

**August 2014**

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**What's going on at WIEGO?**

Take a look at our

[recent](#) and [upcoming](#)

events and activities!



Informal workers participate in the 103rd session of the International Labour Conference (ILC).

*Photos by S. Trevino*



# WIEGO MBO Newsletter



A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations of Informal Workers

**GREETINGS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES!**

We hope you enjoy this August 2014 issue of the WIEGO MBO Newsletter, featuring articles on the International Labour Conference (ILC), Regional Conference of City Authorities on Home-based Workers, Regional Lima Street Vendors Campaign for New City Ordinance, IDWF Leadership Capacity-Building Workshop, and an Update on the Inclusion of Waste Pickers in Bogotá's Waste Management System. Remember, we love to hear from you! If you have questions or comments, or would like to submit content for the next issue, please email us at [julia\\_martin@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:julia_martin@hks.harvard.edu) or [karen\\_mccabe@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:karen_mccabe@hks.harvard.edu).

## Visibility and Voice at the International Labour Conference

By Chris Bonner, WIEGO Organization and Representation Programme Director

Informal workers raised their visibility and voice on the international labour stage this year. More than 30 informal worker representatives participated in the International Labour Conference (ILC) negotiations on "Transitioning from the Informal to the Formal Economy" in Geneva, Switzerland. WIEGO, StreetNet International, the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) provided the support that enabled workers to attend. WIEGO also provided coordination, translation and administrative support before and during the Conference.

Our representatives came from vendor, home-based worker, waste picker and domestic worker MBOs, as well as from SEWA, and were joined by informal transport workers for a number of days. Representatives came from India, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, South Africa, Guinea, Niger, Malawi, Ghana, Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Nicaragua, Bulgaria, Spain and the USA. The group collaborated well, meeting every morning at 8 a.m. to plan for the day ahead.

Although some representatives, especially domestic workers, had been at the ILC before, for many this was a new experience. The

negotiations at the ILO are tri-partite, with official delegates coming from trade unions (workers), employers' associations and governments. The very formal tri-partite meeting procedures were far removed from our worker meetings where we were free to speak, sing, clap and display our banners! Officially registered as International NGOs, we had limited rights to speak in the Workers Group; in the tri-partite negotiating meetings, only one person spoke on behalf of the workers.

However, members of our group were able to make their presence felt in many different ways. Our [Platform](#) was well received – almost all printed copies, which were available in four languages, were taken. Our group submitted our proposed amendments to the document being negotiated (draft Conclusions) to the Chair and Secretary of the Workers Group and through our allies in trade union delegations. Many of these were fought for by the Workers Group and accepted. We also provided the Workers Group with useful information to be used in arguments. Four of our group were able to speak briefly in the Tri-partite Committee, three spoke in the main Assembly Hall, and others spoke at side meetings organized by groups such as the FES, the Nordic School, CARITAS

Internationales and Kolping International. We also participated in meetings organized by the ILO Cooperative Unit. This resulted in an agreement to continue networking around cooperatives and to set up a shared web space for information exchange.

After long negotiating sessions, which continued until 10 p.m. on several evenings, the Conclusions document was agreed upon. This will form the basis of the second round of negotiations due to take place in June 2015. If successful, this will result in an ILO instrument: a Recommendation.

We have a lot of work to do before June 2015. We need to make sure that the trade unions fully understand the reality of informal work and support strong positions in our favour. We need to work on our governments so that they also support us. We need to persuade employers that informal workers are workers and have the right to decent work and protection and that the issue is not only that informal enterprises should register and pay taxes.

Read the Conclusions [here \(page 137\)](#).

Click here for more [information](#), [videos](#) and [photographs](#).

*Home-based workers should not only get civic amenities because they contribute to the economy significantly, but also because it is their human right.*

- Honourable Acting Governor of Bangkok,  
Dr. Pusadee Tamthai



Dr. Tamthai and Dr. Chen present [WIEGO Statistical Briefs](#) on home-based workers.

