insecurity and income insecurity not as a limit inherent to the economic condition of informal sector workers, but rather as a critical gap in knowledge and institutional capacity of mainstream (and even microfinance) actors. MHT's focus on community as opposed to individuals, on settlements and urban planning as opposed to single houses, and on joint house-hold income as opposed to individual saving behaviours, are critical to the uniqueness and effectiveness of this approach.



*SEWA Bank and MHT staff on a visit to an informal settlement in North Ahmedabad. MHT (Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust) was established to tackle the broader challenges of housing that a financial institution like SEWA Bank could not address alone. housing and infrastructure conditions.*

## 3.1 Direct Market Linkages: Increasing Livelihoods for Home-Based Embroidery Workers in the Global Supply Chains in Delhi, India

For the vast numbers of workers in Delhi – 86 per cent of whom work in the informal economy – equity remains largely unattainable. This is particularly true for home-based workers, a large workforce within the informal economy. These workers, over half of whom are women, are predominately embroidery workers who earn their livelihood from Delhi’s large garment and apparel industry and are part of the supply chains formed by well known international brands with their retail outlets in some of the biggest cities.

Many of these workers are migrants from other states in India and have specialized skills in embellishments, sequins, and beads. and yet they face many challenges. They are at the bottom of a global value chain, receiving work and payment from sub-contractors and have the least bargaining power. They are vulnerable to exploitation, irregular work, and low wages. They live and work in dilapidated housing, with little or no sanitation and access to electricity – both of which affect productivity and health.

Workers also have limited opportunities to advance or update their skills to keep pace with fashion, and they lack access to social security and credit to buy costly supplies.



### What Changed?

Since 2006, the Self Employed Women’s Association Bharat has been working to increase livelihood opportunities for home-based workers through the creation of a new production model, enterprise development, social security services, and advocacy.

This work itself is centered around three Embroidery Centres in slum areas. Situated very close to members’ homes, these are used for linking members to the production process as well to support services like health training, microfinance, and skills training. Close to 800 home-based embroidery workers are linked to the centres on a regular basis, and they use the centres to collect and deposit work orders. A further 10,000 SEWA members use the centres for support services.

Through these centres, SEWA has helped reorganize the supply chain by bringing home-based workers into direct contact with international markets, eliminating middleman contractors, and setting piece rates, which doubles their members’ incomes. SEWA also leads the production process and logistics between members, centres, and suppliers, and keeps a transparent payment system. SEWA also regularly leads workers through skill-building, which will ultimately increase their wages by enabling them to create and embroider a wider range of clothes and products.

In 2009, SEWA Delhi registered a producer-led company called RUAAB, which home-based workers own through shares and sit on the board. The company connects members with exporters who provide better rates, and it deals with international firms interested in ethical and transparent lines of work.

SEWA also provides services to home-based workers from a number of approaches, including microfinance, health programmes, artisan’s cards, information dissemination, and supplementary education classes for workers and their families.

Finally, SEWA also engages in advocacy with NGOs, trade union organizations, and global companies through the Ethical Training Initiative.

### Legal and Policy Environment

There is no national policy or act covering home-based workers in India, and any existing Indian legislation applies to only a few home-based workers. The Minimum Wages Act is not applicable to home-based workers, who are paid on a piece-rate. There are certain social security schemes meant for the informal sector that are applicable to home-based workers: the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008; the Employment Guarantee scheme (MNREGA); and pensions schemes like Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, and the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme.

## Results

- Established five Embroidery Centres and sub-centres, providing work to 800 embroidery workers on a regular basis and to close to 3,000 workers at intervals.
- Helped embroidery workers increase their cumulative income by 50 per cent.
- Helped achieve a cash income increase of 32 per cent due to fair profit sharing between the centre and embroidery workers. This has increased workers' daily wage by 20 per cent from US \$1.5 (Rs. 100) to US \$2 (Rs. 120).
- Developed market linkages that have increased the number of working days by 12 per cent from 22 to 25.
- Through other SEWA programmes, provided benefits to workers of US \$77 (Rs. 4,722) per worker per annum or 17.5 per cent.
- Helped workers access government benefits of US \$1.5 (Rs. 95) per worker per annum or 0.4 per cent.
- Established a Producer Company of women members. The company profitability was at 16 per cent.
- Increased scale of operations by linkages to 20 brands and 36 suppliers.

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

- Direct dialogue with international brands.
- Removal of middlemen from production chain.
- Support for workers throughout the production process, including skills training.
- Congruent social security services like healthcare, education, and microfinance.
- Transparent production and payment processes.
- Strong worker governance in leadership.
- Continuous expansion in domestic and international markets.
- Diversification of product range.
- Regional advocacy efforts, especially through multi-stakeholder platforms with workers, contractors, buyers, and sellers.



*A home-based worker prepares textiles.  
Photo: L. Tuttle*

The model adopted by SEWA Bharat presents an alternative economic model that can be adopted for informal economy workers. This model brings workers to the forefront.



## 3.2 Direct Market Linkages: SAARC Business Associations

HomeNet South Asia has emerged as a dynamic and vibrant network of 600 organizations representing over 300,000 home-based workers from five countries in South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It has evolved as the principal resource and collective platform for home-based workers of the region. The strength of HNSA lies in its grassroots membership and the technical support it extends to its members. At the same time, HNSA carries the voices and demands of home-based workers into policy circles at the national, regional and international levels to influence legislation, policies and programs.

In the South Asia region, a majority of home-based workers are self-employed and struggle to get access to markets for their products. To help overcome this, in 2008, the SABAH Project was launched by HNSA and SEWA and supported by the SAARC Development Fund (SDF). SABAH has now been established in all seven SAARC countries.



The SABAH Project was established as a flagship program aimed at increasing employment opportunities and profitability for home-based workers, facilitating collective marketing and mutual learning. Member organizations of HNSA organized home-based workers to form business associations, which were provided with training and support by SEWA from India. The associations are called Sabahs—SAARC Business Association of Homebased workers. In languages of the region, Sabah means both a morning breeze and a collective meeting. Through the project, home-based workers became both the owners and beneficiaries of the Sabahs, inserted themselves into the market and gained the critical skills for managing complex business organizations. Sabah has since become a strong South Asian brand, and its products are regionally and internationally recognized.

### Results

- SAARC Business Associations of Homebased Workers (SABAHs), along with Trade Facilitation Centers, have been established in all of the seven SAARC member states.
- Approximately 100,000 home-based workers in the SAARC region have benefited from this initiative. Specifically, 13,800 home-based workers have been provided work with an increase in income varying from 25% to 60%, across all the SABAHs.
- “SABAH” has become a strong, collective Brand, wherein products from all SABAHs are positioned and marketed in the region (and globally) under the banner of “Made in SAARC.”
- The home-based workers (members) of SABAH have come together across geographical boundaries and diverse cultural traditions to break conventional barriers and learn from each other; motivating and helping each other, towards solidarity and peace in the region.
- Through leadership development and capacity building, many SABAH members have developed a stronger voice in the decision-making of their homes and in the articulation of their aspirations for their children within traditionally patriarchal family structures.

