



Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Inclusive Cities Project

August 2015

Addressing the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Needs of Informal Workers: Market Traders and Street Vendors in Accra, Ghana

Prepared by Tony Dzidzinyo Dogbe Assisted by Suki Annan

Introduction

This case study illustrates the efforts of two membership-based organizations of market traders and street vendors in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area—namely, the Makola Market Traders Union and the Ga East Traders Union—to achieve better health and safety working conditions. It also shows how by organizing, networking, and building alliances, and how, with the support of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC), the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS), and WIEGO, these traders' unions are growing in confidence, engaging with their local authorities, and beginning to get the local authorities' attention.

City Context

Accra is the capital of and the largest city in Ghana. As of the 2010 Population Census, it has an urban population of over 1.8 million (GSS 2012). It is also the capital of the Greater Accra Region and of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (Council). Furthermore, Accra is the anchor of a larger metropolitan area that encapsulates nine other local authorities (excluding Tema Metropolitan Assembly), which is referred to as the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA). The GAMA has a population of over 4.3 million (GSS 2012).

The region's employment structure shows that nearly 27 per cent of the economically active work in the formal sector and 73 per cent work in the informal sector.

According to the 2010 Population Census figures, GAMA holds 83 per cent of the region's population and is the region's economic heart. For this reason, the region's data can serve as a rough proxy for GAMA's. The region's employment structure shows that nearly 27 per cent of the economically active work in the formal sector and 73 per cent work in the informal sector. The informal sector is comprised of 57 per cent women workers and 43 per cent male workers. In contrast, the formal sector is comprised of almost 67 per cent men and just over 33 per cent women (GSS 2012).

Low earnings usually characterize the informal economy. More than half of the workers in the informal economy earn below the legislated national minimum wage, work long hours, have no or little education, lack social and legal protection, and have a low level of organization or unionization (Baah 2011). Informal economy workers face exposure to



Women street vendors comprise over half of all informal workers in the GAMA region. For many, like the street vendor pictured here, this income is their sole means of providing for their families. Photo: P. Carney

high levels of economic and financial risks (e.g., high interest, inflation, and exchange rates), job insecurity, unsafe and unhygienic working conditions, harassment by local authorities (especially at the local level), lack of involvement in national and local policymaking, and lack of access to credit (Osei-Boateng 2011).

Membership-Based Organizations: The Ga East and the Makola Market Traders Unions

The Ga East Traders Union and the Makola Market Traders Union have similar histories. Both were formed in 1999, with seven and five members respectively. The former started as the Madina Shoe Sellers Association as an attempt to resist the authorities who, at the time, were forcing members into a newly constructed market even though there was no room for them. When the Association realized that not only shoe sellers were in conflict with the authorities, it included vendors of other items and formed the Madina Traders Association (MTA). The MTA became affiliated to the Ghana TUC in 2005 and joined StreetNet Ghana that same year. Since then, it has mobilized other traders in the newly created Ga East Municipality and has become the Ga East Traders Union. The Makola Market Traders Union became affiliated to the Ghana TUC in 2003 and joined StreetNet Ghana at about the same time. According to the leadership of the two organizations, the membership of the Ga East Traders Union is about 1,000 and that of the Makola Market Traders Union is 2,000.

Worker Overview

According to the leadership of the two organizations and to Alferts' study (Alferts 2010), the associations' membership includes traders of a wide range of items. Women constitute about 70 per cent and men 30 per cent of the membership. The majority of members sell food items such as vegetables, grains, legumes, fish, and related items like utensils, charcoal, provisions, etc. Women also make up the majority of cooked food vendors. Historically, cloths, especially African prints, are the domain of women, but with the advent of second-hand clothes, men have become involved in clothing wholesale. The membership also includes skilled artisans such as hairdressers, carpenters, tailors, and seam-

The MTA became affiliated to the Ghana TUC in 2005 and joined StreetNet Ghana that same year. . . . The Makola Market Traders Union became affiliated to the Ghana TUC in 2003 and joined StreetNet Ghana at about the same time.

stresses. Members range from 18 to 60 years of age with a few aged between 70 and 80. The Association does not have members below the age of 18 because it discourages child labour, and those younger than 18 are often contributing to family work. According to the leadership, the monthly income of low-earning members (usually in the rural areas of Ga East Municipal) is estimated to be around Ghc150 (US \$63). The middle-income members such as shoe or cloth retailers and cooked food vendors in schools on average make between Ghc300-500 (US \$125-200) a month, while a few high earners like cloth wholesalers, dealers in second hand clothes and traders in electrical and electronic goods can make over Ghc1,000 (US \$415) a month.

