



**Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing**

**WIEGO RESEARCH ON INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT:
KEY METHODS, INDICATORS & FINDINGS**

**MARTY CHEN
WIEGO & HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

REMARKS

- ▣ **purpose**
- ▣ **methods**
- ▣ **key variables**
- ▣ **illustrative findings** – intersection of key variables

PURPOSE

- ▣ to *inform policy debates* about the working poor in the informal economy
- ▣ to *equip organizations of informal workers*, and their representative leaders, to effectively engage in these debates
- ▶ *legal and policy reforms* that the working poor need to secure and enhance their livelihood activities.

WIEGO EXPERIENCE & APPROACH

Over the past 20 years, WIEGO has found that:

- ▣ *to attract the attention of policy makers: we need evidence on the size and contribution of the informal economy*
- ▣ *to inform policy making: we need evidence on the composition of the informal workforce and characteristics of its different segments*
- ▣ *to inspire creative thinking about policy design: we need documentation and dissemination of good policies and practices which protect and enhance informal livelihoods*

To address these different policy advocacy purposes and to meet the advocacy needs of the organizations of informal workers in our network, WIEGO has found that our research needs to be:

- ▣ multi-city or multi-country
- ▣ relatively quick and easy
- ▶ *our research niche: mid-way between in-depth case studies in a single location and quantitative analyses of large cross-country datasets*

Finally, important to note that WIEGO typically *partners with local organizations of informal workers* in our field research: they help us with research design and analysis and recruiting local researchers & we help them build research and advocacy capacity

METHODS: BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- To inform the conceptual framework and design of our field research
 - *consultations with organizations of informal workers* – to determine what research topics or issues are most important to informal workers
 - *literature reviews* – to assess what is known and thought about how the research topic relates to informal workers
 - *institutional mapping* - to identify key stakeholders and their relationship to and stance on the informal economy and the research topic

METHODS:

FIELD RESEARCH

- *Qualitative Research = Participatory Informal Economy Appraisal (PIEA)*
 - developed collaboratively with *Caroline Moser, Angélica Acosta, and Irene Vance*. Adaptation of earlier participatory research methodologies developed by Robert Chambers and Caroline Moser among others.
 - originally designed for *10-city study (in 2012)* to interrogate what driving forces impact three sectors of urban informal workers and their livelihoods, how they respond, and which institutions help or hinder.
 - *pair of qualitative researchers (facilitator + note-taker)* on each city research team conducted:
 - conducted *15 focus groups of around 5 participants each per sector*
 - using *9 focus group tools* – organized around themes of sector characteristics, driving forces and responses, institutional environment, and contributions of the sector
 - wrote *reports of about 10-12 pages*, on average, per focus group with relevant *direct quotes* from focus group participants
 - report findings *coded* around different topics: driving forces, costs and risks, technology, health/OHS, among others.

METHODS: FIELD RESEARCH

- *Qualitative Research* (cont.):
 - PIEA methods outlined above have been adopted for *subsequent field research on different topics* by the WIEGO research team, including;
 - 3-city study of health: Ahmedabad (India), Bangkok (Thailand), Durban (South Africa)
 - 3-city study of technology use and impacts: Ahmedabad (India), Durban (South Africa), Lima (Peru)
 - multi-country occupational health and safety studies, including currently in Brazil
 - 2-city study of water and sanitation deficits in informal workplaces, currently in Durban (South Africa) and Nakuru (Kenya)
 - baseline research in 3 WIEGO Focal Cities: Bangkok (Thailand), Dakar (Senegal), and Mexico City (Mexico)

Notes:

1. WIEGO uses PIEA tools in scoping issues we are working on – e.g. homeworkers in value chains in India and Thailand; child care needs in Accra (Ghana)

2. WIEGO also uses more standard focus group methods when the PIEA methods are not feasible or suitable for a given research question or topic.

METHODS: FIELD RESEARCH

- *Quantitative Research = Survey Questionnaire*

- *Design*: informed by background research (consultations with informal worker organizations, literature review, and institutional analysis) and, where possible, by the findings of our qualitative research.
- *Sample*: focus group participants + equal number from purposive sample

Notes:

- focus group tools & survey questionnaire *translated* into local languages and *pre-tested* with support of local research teams and partners (informal worker organizations)
- WIEGO first used *mix of focus group tools & survey questionnaire* in two rounds (2009 and 2010) of 14-city/10-country study of *impact of Global Recession on informal workers*.

METHODS:

FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS

■ *Key Informant Interviews*

- *purpose*: to help interpret the findings from the field research
- *sample*: representatives from organizations of informal workers, government and other relevant stakeholders

■ *Policy Analysis*

- *purpose*: to draw out the policy lessons and messages from the field research findings
- *partners*: local organization of informal workers which facilitated the research jointly
- *policy lessons and messages*
 - published and disseminated together with the research findings
 - disseminated in user-friendly formats, ideally in local languages, for worker education and policy advocacy by organizations of informal workers

OTHER METHODS

- ▣ *Informal Economy Budget Analysis (IEBA)*
 - examines how government budgets address needs and interests of different groups of informal workers + explores opportunities for informal workers (or their representatives) to participate at different stages of the budget process
 - developed and tested in South Africa by Francie Lund, Caroline Skinner, and Imraan Valodia (all with us here) as well as Debbie Budlender
 - 4-city IEBA: Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Lahore (Pakistan), Metropolitan Lima (Peru), and Quezon City (Philippines)
 - 3-city IEBA: Accra (Ghana), Durban (South Africa) and Monrovia (Liberia) – with analysis of *government revenues as well as expenditures*
- ▣ *Homeworkers in Global Value Chain Analysis*
 - *manual on measuring homeworkers* (outworkers who work in their own homes) in garment value chains, prepared for WIEGO in 2001 (by Hubert Schmitz and Dorothy McCormick).
 - *case study of homeworkers in garment value chains* for social protection book (by HomeNet Thailand)
 - ▶ worker education manual on homeworkers in global value chains (by Celia Mather)