### What Made It Work? Suggestions for Future Efforts

- The trust, sisterhood and solidarity that HomeNet members developed across borders was critical in increasing their visibility to national governments and in garnering support from SAARC officials.
- The complete support and cooperation from SAARC and SDF has been critical to the success of the program, both through the provision of financial resources and extensive support and commitment that have made SABAH a regionally recognized model for women’s empowerment.
- Linkages across borders have provided the SABAHs with opportunities for mutual learning. Support from SEWA has been critical in increasing the marketability and sustainability of the SABAHs.

## 4. Transport Services: Home-based Workers in Bangkok, Thailand

In Bangkok, many home-based workers have been relocated from the centre to the outskirts of the city as a result of major infrastructure projects. Before these relocations, which were conducted with little regard to the impacts on the affected people, residents were assured that basic utilities and public transport would be provided. Neither of these promises were realized: some areas remain underdeveloped and lack accessibility to basic utilities such as tap water. The area is also underserved in terms of public transport—a lack that deprives home-based workers of their livelihoods.

Home-based workers need to commute to central Bangkok to buy materials, take orders, and deliver their finished works, not to mention access basic services such as hospitals, markets, banks, and the district office, none of which are available within walking distance.

The poor public bus service, then, poses two major problems. To travel by public bus is time-consuming: its service is not scheduled and is irregular, especially because it uses an indirect route. For home-based workers, the time spent travelling by public bus is equivalent to the loss of time for their livelihoods. Some of them spend the whole day on commuting alone. Second, in order to shorten time on commuting, workers need to spend much more money on private transportation, such as motorcycle taxi or taxi. Yet, home-based workers cannot afford this choice—their average income is well below 300 baht, which is the minimum daily wage of workers in the formal economy.

### What Changed?

HomeNet Thailand (HNT) has been working since 1992 to empower home-based workers through a variety of strategies, including organizing, networking, capacity building, researching, information dissemination, and advocacy for policies that enhance the social protection of informal workers.

As part of the Inclusive Cities project from 2009-2013, HNT aimed to strengthen the capacity of home-based workers with the aim of ensuring urban planning that takes into account the interests of the working poor.

In order to address the transport issues in a way that empowered workers, HNT facilitated a series of city dialogues with the HBWs, residents of the districts, and city officials to achieve the following:

- Unity in all the various districts under a common cause: to increase the residents' influence through their combined numbers and to demonstrate how cooperation between the districts could be achieved.
- Knowledge of the city's bureaucratic systems and how to navigate them.
- Introduce officials to the HBWs and community members and acquaint them with their concerns.
- Obtain a commitment from authorities to address the issues presented.



*In Thailand, informal workers outnumber those in the formal sector. The informal home-based worker pictured above is one of many living and working in the city of Bangkok. Photo: M. Chen*

### Policy Environment

In theory, Bangkok's vision and mission is to establish extensive public bus service that is integrated with other modes of public transport in a way that is affordable, convenient, and environmentally and worker friendly.

In practice, however, public transport falls under the jurisdiction of various offices—the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) Ministry of Transportation, Traffic and Transportation Department and the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA)—and their duties often overlap, which means that workers who seek improvements find the system frustrating and difficult to navigate.

## Results

- The dialogues empowered HBWs and other community members and enabled them to articulate their realities and problems.
- The dialogues raised HBWs' visibility to authorities.
- Information sharing and diverse perspectives enhanced understanding of the issues.
- HBWs learned about local administration and the roles of different authorities.
- By recognizing that poor bus service is an issue shared by a majority of different communities, the HBWs and community members have overcome their political divisions in order to address the issue.
- Allowing communities to have a say ensured development that genuinely responds to people's needs while addressing city problems.
- The BMTA said the dialogue was useful because of the rare opportunity to hear directly from the community.
- The BMTA has approved two more buses for route no.143, significantly improving the regularity of the service.
- A petition for a pedestrian bridge has been forwarded to the BMA's Traffic and Transportation Department for approval of construction of a pedestrian bridge.

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made it Work?

- Participation of engaged, knowledgeable, and sympathetic representatives from concerned authorities. This made it possible for a fruitful dialogue where input—information, limitations and suggestions—from officials can contribute to the most viable and appropriate solution.
- Committed leaders with essential organizing assets. These well-recognized leaders can serve as powerful hubs for effective networking.
- Engaging a wider group of affected people and mobilizing community support in the city dialogues. This united people within and beyond their communities despite internal conflicts.
- Using a bottom-up and democratic process ensured people's autonomy and participation.
- Keeping the key issues and message focused made it easier to create concrete solutions.
- Thorough research enabled HNT to learn and share with workers the complexity of government agencies' overlapping mandates and roles.
- Sufficient skill and dialogue preparation allowed community representatives to strategically present arguments.



*A home-based worker preps her food for cooking. Photo: M. Chen*

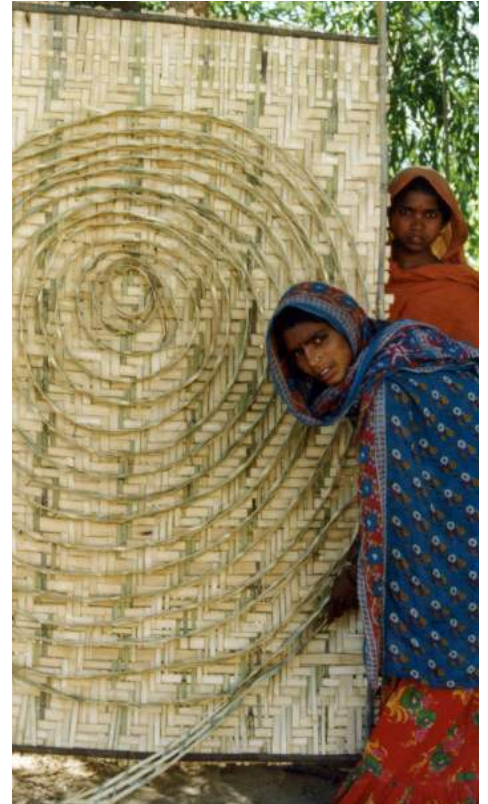
**Bangkok's informal workers account for 5.1 per cent of the total number of informal workers reported in Thailand, which is 24.8 million people.**

## 5. Sub-sector Development: Silk Production in Bangladesh

In 1978, BRAC began a programme to revive silk cultivation and weaving in Bangladesh. The goal was to involve rural women in each stage of the process: cultivation of castor and mulberry bushes (the leaves are used to feed silk worms), production of silk worm seed, rearing of silk worms into cocoons, spinning of silk yarn, weaving silk, printing and dyeing silk cloth, and producing products using silk cloth or silk yarn.

Over the next two decades, BRAC developed sericulture through village women into a viable and sustainable social enterprise. To do so, it researched silk production in other countries; introduced the necessary equipment, techniques and know-how; and established essential production units: some in the homes of individual women (silk worm rearing, silk yarn spinning), others in village-level units (silk spinning and embroidery) and still others at centralized production hubs (for seed production; silk weaving, printing and dyeing; garment stitching).

Design, quality control and marketing services are provided by Aarong, BRAC's popular retail chain that supports 65,000 artisans, most of whom are women. Over 1500 village women supported by BRAC have cultivated mulberry trees on 100 acres of land and now produce around 25 metric tons of silk cocoons, 1.5 metric tons of silk yarn and 37,500 yards of silk fabric per year (BRAC Sericulture fact sheets).