Legal and Policy Framework

According to Rose Kwei of the Ghana TUC, currently Ghana has no formal government policy regarding the informal economy. The legal and policy framework that impacts most of the market traders and street vendors in Ghana is the 1992 Constitution, in particular Articles 35 (6d) and 240 (2e). The latter states categorically 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”. In furtherance of the Constitution and to make decentralization a reality, Parliament enacted the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) and the Local Government Legislative Instrument of 1994 (LI 1589). Act 462 accords citizens some powers and rights, though many citizens groups, like market traders and street vendors, are

In the GAMA region, over half of all informal workers, like the vendor pictured here, are women. Photo: M. Chen



not aware of these powers and rights and therefore have not taken advantage of them. For instance, a citizen or a group can submit a memorandum on an issue before district assembly meetings, which are open to the public. Their community's District Assembly Member is required, by law, to meet with the citizen or group, to collate their views, opinions and proposals before each assembly meeting, and to report to them on the general decisions of the assembly. Assembly members are also supposed to maintain frequent liaison with organized social and productive civil society groups. As the electorate, if citizens are not happy with the work of their assembly member, they have the power to revoke his/her mandate by petitioning the electoral commissioner to that effect, which could lead to the recall of the member.

In line with the Local Government Act and L.I.1589, the management and administration of the city of Accra, where the market and the street traders and vendors at the centre of this case study operate, is the responsibility of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), and the other nine Municipal Assemblies, such as the Ga East Municipal Assembly. These local authorities are mandated to pass by-laws. The by-laws that impinge most directly on the operations of the market traders and street vendors include 1995's Local Government Bulletin of Accra Metropolitan Assembly By-Laws. These contain regulations governing hawkers' permits, business operating permits, regulation of vehicle parking places, and

While this [the National Health Insurance Scheme] is laudable, its focus is on the curative and not preventative health measures.

Public Markets. These by-laws also seek to address issues related to environmental and public health safety.

Another set of by-laws that affect street and market traders includes 2011's "Street Hawking By-Laws," passed by the AMA to take effect on 1 April 2011. These outlined eight prohibitions pertaining to street vending, littering, soliciting alms, juvenile delinquency, and promotional activities on roads and public spaces in Accra (African Urbanism 2011).

Of particular significance, from an occupational health and safety perspective, is the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), which was introduced in 2003. This is a national scheme designed to provide Ghanaians with universal and equitable access to basic curative health care services. While this is laudable, its focus is on the curative and not preventative health measures, the latter being of importance to informal workers whose operations and working conditions expose them to numerous occupational health and safety risks (Alfers 2010). By-laws governing environmental health and sanitation are thus needed to complement the NHIS. While the AMA has integrated environmental health into its 1995 by-laws, other smaller local government authorities responsible for other parts of Accra may have environmental health officers who operate without clear guidelines on what they are meant to be regulating and enforcing (Alfers 2010). Alfers notes that "although the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development produced a template set of environmental sanitation by-laws in 2003, which were distributed to local governments to be adapted according to local circumstance, this has still not been done by most assemblies".

Situation Prior to Intervention (Problem Analysis)

The problems that confront the market traders and street vendors of Accra are many. The focus of this case study is



The lack of proper waste management in the markets has led to the creation of makeshift garbage disposal areas such as the one pictured here. Photo: L. Alfers

on the occupational health and safety (OHS) hazards faced by market traders and street vendors and on the institutional and governance challenges that account for these hazards.

Occupational Health and Safety Issues

In Alfers' study (Alfers 2010) and in the interviews for this case study, market traders and street vendors identified the OHS hazards and risks they face:

- **Poor drainage and waste disposal** due to inadequate provision of refuse removal containers and removal when they are full; inadequate cleaning personnel working in the markets and the lack of adequate cleaning equipment for which reason the traders have to do it themselves or pay others to do it for them. These conditions result in many clogged drains and gutters, which also lead to the breeding of disease vectors for food poisoning and diarrhoea. When it rains, these markets are usually flooded and an intolerable smell emanates from them.
- **Frequent fire outbreaks.** This is often attributed to electrical faults or food sellers using open fire or fish smokers



Makola Market Vendors on the Challenge of Fires. Video: WIEGO

who may have smouldering ashes under their fish overnight. The difficulty in fighting these fires is attributed to the lack of fire extinguishers, fire hydrants, or access to the markets by the fire service.