*Photo by HomeNet Thailand*

## **WIEGO Organizing Brief No. 7: Challenges and Experiences in Organizing Home-Based Workers in Bulgaria**

The [Association of Home-Based Workers, Bulgaria \(AHBW\)](#) is an extraordinary example of how informal women workers have managed to build a strong democratic organization from the grassroots. With virtually no resources other than its voluntary leadership and the activism of its 35,000 members, it has proved capable of making a real difference in women's livelihoods and helping to reshape and revive effective trade unionism in Eastern Europe. We invite you to read [WIEGO Organizing Brief No.7](#), which captures the experiences and challenges of organizing home-based workers in Bulgaria.



Waste Picker wearing facemask and gloves in Bogotá, Colombia.

*Photo by ARB*

## **Regional Conference of City Authorities on Home-Based Workers**

By Shalini Sinha, WIEGO Sector Specialist, Home-Based Workers

A [Regional Conference of City Authorities on Home-Based Workers](#) was organized by HomeNet South Asia and HomeNet Thailand on 7-9 May 2014 in Bangkok.

The conference sought to highlight how good civic amenities impact the productivity, livelihoods and quality of life of urban home-based workers and also sought to share programmes and interventions on the subject from South and South East Asia. There were five panel discussions during the conference to discuss the key urban issues affecting home-based workers: housing, transport, water & sanitation, livelihood and health & safety.

City mayors, administrators, networks of home-based workers and organizations working with

home-based workers attended the event. These attendees arrived from eight countries in South and South East Asia – namely, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The Honourable Acting Governor of Bangkok, Dr. Pusadee Tamthai, delivered the inaugural address, and WIEGO International Coordinator Dr. Martha Chen gave the key note address. Two local home-based workers shared their views and concerns, and representatives of HomeNet Thailand and HomeNet South Asia also addressed the audience.

Dr. Tamthai and Dr. Chen launched [WIEGO Statistical Briefs](#) on home-based workers from four countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

During a session on “Secure and Adequate Housing,” Shalini Sinha – WIEGO Sector Specialist, Home-Based Workers – highlighted the home as a place of work and the need to turn homes into productive spaces through better housing and infrastructure provision.

On the concluding day, an “Asian Cities Declaration on Home-based Workers” was adopted based on the recommendations of the conference. The declaration will serve as a road map for Governments and City Authorities to address issues of urban home-based workers in South and South East Asia and include them in planning and implementation processes.

Read the [Full Report](#) with appended presentation, “My Home Is My Workplace.”

## **Update: Inclusion of Waste Pickers in Bogotá's Waste Management System**

By Federico Parra, WIEGO Regional Coordinator, Waste Pickers Latin America

In 2011, the Bogotá district government opened bidding for the city's waste management and collection services. The process initially excluded the waste pickers/recyclers who had been doing this work for years. In response, the Association of Recyclers of Bogotá (ARB) filed a motion against the district government, and the Constitutional Court [ordered the city](#) to propose a waste management plan that included waste pickers/recyclers. The district responded by developing and implementing an inclusive plan under the leadership of Mayor Gustavo Petro, and in 2013 nearly 2,000 [waste pickers received payment](#) for waste collection services (in addition to any income gained by selling the collected materials). They also received the city's official recognition that they are service providers.

However, the past six months has seen a [crisis of governance in Bogotá](#). The Office of the Inspector-General considered the mandatory inclusion of waste pickers in the redistricting of waste collection services to be hazardous and an illegal violation of free market competition. Mayor Petro was removed from office and reinstated on two occasions and currently remains in office though under continued pressure from his opposition. His reinstatement has enabled the continuity of three important affirmative actions in favour of waste pickers/recyclers:

1. Individual payment every two months to nearly 9,000 waste pickers/recyclers for waste collection services as well as the recovered and transported recyclable materials.
2. The substitution of motor vehicles for animal-drawn vehicles.
3. Campaigns for “separation at source”.

Moreover, the national government established the Alliance for Inclusive Recycling, which consists of the National Association of Recyclers/Waste Pickers (ANR), three ministries and other civil society organizations committed to the promotion of inclusive recycling.

WIEGO has continued to support the ANR by providing information and training in six Colombian municipalities, so that it is equipped to promote the inclusive model of recycling in each municipality. In Bogotá specifically, WIEGO has also presented to the municipal administration existing inclusive models of recycling from Pune, India; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Belo Horizonte, Brazil. These models have been documented and analyzed in several [WIEGO Policy Briefs](#).