*Silk worm rearer in Bangladesh*



# **PAY AND WORK CONDITIONS**

1. Improved Occupational Health and Safety for Market Traders and Street Vendors in Accra Ghana
2. Participatory Hazard Mapping Tool for Informal Markets

# 1. Improved Occupational Health and Safety for Market Traders and Street Vendors in Accra, Ghana

Historically, market traders and street vendors in Accra have faced unsafe and unhygienic working conditions, which arise out of institutional and governance challenges. The majority of vendors, many of them women, sell food and related items, cooked food, and cloths, or are artisans like hairdressers, carpenters, tailors, and seamstresses.

These traders and vendors belong to the informal economy—as do 73 per cent of Ghana’s workers—and their earnings are often below the national minimum wage. They face high levels of economic and financial risk, job insecurity, harassment by local authorities, lack of access to credit, and lack of involvement in national and policymaking processes.

Because of this lack of institutionalized channels of communication, a lack of information delivered to informal workers, a system of patronage and deference to authorities, and a system in which misuse and embezzlement of revenue from the market is common, market traders and street vendors face many occupational health and safety hazards:

- Poor drainage and waste disposal and inadequate cleaning (personnel and equipment), which lead to the breeding of disease vectors, food poisoning, and diarrhoea.
- Frequent fire outbreaks in markets.
- Insecurity of the traders and their wares because of inadequate lighting in many market areas, the lack of safe and sufficient storage facilities, and the presence of criminals.
- Harassment from local government officials.
- Physical and psychological effects resulting from the unhealthy and unsafe work environments.

## What Changed?

Two trader associations—the Makola Market Traders Union (MMTU) and the Ga East Traders Union (GETU)—recognized that as individuals, traders are weak when dealing with the local government or city authorities. Over the course of years, they mobilized other traders, often at their own expense.

With support from WIEGO, the first strategy involved conducting a small study to learn more about the occupational health and safety risks that market traders and street vendors face. The study led the traders and WIEGO to come to the conclusion that, in order for traders’ occupational health and safety needs to be addressed, they first needed to first tackle underlying governance and institutional challenges with pressure from below as well as from above. But pressure from below can’t be effective without adequate information—a principle that informed the traders’ subsequent strategies.

The next steps were to disseminate information to traders’ associations, to build workers’ skills through workshops and dialogue sessions, and to engage effectively and proactively with the local authorities. First, WIEGO together with the Institute for Local Government Studies (ILGS) in Accra, ran a series of workshops for the traders on topics including: the structure and functions of Ghana’s local government system; occupational health and safety issues and the environmental and public health responsibilities of local government authorities; assertiveness and confidence building; networking and alliance building; advocacy planning; negotiation skills and basic book-keeping. Subsequently, WIEGO and ILGS organized dialogue sessions between the traders and vendors on one hand and service providers and local government authorities.

## Policy and Legal Environment

The Policy framework that most impacts vendors in Ghana is Article 35 (6d) of the 1992 Constitution, which requires the State ‘to take appropriate measures to ensure decentralisation in administrative and financial machinery of government and to give opportunities to people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and government’.

Chapter 20, Article 240 (2e) states that, “to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance.”



*For many vendors, their vending income is their sole means of providing for their families. Photo: P. Carney*

Both unions, together with nine other informal workers' associations, also formed the Council of Informal Workers Association (CIWA) to act as an umbrella organization. In the long term, this organization will be well positioned to support the traders in their struggle for recognition and for safe and healthy working conditions.

## Results

For the workers, the series of workshops and the dialogue sessions with the city authorities and service providers reinforced the importance of mobilization, networking, coalition-building, and direct representation in local government structures.

The workers also gained knowledge of how to engage with the city authorities, who, in turn, are responding positively.

With the leadership development and training they gained, the traders have begun to pursue more direct representation within local government structures. One executive member of the Ga East Traders Union is now a member of the Gender and Children Sub-committee of the Ga East Municipal Assembly. Another member was elected as a member of the Unit Committee (community level structure of the local government system). As a result, he is representing his community on the Area Council and is secretary to the development sub-committee. Through these two executive members, the traders unions' interests and issues are brought to the fore at the municipal assembly and area levels, which partly accounts for the successes they have won so far.

WIEGO's social protection program supported every phase of the process, and played a particularly critical role in harnessing and motivating existing institutions.

## Workers also gained:

- Better awareness of OHS issues.
- The importance of registering with the NHIS.
- How to douse small fires before they get out of control.
- Basic bookkeeping, financial management, and how to access credit, which means vendors have improved on savings.
- The confidence and ability to speak in public forums and to engage with city authorities, which has resulted in new infrastructure.

For its part, better OHS in the market benefited the city by:

- Reducing the spread of communicable diseases.
- Citizens' continued access to basic services and necessities.
- Improved infrastructure and services.
- Continues revenue from markets, which contribute an average of 20 per cent to the Accra Metropolitan Assembly's internally generated funds.

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made It Work?

- A decentralized local government, which gives citizens the courage to come together without fear and allows them to engage with local authorities.
- Research that helped explain real and pressing issues.
- Bottom up and top down approaches to tackling challenges.
- The involvement of progressive institutions like the Ghana TUC, the ILGS and People's Dialogue on Human Settlement, who are already engaged with the informal workers and their needs.
- A facilitative organization that knows how to harness and motivate other institutions.
- Joining a trade union (Ghana TUC), which has international links.
- Learning lobbying and negotiation skills.



*A kayayei (head porter) sheltering from the sun. Photo: M. Chen*

“Any organization that wants to replicate what [we] have achieved as an association must remember that [we] started small with only seven members and grew over time. It is a gradual process which is not done and achieved overnight”.

- Enoch Bio, Secretary for the Ga East Traders Union

## 2. Participatory Hazard Mapping for Improved Occupational Health and Safety in Informal Markets

### Background

Street vendors and market traders worldwide face occupational health and safety (OHS) hazards on a daily basis. OHS refers to the prevention of injuries and diseases that happen in the workplace, and hazards are defined as physical (including noise), chemical, ergonomic (including lifting, standing long hours), psychosocial (including violence, gender harassment, long working hours), and biological (including infections such as TB).

In Durban, South Africa, one of the main concerns of market traders at Warwick Junction, the city's main market, is fire, along with other issues, such as sanitation. The Phephanathi ("be safe with us" in isiZulu) project was a pilot project conducted by WIEGO and supported by NGO Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) that aimed to engage informal traders in the development of a health and safety system for eight markets in Warwick Junction, Durban. The participatory exercises that formed part of this process have resulted in the development of a Participatory Hazard Mapping Tool for Informal Markets. This tool focuses on a collaborative process for market traders and local government officials to develop a disaster response plan. The Participatory Hazard Mapping Tool for Informal Markets provides urban planners, architects, and city officials with an adaptable blueprint for engaging informal workers in urban planning processes, such as disaster risk reduction management.