- **Insecurity of the traders and their wares** due to inadequate lighting in many market areas and the lack of safe and sufficient storage facilities. The presence of criminals also decreases the sense of physical security felt by traders in their place of work.
- **Harassment from local government officials**, especially of street vendors, which gave rise to the Madina Shoe Sellers Association—now the Ga East Traders Association. According to these traders, paying an annual license fee to the local government for the right to trade from unofficial market areas does not prevent the destruction of their goods during government “decongestion” exercises. During such exercises, the authorities often do not differentiate between those street traders who pay licenses and those who do not. As a result, licensed traders are subjected to the same physical harassment from local officials, ranging from goods being destroyed to physical abuse and imprisonment.
- **Physical and psychological effects** resulting from unhealthy and unsafe work environments (including heat and poor ventilation) and unsupportive institutions that, after collecting tolls and taxes from traders, do not provide basic essential services, which means traders must pay to others to these services. This apart, some traders have fallen prey to micro-credit companies who aggressively pushed credit with high interest rates on them. This, traders say, gives them sleepless nights.

Institutional and Governance Issues

In the words of Anas Ibrahim Hille of the Makola Traders Association, these occupational health and safety risks come as a result of “the failure of institutions that are meant to be at [traders’] service”—meaning the institutional and governance failures as listed below:

- **Misuse and embezzlement of the revenue from the markets.** The Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) has stated three different lots of monies (dues, licence fees,

... these occupational health and safety risks come as a result of “the failure of institutions that are meant to be at [traders’] service” ...

- Anas Ibrahim Hille

and income tax) that informal workers must pay to their local authority (Local Government Act). Although these monies place a large financial burden on informal workers, they supplement the District Assembly Common Fund (DAFCF), which the local authorities receive from the central government. They are therefore seen as monies meant for development in general but not for providing services to the traders or for improving their working conditions. This point was made in a 2003 Auditor-General’s Report, which read “there are no preventive maintenance schemes in place due to lack of funds since revenue from the markets are lodged in a common fund of the Assembly and used for other purposes.... AMA seems to regard the markets as a principal source of



The often cramped layout of Accra informal markets leaves workers vulnerable to a variety hazards: illness, crime, fire, police harassment, and so on. Photo: M. Chen

revenue, contributing about 20% of total internally generated funds (IGF) but the provision of services to traders who pay the fees have not been given the necessary attention”. The report also points to the massive embezzlement of market tolls and taxes by revenue collectors and AMA officials. In one 1998 instance, an AMA revenue coordinator could not account for revenue tickets worth ₵138,433,300 (Ghc13,843) and also failed to record tickets valued at ₵55.5 million (Ghc5,500) in his stock register, making monitoring sold tickets very difficult. While these issues had been brought to the attention of the authorities at AMA in 1998, the report says, “there is also no evidence during the audit to show that AMA is or has taken the necessary measures to prevent future leaks”. From the complaints of the market traders and street vendors, it does not seem like much has changed 10 years down the line.

- **Patronage and deferring to people in authority.** As has become the norm in Ghana, the relationship between the market traders and the street vendors on one hand and the city authorities on the other is an adult-child and patronage relationship. To have their needs met, traders often fall on political links and patrons, which, in the case of the market traders in Makola, has created divisions in their ranks.
- **Lack of information.** As was captured in Alferts’ study and confirmed in interviews and workshop reports, the market traders and street vendors lack information about the local government system and the roles and responsibilities of their representatives and of city authorities as well as their own rights as citizens. Public information, such as by-laws, is poorly disseminated and difficult to access—sometimes, it seems, deliberately made so by those in authority. Even in instances where they have information or are aware of their rights, they lack the skill sets with which to demand them.
- **Lack of institutionalized channels of communication between local government and traders.** Once again, this was a major finding in Alferts’ report. It was also brought up at workshops organized for the traders and vendors under WIEGO’s auspices and in the interviews for this case study. A participant at one of the workshops said

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.

it was difficult to access officials when the need arose. This is also because the traders do not seem to know which specific departments or divisions of government are responsible for the different aspects of health and safety in the markets. As a result, consultation and communication is poor, leading to antagonistic relationships between the two groups (Alfers 2010). A case in point is the 40 per cent increase in market tolls. According to the executives of the Makola Traders Union, because they were not consulted, people are now fighting the authorities over the increase.