KEY VARIABLES

▣ **Branch of Industry/Sector**

- WIEGO focuses on 3 sectors in our urban research: *home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers*
- WIEGO has also done statistical work and research on a fourth sector: *domestic workers*

▣ **Status in Employment**

- *statistical concept*: degree/type of risk & autonomy in work
- *statuses*:
 - *wage employment*: employees + other wage workers
 - *self-employment*: employers + own account workers + contributing family workers
 - *dependent contractors* (e.g. homeworkers)

▣ **Place of Work**: streets/open spaces + built markets + homes + work sheds + fields/pastures/forests/waterways + so called “standard” places

▣ **Gender** (other demographic indicators)

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: HOME-BASED WORKERS

City Services, Value Chains and Home-Based Workers: Place of Work & Status in Employment = Key Variables

- *Place of Work* – home-based workers produce goods and services from in or around their own homes.
 - *common features of homes-cum-workplaces*: which undermine productivity
 - *small size* (often 1 or 2 rooms): difficult to carry out productive work when other members of the household need same space for other purposes
 - *poor quality*: inferior materials, poor ventilation and subject to flooding or leaks
 - *lack of tenure*: disincentive to expanding or improving homes-cum-workplace
 - *location*: (typically) in underserved informal settlements with little or no basic infrastructure services (water, sanitation and electricity) + transport services
- *Status in Employment* – two basic types of home-based workers: those who work on their own (the *self-employed*) and those who work for others (mainly as industrial outworkers, called *homeworkers*)
 - both categories are impacted in the same way by city housing policies and city services
 - but operate in different ways and with different constraints within markets
 - *self-employed* produce goods and services for local markets or customers: *need business support, product development and marketing services and support*
 - *homeworkers producing for value chains*, either domestic or global: *need bargaining power with contractors and lead firms up the chain*

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: INFORMAL TRADERS

City Policies/Practices and Informal Traders: Place of Work = Key Variable

- *Place of Work*: two main groups of informal traders
 - those who vend *on streets or in open-air markets* (what organizations of street vendors, SEWA and WIEGO call *natural markets*)
 - those who trade from *built markets*
- *Costs & Risks*: both groups face costs & risks associated with city policies and practices but type of costs/risks vary significantly
 - *street vendors*: harassment + confiscation of goods + evictions + no basic infrastructure services at their natural markets (water, sanitation, toilets, electricity)
 - *market traders*: fire hazard + little or no basic infrastructure at their built markets
- *Type of Product*: another key variable among street vendors, with a gendered dimension
 - those who sell *perishables (more often women)* are more vulnerable to confiscation or theft of goods (by police and local officials) than those who sell *durables (more often men)*

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: WASTE PICKERS

City Policies/Practices and Waste Pickers: Place of Work, Tasks & Whether Organized = Key Variables

▣ *Place of Work by Task*

- *picking & collection*: homes, streets, dumps, landfills
- *sorting, bundling, processing*: homes, open space, warehouses

Note: Those who work in dumps or landfills face the greatest occupational health risks while those who work in sorting warehouses face the least occupational health risk.

▣ *Whether Member of Waste Picker Organization*

- *waste picker organizations*: can negotiate for access of waste, equipment and warehouses + bid for solid waste management contracts
- *individual waste pickers*: face difficulties in negotiating and cannot bid for contracts (but can be integrated under contracts won by organized waste pickers as in Bogota, Colombia)

Notes: Even when organized, waste pickers have to engage in long struggles to reduce harassment by local authorities and to secure access to waste, infrastructure and contracts.

KEY WIEGO FINDINGS: SYSTEMIC COSTS & RISKS

Through our field research, WIEGO has found that informal workers face *several sources of systemic costs and risks*, including:

- ❑ **Dominant Narratives** which *stigmatize & penalize* informal workers and their livelihood activities as: being *non-compliant* (i.e., evading registration & taxation); having *low productivity* (i.e., a drag on the economy); creating *pressure on public space*; and being associated with “*crime and grime*”.
- ❑ **Inappropriate Policies & Laws** which are often burdensome for or punitive towards informal workers, units and activities, including *labor & employment laws* which most often exclude all informal workers without a recognized employer, even if they are wage employed; and *sector laws* which are often biased towards formal firms (e.g. urban laws and regulations)
- ❑ **Lack of Access** to *public space* (to pursue livelihood activities); to *public services* at workplace (basic infrastructure and transport services); and *public procurement* (i.e. right to bid for public contracts)
- ❑ **Lack of Legal Recognition & Right to Representation**

Sally Roever, incoming WIEGO International Coordinator, has categorized the costs borne by informal workers as follows:

- ❑ *direct expenditures*
- ❑ *downloaded costs* or costs imposed on/transferred to informal workers through unequal bargaining power and lack of contract enforcement and/or livelihood rights
- ❑ *structural costs and constraints* or losses that result from systemic constraints on the ability of informal workers to work or to enhance their productivity; and
- ❑ *implied costs* or costs that further result from the previous categories of costs (Roever 2015).

FUTURE WIEGO RESEARCH: ADVICE WELCOME

- *Key Questions*
 - which questions and topics?
 - which sectors and geographies?
 - which methods?
- *Key Dilemma* – how best to challenge dominant narratives...
 - by publishing in mainstream journals?
 - by influencing policy dialogues?
 - by empowering organizations of informal workers?
- *Key Challenge* – small research team
 - many part-time
 - all have other primary responsibilities within WIEGO



THANK YOU!