*First Aid 'green cross' prominently displayed in Warwick Junction market.*

### STEP 1: Improve understanding of underlying risk issues and risk management through hazard mapping walkabouts and trainings

Two "hazard mapping walkabouts" involving AeT, traders, and city officials, were carried out through Warwick Junction's markets to identify fire risks or hazards and environmental sanitation hazards. The walkabouts resulted in the resolution of some sanitary issues, but it also prompted fire officials to understand the need for fire training geared specifically toward the informal market situation. Importantly, it also – even if temporarily – improved relations between government officials and traders.

A select group of market traders underwent Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Training after a focus group discussion (FGD) identified their level of knowledge and understanding of OHS. Based on that FGD, a one-day course was developed on basic health and safety for workers in the informal sector. Objectives of the training were to:

- Educate workers on OHS for a better quality of work and life;
- Empower workers to take steps to work better and be healthy;
- Develop an understanding of the link between health and safety, and economic conditions;
- Develop a work ethic of protection, health, and safety.

The training was followed up by mobile phone text messages that were sent to participants on a weekly basis. The project used Frontline SMS ([www.frontlinesms.com](http://www.frontlinesms.com)) to send health messages to 550 traders. This is an effective behaviour change strategy, as one of the key difficulties in targeted behaviour change is that the desired change is often not maintained over time. Receiving text messages serves as a regular reminder. The factors that made this strategy effective included:

- **Frequency:** 15 health messages were sent over a period of three weeks (one message per working day).
- **Language:** Messages were sent in isiZulu to the majority of participants, although English messages were also used for the few traders who preferred to receive messages in that language.
- **Types:** Messages included health tips, how to lift heavy things, information about the importance of resting and reminders to go for regular health checks – especially blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

In addition, traders were trained in first aid through a private accredited company that offered introductory training and certification.

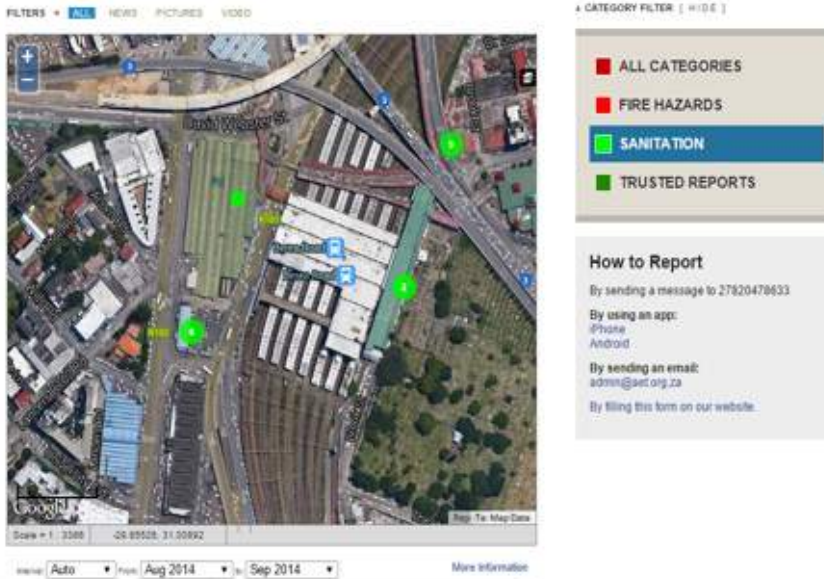
Fire marshals completed a one-day Basic Course in Fire Technology. This course was a standardized one, but the materials were adapted for the local audience. For example, sand as an extinguishing medium was incorporated, which is important for informal market situations. The fire training involved trialing the use of different types of sand to extinguish fires that might break out in the market – caused by electrical problems, cooking oil, or flammable materials.



## STEP 2: Improve the infrastructure for risk management through digital hazard mapping

The project also included the digital mapping of hazards using a free crowdsourcing platform, called Ushahidi ([www.ushahidi.com](http://www.ushahidi.com)), which allows users to send information about a hazard and its exact co-ordinates to a central system that generates a hazard map. Ushahidi was used to map fire and sanitation risks in Warwick Junction market.

The Ushahidi Platform proved to be useful as a tool for recording hazards in Warwick Junction. In addition to the map that is generated, the “report” function allows one to keep a description of the hazard, a photograph, and the date and time that the hazard was recorded. This allows for the development of a systematic database (even data set) of infrastructural problems and hazards within the market that can be updated on a regular basis. These reports can be used as an information source when working with local government authorities on improved service provision. Such reports can also be extended to reports of harassment, evictions, crimes and other hazards.



### Enabling conditions:

For the technology to be effective, the information gathered eventually needs a place to go – it needs at least a partially responsive audience from an institution that has the mandate and capacity to institute changes on the ground. Technology can only operate optimally if it is situated within social and governance systems that are also operating optimally. These systems need to be developed prior to, or at least alongside, the use of the technology.

## STEP 3: Identify affordable alternatives to expensive fire-fighting and first aid equipment

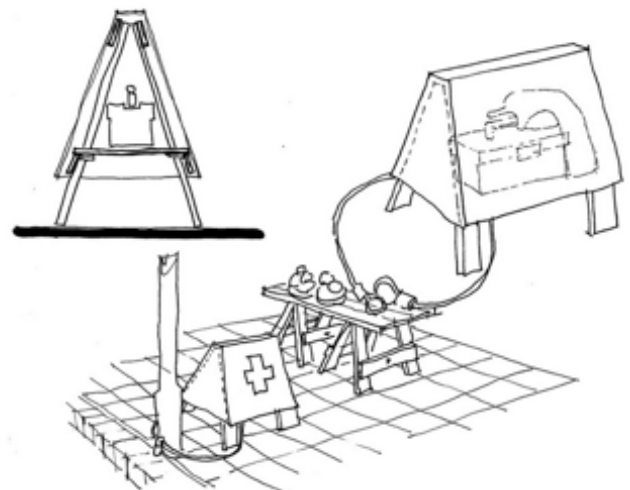
Prior to rolling out first aid and fire-fighting stands into the market, the WIEGO/AeT team undertook a detailed assessment with the help of traders in each market. During this exercise, the number and placing of the stands in each market was decided upon collaboratively. Measurements were also taken to ensure that the stands could be tethered to appropriate infrastructure (traders' tables, poles, and so on).

AeT prototyped cardboard cones that can be used to throw sand onto fires as an alternative to expensive fire-fighting equipment that may be stolen or vandalized or used for other purposes. This fits in with the idea that solutions and training should be designed appropriately for the local context: they should be implementable, desirable, and appropriate – the first aid stands and fire extinguishers must be easy to see, easy to use, and easy to store and access every day.

To demarcate where traders in the market could receive first aid in case of an emergency, AeT designed and piloted what have been dubbed as ‘green crosses’ by traders: A-frame stands with a platform for the first aid box and a vinyl protection cover with a green cross on both sides.

Health screenings conducted at the market identified respiratory and reproductive issues, especially among women traders.

Subsequently, a health clinic was brought to the market. Doctors and nurses were now available on site, so traders did not have to leave their workplaces to go to a clinic, but could drop in without much loss of trading time.