Model of Intervention or Theory of Change

The two membership-based organizations at the centre of this case study, the Makola Market Traders Union (MMTU) and the Ga East Traders Union (GETU), recognize that as individual traders they are weak when dealing with the local government or city authorities. For this reason, their first objective was to mobilize other traders, often at their own expense. The Ga East Traders Union began mobilizing at the Madina Market and then gradually mobilized others in markets across the municipality. In 2005, early in its formative stage, the Madina Traders Association affiliated with the Ghana Trade Union Congress (Ghana TUC) so as, in their words, "to gain another fleet of members". The Makola Market Traders Union did the same in 2003. Their affiliation with the Ghana TUC brought both associations into contact with StreetNet International. The two traders' unions became founding members of StreetNet Ghana and, by so doing, became members of StreetNet International—a global network of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers (i.e., mobile vendors).

According to the two leaders and other members interviewed, initially, their primary objective as membership organizations was to fight the authorities when they attack

their members and to come to the aid of members who may lose their wares due to theft or fire. By and large, their objective was more reactive than proactive.

Intervention: Details of Strategies

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 also looked at the major institutional challenges informal workers face in addressing these risks (see section Situation Prior to Intervention for study results).

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. Pressure from below, however, cannot be effective without adequate information (Alfers 2010) – a principle that informed the traders' subsequent strategies.

The next strategy, therefore, was to disseminate information to the traders associations and to give them the requisite set of skills to engage effectively and proactively with the local authorities. Consequently, WIEGO, together with the Institute for Local Government Studies (ILGS) in Accra, ran a series of workshops for the traders. Some of the topics covered in these workshops include the structure and functions of Ghana's local government system; the relationship that must exist between the local government authorities and the small business and informal sectors; occupational health and safety issues and the environmental and public health responsibilities of local government authorities; assertiveness and confidence building; advocacy skills; networking and alliance building; advocacy planning; leadership; public speaking; influencing and negotiation skills when dealing with local and central government authorities; basic book-keeping and records management; working with the media; and how to put ideas into action through planning.

In addition to the workshops, WIEGO and ILGS organized dialogue sessions between the traders and vendors on one hand and service providers and local government authorities on the other hand. To start with, as part of these workshops,



A woman working as a Kayayei, a head porter, in the Accra market. Photo: M. Chen



A rainy day for Accra market vendors means a muddy trek for their customers. Photo: L. Alferts

they organized “clinics” with some of these officials by inviting a local government financial expert to have in-depth discussions with the traders on how to deal with officials of the Ghana Revenue Authority in relation to income tax and VAT. They also invited the Chief Budget Officer of a local government authority who explained to them the functions of the local government and the relationship that should exist between traders and their local government. Outside the workshops, WIEGO and ILGS organized dialogue sessions between the traders and officers from the National Board for Small-Scale Industries, the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), the Informal Sector of the Social Security, and the National Insurance Trust.

While working with the traders to exert pressure from the bottom, WIEGO was also working with key institutions, such as the ILGS and the Ghana TUC, to exert pressure from the top. The choice of these two institutions was strategic. ILGS is an institute for training the staff of the local government service and for researching local government issues. It is therefore well positioned to take the findings of this partnership further and to bring to the attention of the local government service staff the importance of the informal sector, especially traders.

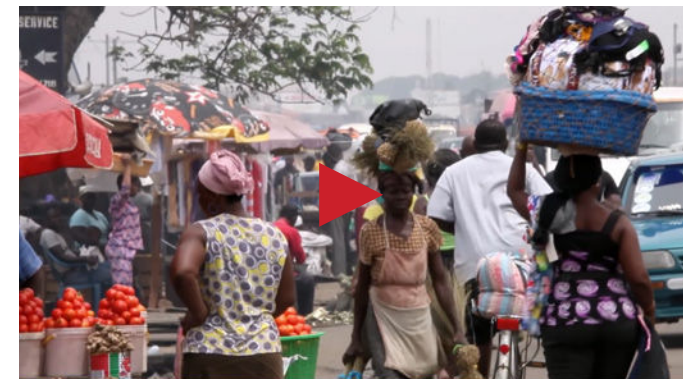
The Ghana TUC, its affiliate members (the Ga East Traders Union and the Makola Market Traders Union), and nine other informal workers’ associations are in the process of forming the Council of Informal Workers Association (CIWA), which will become the 19th national union to come under the Ghana TUC’s umbrella, which is well positioned to support the traders in their struggle for recognition and for safe and healthy working conditions.