Above and below:  
IDWF Leadership  
Capacity-Building Workshop in  
Geneva, Switzerland

Photos by IDWF



LIKE the

WIEGO Facebook page for  
[Self-Employed Workers, Struggles and Achievements - Lima and Peru](#) (Spanish)!



Street vendor in Lima, Peru.

Photo by M. Chen

## IDWF Leadership Capacity-Building Workshop

By Elizabeth Tang, IDWF General Secretary

The International Domestic Workers Federation held a four day training workshop in Geneva, June 7-10, 2014 to build the capacity of its leaders to effectively direct a global workers organization. It was the first face-to-face meeting of the Executive Committee, Coordinators and Technical Team since the Founding Congress in Uruguay last October. The workshop also provided an opportunity for the IDWF leadership team to get better acquainted with one another.

The workshop began with a session on the IDWF and the Labour Movement, facilitated by WIEGO Organization and Representation Programme Director Chris Bonner. Through group work, participants discussed and created images of problematic trade union movements around the world. They recognized that domestic workers need the support from the labour movement and that they – as

leaders – have the same responsibility to strengthen the labour movement as a whole.

The group also determined the objectives of the IDWF and reviewed the IDWF five year strategic plan after listening to activity reports from coordinators and representatives of six regions. The group also completed a “Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)” exercise in small groups to help establish ways to strengthen the organization over the next 18 months. Under strengths, the groups listed the size of the IDWF’s membership and C189. Some weaknesses included internal communication and smaller organizations that still needed strengthening. The participants agreed to focus on five key areas of work in the 18 month action plan: strengthening affiliates; protecting domestic workers’ rights with the ratification of the C189; increasing

effective communication; establishing a well-functioning secretariat; and alliance building with trade unions and other allies.

WIEGO Global Projects Officer Sofia Trevino led the final session on communication strategies and planning. Her presentation emphasized that the IDWF must speak in one voice. In addition, she and IDWF Asian Coordinator Fish Ip introduced and provided training on several communications tools, including the IDWF website, PBworks (wiki), Facebook, and WhatsApp. By the end of the session, many of the participants were empowered.

As the workshop came to a close, IDWF President Myrtle Witbooi reminded everyone that – with the newly acquired Action Plan, communication tools and knowledge – they can only make the IDWF even stronger and more effective than before.

## Lima Street Vendors Campaign for New City Ordinance

By Carmen Roca, WIEGO Regional Advisor for Latin America and Leslie Vryenhoek, Independent Consultant

In May 2014, Lima’s City Council passed a new ordinance that governs how individuals are authorized to sell in public spaces. The ordinance covers Lima’s Cercado district, the downtown area – a main commercial centre – and will have a major influence on the other 42 districts of Metropolitan Lima, a city of almost 10 million inhabitants.

WIEGO directly supported the consultation process that gathered more than 150 street vendors’ federations. At the consultation workshops, the draft ordinance was shared and comments and suggestions were taken to improve the text and its content.

The ordinance, which replaces one that is nearly three decades old, recognizes the vendors as

legitimate workers. A pro-poor orientation in the ordinance prioritizes licenses to vendors who live in extreme poverty and those who have particular difficulties, including women heads-of-households, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. In addition, a fundamental commitment of the licensing regime is to encourage vendors to save money and move toward formalization of their businesses over time, helping them leave the streets for more secure incomes.

The ordinance also simplifies and shortens the process by which a street vendor can receive authorization to vend, and it extends the period of a vending license from one year to two, so vendors can plan for more continuous income. Authorization

will also now be given earlier in the year for the next year, so vendors can plan their near future. And the appeal process is more immediate, reducing vendors’ uncertainty.

The new ordinance does not solve all the problems. The number of authorizations granted still only reaches about half of those who make their living from vending. The unauthorized street vendors will continue to risk punishment, which includes confiscation of their merchandise. However, Carmen Vildoso, a WIEGO Board member and Manager of Economic Development with the city, was instrumental in moving the ordinance through council.

Read the full story with additional details on [wiegoinbrief.org](http://wiegoinbrief.org).