*Design prototype of a First Aid Stand for informal workers developed for the Phephanathi Project. Design and sketch by Richard Dobson.*

## **STEP 4: Improve the collaboration amongst traders and the communication with local government in managing risk**

Risk management sub-committees exist in each market and have been charged with managing the First Aid stands and the Fire Cones. AeT has continued to track the progress of both these designs. An expert urban planning consultant has developed a Disaster Response Plan for the Early Morning Market. The Phephanathi Committee (originally known as the WJ Central Risk Management Committee) continues to meet. The committee is tasked with promoting health and safety in Warwick Junction. It meets at least four times a year, and has representatives from all the markets. It is supposed to coordinate the participation of traders and report back to them.

### **Results**

- Market traders and city officials alike gained a better understanding of the health and safety risks in the market as well as steps to take to improve those conditions
- Informal traders were enabled to be part of city planning through participatory risk management. The collaboration with city officials helps to build a foundation to develop collaboratively a more resilient city for all.
- Improved risk management infrastructure better equipped traders to deal with hazards they face in the workplace, and low-tech warning and extinguishing systems proved to be appropriate options. Also, hazards were digitally mapped so that the information could be shared with city authorities and to increase accountability, as traders can monitor if and when things are fixed.
- The information gathered through the project has the potential to form the basis for collaborating with local government on larger scale infrastructure upgrades.
- Traders gained knowledge about the importance of taking health and safety seriously, which is critical for behavior change. At the same time, city authorities were encouraged to see traders not just as people taking up the sidewalks but as business people who need services and have rights.

# CARE ECONOMY

1. Childcare Centres for the Children of Informal Economy Workers in Gujarat, India
2. WIEGO Childcare Initiative: Coordinated Research and International Advocacy
3. Domestic Worker Benefits Campaign in Lima Peru

# 1. Childcare Centres for the Children of Informal Economy Workers in Gujarat, India

SEWA has been managing 33 childcare centres in Gujarat. The childcare centres serve the women workers of the informal economy, including women street vendors, agricultural workers, weavers, domestic helpers, construction workers, and other service providers. The average income of these women is estimated to be between Rs. 50 (US \$0.83) and Rs 200 (US \$3.33) a day. The working hours of these women average between six and eight hours a day, although they are sometimes longer.

These women workers are very vulnerable. If they have young children, they often have to stop working in order to care for them. This means a loss of income and further aggregation into a vicious cycle of poverty. At times, it is necessary for elder school-going children, particularly girls, to be removed from school so that they can care for younger siblings when parents are at work. This results in the under-education of children, especially girls.

SEWA believes that childcare is an integral component of social security for women workers; its centres help ensure that women can work and earn enough income without worrying about wards at home or pulling their daughters out of school.



## What Changed?

When children are enrolled in SEWA centres at affordable rates, they receive high quality and age-appropriate nutrition, programming, and health interventions like vaccines. Centres communicate health and developmental guidelines to parents, including fathers, and track children as they age out into higher levels of schooling.

## Results

- 100 per cent of children attending the centres received vaccinations on time and their rates of malnourishment appeared lower than those who do not attend the SEWA centres. They are actively encouraged to pursue hand hygiene.
- Women who previously would have had to stop working to care for their children were now independent enough to perform work without worrying about their wards at home. Their income increase ranges from Rs. 500-1,000 (US \$8-16) per month, and for many this income reached up to Rs. 2,000 (US \$32) per month.
- Only 71 per cent of older siblings who have younger siblings attending a SEWA centre take care of younger siblings compared to 100 per cent of respondents whose siblings attend ICDS centres.
- Children whose siblings don't go to any centre end up spending more than eight hours a day managing their siblings. Those whose siblings go to SEWA childcare centres spend less than two hours a day performing childcare.
- Research shows that 80 per cent of the Ahmedabad childcare centre alumni have a comparably higher school attendance (78 per cent) than those who did not (68 per cent).

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made it Work?

SEWA's success in establishing its childcare centres is due in large part to gaining and maintaining the trust of parents. This trust has been achieved through regular and open communication with parents; adjusting hours of operation to suit parents' work schedules; proactive measures focused on the well-being of the children, such as providing them with nutritious lunches daily and ensuring their immunizations are up-to-date; consistency of routines; and taking into consideration the women's entire families, including older children.

## Legal and Policy Environment

India's national policy framework stipulates that there should be at least one child care centre in each area with a population of 1,000 persons, and although their management is a state responsibility, in many states, management now comes under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation.

## 2. WIEGO Child Care Initiative: Coordinated Research and International Advocacy

In response to the demand from member-based partner organisations (MBOs), the Social Protection team at WIEGO started up the Child Care Initiative in 2014. The initiative aims to document, raise awareness and advocate for quality child care services for all workers. On the one hand, informal women workers' low earnings mean they have to work long hours to meet their households' most basic needs, leaving little time for them to care for children. On the other hand, without quality child care services women informal workers are less productive if they have to look after their children as they work, or forgo paid work altogether. This contributes to high levels of poverty amongst women informal workers and gender inequalities in labour force participation rates and earnings.

Family benefits are one of nine core work-related contingencies covered under the ILO Convention on Social Security (C102) and the global social protection floors (R202). In order to guarantee women workers' income security and address childhood poverty, global social protection floors must go beyond child grants and maternity benefits to also include quality child care services. For children of informal workers, access to quality child care services and more time spent with their parents can lead to better care and positive education and health outcomes.

### MBO-led Research on the Ground

Focus group discussions conducted by MBOs in Brazil, Ghana, India, South Africa and Thailand revealed that the experiences of informal workers vary across sectors when quality child care services are not available. Street vendors may have to take their children with them to sell in crowded urban areas, while home-based workers struggle to both care for their children and work at the same time. Migrant domestic workers may leave their children with extended family members while they are working in another city of country. For waste pickers, waste dumps are not places where they wish to bring their children and may prefer to leave them at home even if unattended.

Most domestic workers and many child care workers are themselves informal workers lacking the necessary wages, working conditions and social protection to care for their own children. In a time of rapid urbanization and declining wage growth family structures are changing making it harder for households to provide child care. At the same time, public sector budget cuts lead to less favorable working conditions for child care workers and too few quality child care centres to meet the growing demand. This is part of the care crisis that workers face today, alongside the growing need for elder care.

### Developing a strategy for International advocacy

Since its launch in 2014, WIEGO's Child Care Initiative, has produced several background papers, including a comprehensive literature review on the links between child care provision and women's incomes. In June 2015, MBOs and WIEGO partners decided to develop an international advocacy strategy drawing from national advocacy initiatives and coalition building with trade unions, MBOs, women's rights and child rights organizations. In the coming years, the ambition is to create and strengthen broad national and international coalitions that bring together labour, women and child rights advocates, researchers and supportive international institutions. National and international advocacy strategies will position child care as a core component of social protection for all workers in the hope of expanding child care provision with the support of governments and employers.



*SEWA child care centre, Ahmedabad, India*



*Public child care centre, Bangkok, Thailand*

# 3. Domestic Worker Benefits Campaign in Lima, Peru

## Coordination and dialogue for a campaign

Since 2014, WIEGO Project Officer Edith Anampa has sustained a “mesa,” or board, which brings together government institutions and the two National Federations of Domestic Workers in Lima, Peru to pilot a campaign that aims to increase the number of Peruvian domestic workers who have effective access health insurance, and to a pension savings program. These are rights that are covered under the National Domestic Workers Law in Peru, but fewer than 10 per cent of eligible workers’ employers comply. The board brings together officials from various public agencies (including the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs), with representatives from the two federations, in addition to other NGOs.