While WIEGO was working with the ILGS to directly build the capacity of the traders for direct engagement with the city or local authorities, it was also working with the Ghana TUC to research and analyze the labour laws, AMA by-laws, and other laws that impinge on three groups of informal workers in the city: street vendors, domestic workers, and head porters. According to Togbe Drayi, the Project Coordinator and the Head of the Organizing Department at the Ghana TUC, the Ghana TUC had successfully used the findings to engage city officials and five judges in two meetings. To Drayi’s

Officials agreed with the research findings that appalling injustices were being meted out to informal workers.

pleasant surprise, these officials agreed with the research findings that appalling injustices were being meted out to informal workers. As a result, Drayi is convinced that the only way to get authorities like the AMA or the judiciary to improve informal workers’ lives is to be proactive in amending the laws in their favour. According to him, “Those of us who profess to be out there for ordinary workers should fight more seriously for them and engage more with these stakeholders. We should not just assume that organizations and establishments that are in place automatically know what to do to bring improvement into the organization of the informal economy workers”.

In 2014, WIEGO started a new partnership with the People’s Dialogue on Human Settlement. This community-based NGO works in alliance with the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor, which is a network of savings groups in slums, informal settlements, and depressed communities in Ghana. This partnership is for the implementation of the Local Economic Development-Led Forum. It was a one-year project meant to step up and strengthen the existing work WIEGO has been doing with the market traders and street vendors and the existing fora and platforms they have cre-



Head Porters in Accra Access Opportunity Through an Informal Savings Bank. Video: Rockefeller Foundation

ated to engage city authorities and planners. It was also meant to link up the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor with the informal trading networks in order to create a much bigger voice around the issues of the informal sector.

Achievements and Outcomes

The market traders and street vendors acknowledge that it takes time for results to show and that the benefits of their efforts may not be visible right away. They believe, though, that they must pursue their actions until they can see improvements in their working conditions and in their standard of living. As a result of this determination, they are seeing outcomes from their efforts and from WIEGO's support.

All the union members who participated in the ILGS- and WIEGO-facilitated workshops and dialogue sessions facilitated attest to an increase in personal confidence, assertiveness, and ability to talk in public fora without fear of the authorities. They also say that they are now more aware of health and safety issues such as personal hygiene, of the importance of registering with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and of how to douse small fires with a wet jute sack before they get out of control. The sessions on basic bookkeeping, financial management, and credit have enabled them to improve on their savings as they no longer just dip their hands into their sales to buy things or to meet heavy expenses like school fees. Now, they are able to differentiate their capital from profit and therefore only spend from the latter. They are also now aware of the dangers of micro-credit schemes, which often have high interest rates and eat into profits and capital. Moreover, by reducing their unnecessary expenditures and by putting the resultant savings (no matter how small) into the bank, they have less need for such unfavourable credit. One person said he can now boast of having enough savings in the bank to purchase a piece of land.

For the workers, the series of workshops and the dialogue sessions with the city authorities and service providers have reinforced the importance of mobilization, networking, coalition-building, and direct representation in local government structures. This heightened awareness has led them to come together with nine other informal sector groups affiliated to the Ghana TUC to start the formation of the Council of Informal Workers Associations (CIWA).

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

The workers have also gained the confidence and inner strength to engage with the city authorities who, in turn, are responding positively. For instance, the Ga East Traders Union said it is being invited to dialogue sessions with its local authorities and to events such as Farmers' Day. Through dialogue with the Ga East Municipal Assembly (GEMA), the local authority has acquired land to build a market and lorry park at the Municipal capital, Abokobi. In 2013, the local authority built a bus station, baths, and toilets and have started work on the lorry park.

For their part, the Makola Market Traders Union executives said that they persuaded the city authorities to construct a street vendor market called the Pedestrian Shopping Mall, located at Kwame Nkrumah Circle. They also took the initiative to purchase fire extinguishers so that they can quickly react to fires in the market.

Through the workshops, the traders have also come to the realization that they need to be represented directly within the local government structures if their voices are to be heard and their issues addressed. For this reason, in the 2010 Local Government Elections, one executive member of the Ga East Traders Union stood to be elected as an assembly member of the Ga East Municipal Assembly. Though she lost the elections, the union lobbied for her to be one of the 30 per cent of assembly members that the government appoints. Now she is a member of the Gender and Children Sub-committee of the 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.



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

Benefits to the City

According to the Ghana TUC's Togbe Danyi, until the recently introduced pay increase through the public sector pay policy, Ghana was among the "least-paid" countries in the whole of West Africa. Despite this increase, income levels for the over 80 per cent of workers who are not in formal employment are still very low. For this reason, without the informal sector, most people would not have been able to access certain basic services and necessities of life, such as food (both in cooked and raw state), clothing, transportation, housing, vehicle maintenance, etc. The informal sector provides these services and necessities at prices and quantities that consumers can afford and often at their convenience, even if the quality or services are less satisfactory compared to the formal sector. In terms of city revenue, the Auditor-General's Performance Report of 2003 revealed that the markets contribute an average of 20 per cent to the internally generated funds (I.G.F) of the AMA and possibly of other municipal or district assemblies. In other words, as one informal worker, C. K. Prahald, said, "the informal

The local government law already states citizens have the right participate in governance ... It is up to the traders to push for and insist on this.

city is the bottom of the pyramid that holds up the formal city” (Informal City Dialogues). But this foundation is not just monetary: it also includes public health and services. If the occupational health and safety needs of the market traders and street vendors are addressed, the spread of communicable diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria, hepatitis, etc., is minimized. In addition, more empowered and knowledgeable traders and vendors who are in a position to better engage the local authorities would mean improved services to citizens living in the city.

Critical Success Factors

Some of the critical success factors that enabled the two membership organizations to come this far include the following:

- **Democratic and constitutional rule**, which allows for the freedom of association and for decentralized local government. Such a climate gives citizens the courage to come together for their interests without fear. It also allows citizens to engage with their local authorities.
- **Committed and selfless leaders who are themselves one of the people they seek to lead**, as was the case for the traders and street vendors.
- **Research**, no matter how small, helps shed light on what the real and pressing issues are for the membership-based organizations.
- **Bottom-up and top-down organizing**, or addressing problems from different angles.
- **Forming partnerships with institutions** like the Ghana TUC, the ILGS and People’s Dialogue on Human Settlement that are already engaged with the informal workers and their needs.
- **Partnering with a facilitative organization like WIEGO** that knows how to harness and motivate the existing institutions.

Challenges and Their Root Causes

Institutional and governance failures continue to shape appalling work and occupational health and safety conditions for market traders and street vendors (see section Legal and Policy Framework). These have been outlined above. However, another root cause of challenges is the traders’ ignorance of their rights under the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462). This law imposed three different taxes on them (dues, licence fees, and income tax), which they must pay to their local authority. These taxes place a large financial burden on the traders and, while they appear to be designated for local development, do nothing to provide services to traders or to improve their working conditions.

To address Act 462, traders could forge an alliance with the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU), another Ghana TUC member that also suffers a similar fate when it comes to lorry stations. With the support of the Ghana TUC, the ILGS and People’s Dialogue, this partnership could

push for an amendment of the law so that of the three taxes collected from the traders, dues and fees can be used solely for the maintenance and construction of markets and stores and to continuously improve on traders’ working conditions. Since there is a financial interest at stake, the local authorities are bound to resist this separation. This will therefore require intensive negotiation. It may also require some radical measures like strike actions should negotiations fail.

The local government law already states citizens have the right participate in governance and in the planning and execution of projects. It is up to the traders to push for and insist on this, especially when it comes to the maintenance, design, and construction of markets and other facilities like toilets, so that they meet the occupational health and safety standards traders need.

A street vendor sells her wares while caring for her child in the markets of Accra. Photo: M. Chen



Lessons Learned

The Makola Market and the Ga East Traders Unions have come this far because of the commitment, patience, and sacrifices of their leadership. According to Enoch Bio, Secretary to the Ga East Traders Union, “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 overtime. It is a gradual process which is not done and achieved overnight”. He also said that joining the Ghana TUC was also important because trade unions in various countries have been mandated to organize the informal sector: “If you join your country’s Trade Union Congress you will become a strong union and the government will show you respect, as you would be recognized through the TUC”. Through membership in trade unions, the Makola Market and Ga East Traders Unions also gained exposure to international networks like StreetNet International and WIEGO. Through the various capacity building sessions and international conferences these networks facilitated, traders realized their problems can best be solved through negotiations with the authorities and not angry outbursts. Learning lobbying and negotiation skills is therefore important.

Conclusion

The citizens of Accra cannot do without the affordable and accessible services provided by market traders, street vendors, and others in the informal employment sector. These workers are a necessary part of the fabric of the city. Still, these workers face substandard working and occupational health and safety conditions—despite the fact they pay taxes meant to aid in local development. To reverse this situation would require a sustained campaign and, if need be, strike actions. A successful campaign may mean building coalitions with other informal workers’ unions, like the Ghana Private Road Transport Union, which faces similar conditions. Support would also need to come from organizations such as the Ghana TUC, the ILGS, and NGOs like the People’s Dialogue on Human Settlement. Going forward, these organizations could form an alliance to take on and sustain the facilitative role WIEGO has played in supporting informal sector workers as they address the underlying governance and institutional factors responsible for their working conditions.