The two month Domestic Workers Benefits Campaign was launched in July 2016.. The campaign targets a district of Lima that has 35,000 households (San Borja), but where only 1000 domestic workers enjoy health insurance coverage. The initiative uses humor, and highlights the positive aspects of employers and workers as partners in caring for families and homes. It encourages compliance by appealing to values of equality and fairness for workers rather than in law enforcement terms, and advertises rewards for compliance rather than threatening non-compliance with sanctions, such as fines. increases in the number of domestic workers able to access health insurance and pensions will be measured after the campaign. As WIEGO Project Office Edith Anampa explains, however, “what matters most with this campaign is not the increase in of itself, but the fact that several government offices have worked together, and the effort illustrates that it is not difficult to promote enforcement of existing law to grant social benefits to all domestic workers. This is a step towards the government launching a national campaign to promote law enforcement for this vulnerable population.”

## Unique, multi-phased approach

The campaign has three phases: development, incentives and evaluation.

**Development:** The development phase of the campaign involves raising awareness and disseminating messaging in unique ways. For example:

- Reminders about the campaign are included on mid-term utility bills;
- Announcements are posted on public billboards, at shopping malls and supermarkets;
- Announcements, messaging and graphics on social media.

**Incentives:** Incentives for compliance are offered to both domestic workers and employers, including:

- For compliance and consecutive payments, employers and domestic workers can access trainings, or even win tickets to attend shows together.

**Evaluation:** The campaign will be followed by a rigorous evaluation process to assess whether there was a significant increase in the number of domestic workers registered to the national health system.



# AGRICULTURE

1. Gaining Confidence, Visibility and Economic Opportunities: Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union
2. Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative: Growing Toward a New Gender Balance
3. Increasing Women's Productivity: Technology and Agriculture in Rural Bihar, India

# 1. Gaining Confidence, Visibility and Economic Opportunities: Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union

Since cocoa was brought to Africa from the Americas in colonial times, Ghana has been a leading global producer of cocoa beans for the world market. Ghana is the second largest producer, contributing 16 per cent of the global supply. Until the recent discovery of oil and despite growth in some other export sectors, cocoa has been the mainstay of Ghana's economy for a century. Ghana earned \$715 million from the export of cocoa in 2009.

While cocoa sales are critical to the national economy, the production of cocoa is largely an informal activity. Cocoa production in Ghana is fully a family affair: there are no plantations and more than 700,000 individual small-scale farmers with only 2-3 hectares.

The state retains full control on the cocoa marketing system and sets a minimum price at the start of each season based on its projected sales income less expected costs. This makes the cost of state support to the sector of critical importance – the more spent on government workers, the less there is available for farmers. At times, farmers have received less than 30 per cent of the export price, with the rest going to government. Farmers were largely powerless to influence government over this vital issue, despite having two (traditionally male) representatives on the Board of the Cocoa Marketing Board and a national “Farmers Association.”



*Members of the Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union*

## What changed?

Most cocoa farmers in Ghana have never tasted chocolate. Farmers have no opportunity to see what happens to their cocoa in the final market, or to be involved directly in exports. The formation of the cooperative “Kuapa Kokoo” in 1993 changed this irrevocably because, while it did not involve a challenge to the state-dominated system locally, it brought the cooperative into direct relationships with fair trade buyers and gave them a perspective on the global chocolate market unique among farmers in Ghana.

Many farmers were previously cheated at the hands of government agents who fixed the scales and delayed payments, and they feared worse from the private sector after liberalization in 1993. Forming their own cocoa trading company at this time was their response to ending the village-level exploitation. This initiative expanded in 1999 with the formation of Kuapa Kokoo's own chocolate marketing company, Divine. Kuapa Kokoo farmers hold 45 per cent of the equity. It is the only farmer-owned chocolate company in the world, trading branded products in more than 10 countries globally.

## Voice and visibility

Kuapa Kokoo is a democratically run organization and has flourished, growing from 2,000 to more than 60,000 farmers in 1,350 villages; 38 per cent of members were women (at the end of 2008). Kuapa Kokoo's members produce almost 6 per cent of Ghana's annual crop and have earned a good reputation for repayment of loans, cocoa quality and timely delivery within the industry.

As a successful cocoa trading company, Kuapa has joined other traders to form a representative body to lobby the government, and its voice is particularly powerful because it is the only farmer-owned trading company in Ghana. Currently, farmers expect to receive around 70 per cent of the export price. Because it is well organized at the village level, Kuapa Kokoo has been able to leverage many other supports from government, development agencies and sponsorships from local service providers (e.g. mobile phone companies) for its members, including scholarships, credit, farm inputs and development project resources.

## Representation of women

From its formation, embedding an equal opportunity approach in Kuapa's democratic systems and services was a major objective. Enforced quotas exist for female representation at every level, from village to district to national bodies. In 2006, 32 per cent of primary society committee representatives were female (2,079 women out of a total of 6,524 representatives), and 45 per cent of area level representatives were female (81 women out of a total of 182 representatives). Sixty per cent of the National Executive Board members are female, even without a “quota” system at this level. As early as 1998, Kuapa established a Gender Programme to address women's unequal access in the cocoa sector, as well as specific issues identified in a 1996 survey. For example, no collateral is required to secure loans – often a problem for women; only a peer group approval of someone as credit-worthy is needed. Between 2000-08 Kuapa Kokoo's Gender Programme supported 800 women in 35 communities to develop viable income-generating activities. Applications for community projects to be funded with Fairtrade Social Premiums must be defined and approved at the village level, and at least three committee members must be women.

A number of Kuapa Kokoo women have taken key roles in the organization's Boards of Directors. For example, Comfort Kumeah has been the Chairwomen of the Kuapa Kokoo Farmers' Trust since 2005, managing a budget that has grown to more than US\$1 million a year under her management and passing a full systems inspection by FLO-Cert in 2009.

Many women have travelled overseas to promote Kuapa Kokoo, Ghana and Divine chocolate. Including women in overseas delegations has had a huge impact not only on the self-confidence of the individual women involved, but also on other women members of the co-operative who now see these women as role models.



## Business and leadership training

Between 2012 and 2015, WIEGO's fair trade initiative worked with Kuapa Kokoo to deliver training to at least 2,800 women farmers in 670 of its primary societies.

As part of WIEGO's Business and Leadership project, which was carried out with groups in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, Kuapa Kokoo set a goal to increase women's membership to 30 per cent from 14 per cent. Progress was initially slow, but a woman was elected as president in 2013. Then in July 2014, women won 2,244 leadership positions up for election, representing 40.7 per cent of available leadership positions in the huge co-op.

Kuapa Kokoo planned to train at least 2,800 women cocoa farmers using the cascading training approach. In 2013, training needs were assessed and 670 women were selected as trainers. Chosen for their active engagement with Kuapa Kokoo and their communities, the women were given training on women workers' rights, business and leadership skills. They were encouraged to carry their new knowledge back to their regions and primary societies. Each was asked to train a minimum of six other women.