“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 overtime. It is a gradual process which is not done and achieved overnight”.

- Enoch Bio, Secretary for the Ga East Traders Union



Working as a Kayayei is a difficult job in Accra. The hours are long, the loads heavy, and the pay meagre. Photo: M. Chen

References

Alfers, L. 2010. Occupational Health & Safety for Informal Workers in Ghana: A case study of market and street traders in Accra. WIEGO.

African Urbanism. "The Unsustainable Illegalization of Street Hawkers and What are Some Real Solutions." Available at: <http://africanurbanism.net/2011/08/28/the-unsustainable-illegalization-of-street-hawkers-and-what-are-some-real-solutions/> (retrieved on 05 03 14).

"Assembly Determine to Enforce By-laws." Ghana Districts. February 6, 2013. Accessed February 27, 2014. Available at <http://ama.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/?arrow=nws&read=48420>.

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). *Summary Report of Final Results of the 2010 Population and Housing Census*. May 2012.

Government of Ghana. *Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General on Management of Accra Metropolitan Assembly Markets*. 2003.

Accra Project Brief. 2013. Informal City Dialogues. Available at: <http://nextcity.org/informalcity/city/accra> (accessed July 15 2015).

Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS)/Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). Three-Day Workshop on Leadership, Negotiation and Advocacy Skills for Informal Workers. 3rd and 6th August 2010.

Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS)/Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). Two-Day Workshop on Social Protection, Occupational Health And Safety, Workshop Report. 10TH and 11th March 2010.

Institute Of Local Government Studies. 2010. Report of the First Practice Dialogue for the Informal Associations and Service Providers in Collaboration. Institute Of Local Government Studies.

The Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462), Sixth Schedule (Section 86): Revenue of Local Government Bodies, pages V-3511-3513.

"Makola Market Traders' Union." WIEGO. Accessed January 10, 2014. Available at <http://wiego.org/wiego/makola-market-traders-union>.

Osei-Boateng, C and Ampratwum, E. 2011. *The Informal Sector in Ghana*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Report on the One-Day Multi-Stakeholder Workshop between Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing And Organizing (WIEGO) Members and National And Local Government Officials, 9th December, 2011.

The Informal City Dialogues (ICD). 2013. *Accra Project Brief*.

WIEGO. "The Informal Economy in Ghana: A Comparative Perspective." Available at <http://wiego.org/wiego/informal-economy-ghana-comparative-perspective>.

"The Unsustainable Illegalization of Street Hawkers (and, What Are Some Real Solutions?)." African Urbanism. August 28, 2011. Accessed March 3, 2014. Available at <http://africanurbanism.net/2011/08/28/the-unsustainable-illegalization-of-street-hawkers-and-what-are-some-real-solutions/>.

Yaw Baah. 2011. Powerpoint presentation at LOFTF/West Africa Partners Regional Meeting in Lome.

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Ga East Traders Union

1. Enoch Bio: Secretary of Ga East Traders Union
2. Mr Yao Nkrumah-Sekyere: Chairperson of Ga East Traders Union
3. Vida Tangwam – Vice Chairperson of Ga East Traders Union
4. Regina Nsiah (food vendor: sells fried rice at the school)
5. Rakia Jibril (food vendor: sells waakye at the school)
6. Celestine Amakoh



An informal vendor in the market making use of the cramped space available to sell her wares. Photo: K. McCabe

Ga East Municipal Council

7. Jemima Lomotey, former Municipal Planning Officer

Makola Market Traders Union (MMTU)

8. Juliana Brown Afari: Vice President of StreetNet and the National Coordinator for the Ghana chapter. Also the Welfare Officer for Makola Market Traders Union (MMTU) affiliated with TUC.
9. Deborah Yemoteley Quaye: Chairperson of MMTU and President of IHVAS (informal hawkers and vendors association)
10. Emelia Obeng: Member of MMTU and SteetNet Ghana
11. Anas Ibrahim Hille: Member of MMTU and StreetNet Ghana

Trade Union Congress

- 12. Clara Osei Boateng
- 13. Togbe Adom Drayi: Project Coordinator of TUC
- 14. Rose Kwei: Assistant to Mr Togbe Adom Drayi

National Health Insurance

- 15. Harold Kalevour: Scheme Manager for NHIS

People's Dialogue

- 16. Rabiou Farouk Braimah: Executive Director for People's Dialogue on Human Settlement

Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)

- 17. Lydia Sackey Addy: Budget Officer

Greater Accra Markets Association

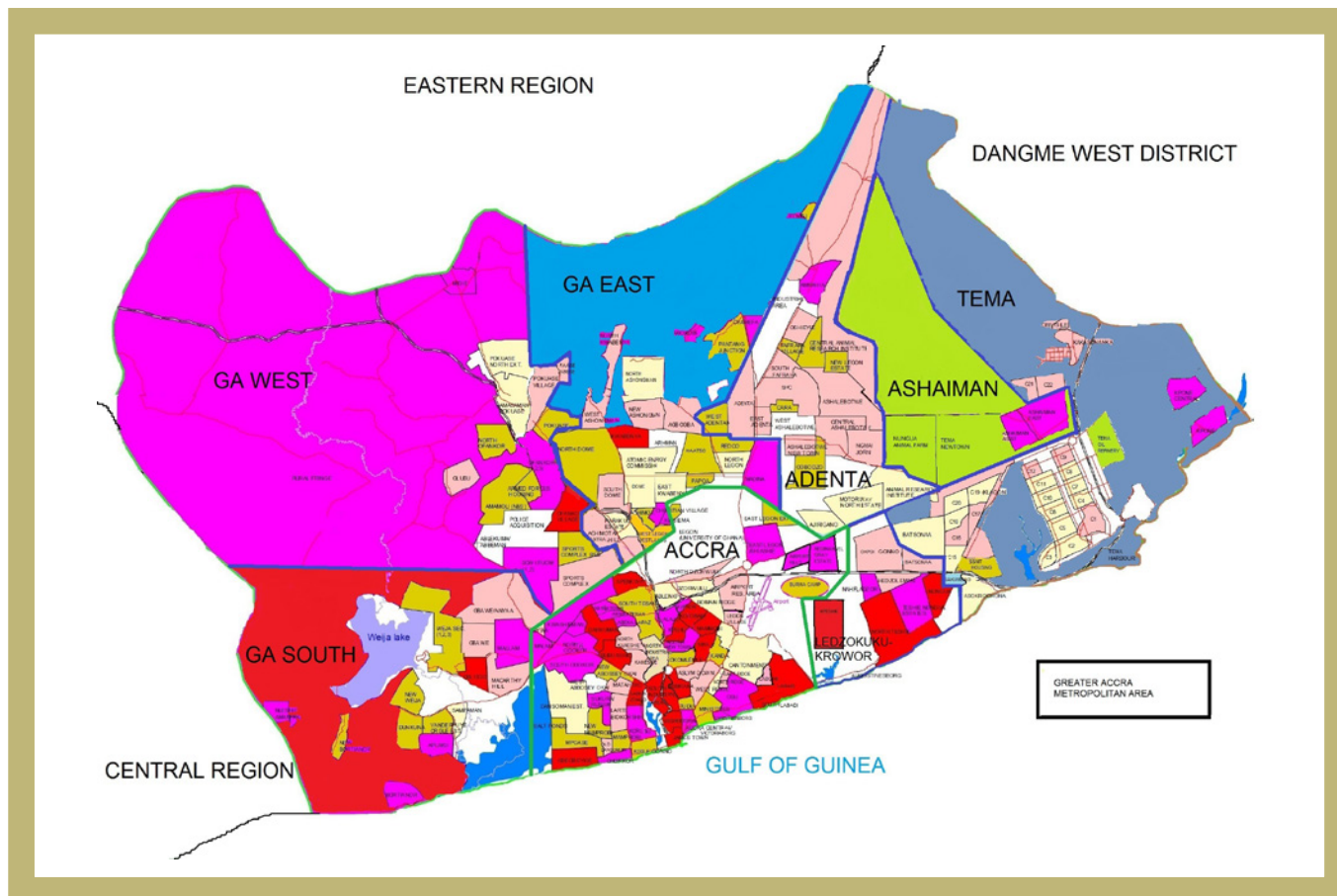
- 18. Mercy Needjan: President of Greater Accra Markets Association

The Institute of Local Government Studies

- 19. Magdalene Kannae : Head of Gender and Social Development

WIEGO

- 20. Dorcas Ansah – In-Country Facilitator of the WIEGO Project with Market and Street traders



Appendix 2: Map of Greater Accra Metropolis

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/77/Greater_Accra_Metro_Area.jpg

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. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities and rights. WIEGO creates change by building capacity among informal worker organizations, expanding the knowledge base about the informal economy and influencing local, national and international policies. Visit www.wiego.org.