Most women have other streams of income beyond cocoa, such as vegetable gardens, petty trading, manufacturing of soap and plant oil extraction, and hair dressing. The project equipped women to better plan and manage their businesses and finances. The Impact Survey conducted in 2015 revealed that about 94 per cent of the women now plan before implementing a venture.

While the baseline survey found that 60 per cent of the women involved with Kuapa Kokoo owned land apart from land owned by their husbands, that number rose to 89 per cent by the end of the project in 2015. The greatest increase was due to women exercising their inheritance rights and getting land from their parents, while a smaller percentage acquired land from their spouses. In 2015, 17 per cent of the women who owned land had purchased it themselves, compared to just 3 per cent in 2013. The women indicated that empowerment training had been the single greatest contributor to their decision to pursue land ownership.

The cascading training approach will allow those trained as facilitators to continue to train women in leadership and business skills; the new online manuals will help. Kuapa Kokoo wants to spread the benefits to primary societies that did not participate in this project.

The women surveyed at the end of the project indicated that they feel proud when women gain leadership positions and they think women can do better—that they can do what men can do. They pledged to train their daughters to become women of substance.

## Conclusion

How can core labour rights be promoted for individual and family farmers and their communities? They are not "employed" by anybody and will not benefit from labour legislation. So the crux of effective interventions for peasant farmers, as informal workers, is around the terms of trade and their presence through formal and representative organization, and then their visibility in the market to consumers. These are the key elements to improve their negotiating power. These unique focuses remain the preserve and priority only of fair trade certification schemes at present.



*For Kuapa Kokoo, singing is a vital part of the training*

## 2. Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative: Growing Toward a New Gender Balance

Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative was a key partner in WIEGO's Business & Leadership Skills to Women Fair Trade Producers project, carried out from 2012-2015 with groups in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana. Gumutindo (which means "excellent quality" in the local Lugisu language) is a secondary level cooperative which began as a group of 200 farmers in 1998 and now encompasses 10,000 farmer members organized into 16 primary societies. The farmers live on Mount Elgon in eastern Uganda. Gumutindo produces Arabica coffee and is 100% Fair-trade certified. 10 of those societies took part in the project, offering training that reached over 1,200 women.

The project's mission was to make sustainable improvements to members' livelihoods in the most advantageous markets. Its objective was to mobilize more coffee growers to see coffee not as an alternative livelihood, but as a business that generates income and makes possible good housing, education, clean water and energy while conserving nature. The following section describes the impact of the project on women's lives from the perspective of participants and leaders in the cooperative.

### Impact from a member's perspective

In Konokoy, one of the 16 primary societies that belong to the Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative, a group of women share their thoughts on the impact of business skills training on their lives:

Justine Watalunga, the project coordinator for Konokoy explains that 12 women's groups were formed there, each with 20 members. She explains that the women enjoyed the project trainings, and the social aspects of coming together. "But what they learned most, and loved most, is savings."

Justine explains the revolving merry-go-round style of saving that the women established. Each group of 20 decides on what to they will save for in a particular month—it could be household goods like cups and plates, or something to improve their businesses. They all contribute 1,000 shillings each week. In the first week, the full sum is divided between five women; the following week, another five women receive the money. This repeats in the next two weeks, and by the end of the month everywoman has received a lump sum of 4,000 shillings and bought the items.

But their saving strategies go beyond the simple, enforced merry-go-round system. They have all been encouraged to make budgets and save on their own. One of the older women in attendance, Esther, praises the habit. "I no longer have financial gaps. The needs at home are met, and we do not depend just on the men."

From watching each other, the women have learned that they can use their savings to invest in businesses that improve their livelihoods. Justine references Stella, a young woman in the group, and explaining that she got the idea to sell petrol to motorcycle drivers. Stella began with one jerry can, saved the proceeds from sales, and now has five jerry cans—and money in her pocket that she can call her own.

"She is admired. When women look at Stella, they see how she has grown up. Then they look around for where there is a need and they have their idea, just like Stella did," Justine says, adding that the training has helped them understand how to spot a particular niche. "They are thinking far and looking far now."

Justine says the women's small businesses have made a big difference. "Life comes better. Before, we were waiting for men to give us everything because we didn't have any money in our pocket." That creates greater harmony at home, too—many of the women shared that their husbands are pleased that instead of "demanding" money or things, their wives now contribute income to the household.



*Members of Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative*



"We shall have a woman as the chair. Men say this is our store, but we will change that."

- Justine Watalunga

There's plenty of irony in that statement, given that these women do most of the work involved in growing and harvesting the coffee. However the land, and therefore the coffee grown on it, almost always belongs to the husband. On Mount Elgon, gender inequality has very deep roots.

According to Tabitha Namarome, Gumutindo's Gender Coordinator, "A lot of these women prune, pick, wash, dry and carry the coffee to market—and the man will follow and sell it and take the money."

But she believes a progressive change is happening—slowly.

In the past few years, she says, she knows of about 30 husbands who have given a plot of land to women in the training program—because the men, too, have learned about the issues—and 34 who have agreed to make the land a joint holding with their wives. Bureaucratic red tape, however, makes the official transfer of title difficult. Tabitha says it can take years. While Gumutindo requests that women keep at it until they have the documents, the cooperative does recognize the transfer of land title as soon as the process is begun.

Justine herself farms 300 coffee trees. One of her six children, a son, works with her. Her husband, however, works far away and is only home occasionally and for short times. "I am the one controlling everything at home," she laughs.

She was trained as a master trainer more than two years ago, and has since passed on her knowledge to four other leaders who now train the women in this primary society.

"Before, I had nothing to teach them. But then I learned to help them plan and I learned even more about saving than what I used to do, and now I feel powerful."

Her newfound confidence led her to put her name forward to become chairperson of her primary society last year. She was defeated, largely she says because so few women are members and the men opposed her. Now, she's encouraging all the women who can to pay the membership fee to Konokoy before the 2017 elections. Because in 2017, Justine plans to win.

"We shall have a woman as the chair. Men say this is our store, but we will change that."

In addition to taking part in the WIEGO-led project, Gumutindo has been offering Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training, developed by Oxfam-Novib, which gives women (and their husbands) a space to re-think gender dynamics that have women doing most of the coffee farming but receiving none of the income generated by their labours. The GALS training complements the trainings on leadership, good business practices, and savings already offered through the WIEGO project.



# 3. Increasing Women's Productivity: Technology and Agriculture in Rural Bihar, India

In recent years in India, there has been a feminization of agriculture, with women accounting for over 50 per cent of the agriculture workforce. Although women continue to carry out their “traditional” tasks such as manual planting, weeding and harvesting, they have also begun to take on “men’s work” such as ploughing, marketing, irrigation and the overall management of the farm. This trend has been perpetuated by the increasing migration of men from rural to urban areas for work, leaving women behind in villages to work on farms.



This phenomena has resulted in an increased burden of work for women. Women in rural areas work as sharecroppers, small and marginal farmers, and labourers in the fields. At the same time, women are also responsible for household work that includes cooking, fuel and water collection. These female farmers do not have the skills or financial resources necessary to improve agricultural productivity. They often supplement their income on farms with home-based work, producing food products, clothing, incense sticks or other handicrafts for sale. For this type of home-based work, which is often done in the evening after work on the farm is done, a consistent source of electricity is crucial. However, the energy supply in rural areas of India is inadequate. Bihar is one of the regions in India with lowest energy access.

## What Changed?

In the state of Bihar, technology was the entry point through which SEWA addressed the related issues of productivity, occupational health, and safety among agricultural and home-based workers. This included an intervention to increase crop productivity through facilitating access to agricultural machinery, and increase energy access through the provision of solar home light systems. These interventions connected women with technological innovations in an accessible way, allowing them to become familiar with the benefits of these through first-hand experience. This experience is significant, as many rural women workers want to improve their livelihoods but are unsure about their own capabilities to use technology. More significantly, they do not have the financial resources to access these technologies.

Awareness and education of women workers is a key strategy used in both interventions. Through a group learning setting, women are trained on new technologies and agricultural techniques. This process has not only increased knowledge among women workers but has also enhanced their confidence to make decisions in their field.

SEWA also promotes procurement of technology through end-user financing either from nationalized banks or SEWA's banking institution. In the case of solar home light systems, where the cost is affordable, it is easier to provide the technology on deferred credit to individuals. In the case of larger machines used in agriculture, a community-based procurement approach is employed. Specifically, a Custom Hiring Center (CHC) is established from where women can rent machines for tilling (zero tillage machines), transplantation (paddy transplanters), and threshing.

## Results

- The paddy plantation process has led to a 65 per cent increase in yield in one acre of land through the mechanized process.
- The zero tillage machine used for wheat plantations has led to a reduction in waste of seeds that in turn has led to savings of US \$10 and the conservation of water.
- The light system has led to an increase in productive hours, particularly for workers who run small shops (such as dairy farms, poultry farms, parlours, stitching centres, and grocery shops), or that work independently stitching garments, weaving clothes, making bamboo baskets, incense sticks or leaf plates. It is estimated that a home-based worker making leaf plates is able to earn an additional US \$125 in income annually using the solar home light systems, which have replaced kerosene lamps as a source of lighting in one room houses.
- There has been a reduction in household expenditure on fuels by at least 80 per cent in small houses. In slightly larger houses, solar home light systems have reduced monthly expenditure on fuel by 30 per cent. Households also have the option to charge mobile phones from the light system. This has proved instrumental in reducing the cost of mobile charging by US \$1.50 (Rs. 90) per month, in remote areas, where people had to travel between four to five kilometres every other day to get their cell phones charged.

## Suggestions for Future Efforts: What Made it Work?

- **Women as agents of change:** In both interventions – facilitating access to agricultural machinery and the adoption of sustainable energy technologies – it is the women from the community who are the drivers of change. SEWA invests in building capacity of the women leaders who function as trainers, mobilisers, and marketing agents, ultimately contributing to the sustainability of these initiatives.
- **Livelihood linkages:** The use of technology has been instrumental in strengthening the livelihoods of home-based workers, small shop owners, share croppers, and small and marginal farmers. Additionally, the provision of the technology itself is also a source of income-generation for women. For instance, business associates and service associates earn their livelihood from sale of sustainable energy products. Also, the CHC is owned and managed by local women themselves. The rates, rents, terms and conditions are fixed by these women farmers.
- **Increased ease and productivity:** The women workers highlight the increase in comfort from using a stable and bright light as a critical benefit of the energy initiative. In the case of the agricultural machinery, women point out how machines have eased the hard burden of the work, and saved time in the process. This has had positive health benefits as well. For example, switching to reaper machines has relieved back pain for many women, which was otherwise common with the use of traditional methods that require working for long hours in a bent position.



# Global Movement of Women Informal Workers: Inspired by SEWA, Facilitated by WIEGO, Led by Women

## About SEWA:

SEWA is a movement of informal women workers in India. It was started by Ela Bhatt as a trade union in 1972 and within a few years had formed a women's co-operative bank and a number of artisan co-operatives. This set the path for SEWA to pursue a joint strategy of "struggle" (collective bargaining, negotiations, campaigns, and advocacy) and "development" (forming organizations such as co-operatives and companies for direct interventions in the market and services of various kinds). SEWA stresses self-reliance, both individual and collective, and promotes organizing around four sources of security: work, income, food, and social security.

SEWA's 2 million members, poor women in the informal economy, are drawn from multiple trades and occupations and from all religious and caste groups. SEWA is also the most influential organization of informal workers worldwide, having influenced policies, norms, and practice at the local, national, regional, and international levels. SEWA has been a pioneering leader of four international movements: labor, women's movement, co-operative movement and micro-finance.



## About WIEGO:

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. What sets WIEGO apart from many international NGO networks is that it is a member-based and member-driven network; and its institutional members are not NGOs but membership-based organizations of informal workers: a total of 34 from 26 countries.

Another distinct defining feature of WIEGO is its ability to bridge ground level realities of informal workers and mainstream academic and international discourses. WIEGO's network also includes 163 individual members from 30 countries who are researchers, statisticians and academics or development practitioners from non-governmental or inter-governmental organizations. Individual members help to open doors for the organizations of informal workers to engage in policy advocacy on behalf of their members and to provide the official statistics, research findings and policy analysis to inform their policy advocacy.

WIEGO helps to build the capacity, frame the messages, and generate the knowledge that organizations of informal workers need to engage in effective bargaining, negotiating, and advocacy at all levels; and it is doing so around the world with four groups of informal workers – domestic workers, home-based producers, street vendors and waste pickers.

## Perspective and Position on Women's Economic Empowerment:

Economic empowerment of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy is at the heart of both WIEGO's and SEWA's mission. Both organizations' perspective and position on women's economic empowerment is informed by close collaborations with organizations of informal workers, and the women members and leaders in them, and a grounded knowledge of informal workers and their livelihoods.

The increased ability of working poor women to influence the wider policy and regulatory environment that shapes their livelihoods and lives is critical for women's economic empowerment. Through work with membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers, it has become clear that increased access to resources without an enabling environment will not necessarily translate into more secure and remunerative livelihoods. Existing policies, regulations, and institutions are not designed to meet – and often undermine – the needs of the working poor, especially women. Therefore, improved outcomes for the working poor, especially women, require their ability to significantly influence the wider environment.

For WIEGO and SEWA, then, empowerment refers to the process of change that gives working poor women – as individual workers and as members of worker organizations – the ability to gain access to and control over the resources they need while also gaining the ability to influence the wider policy, regulatory, and institutional environment that shapes their livelihoods and lives.

## Resources:

WIEGO produces a range of publication and resources – from books to statistical and policy briefs to worker training kits. The WIEGO website is a repository of information on the informal economy where all of these resources, background information on the organization, news and newsletters from membership-based partner organizations, and a range of additional information is made available. WIEGO also curates others' materials in WIEGO's Knowledge Base on the Informal Economy (also available on main website).

**SEWA website:** <http://sewa.org/>

**WIEGO website:** <http://wiego.org/>

**Statistics on the Informal Economy:** <http://wiego.org/informal-economy/statistics-informal-economy>

**Major occupational groups of informal workers:** <http://wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups>

**WIEGO's microsite on women's economic empowerment:** <http://wiego.org/wee>