



**Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing**

**INFORMAL WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC-CUM-LOCKDOWNS:
DEMANDS & RESPONSES**

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REMARKS

- Demands by Specific Networks or Organizations of Informal Workers
- Common Demands & Guiding Principles
- Relief ► Recovery
- Recovery ► Reenvisioning & Resetting

But first, the international definition of informal employment and the first-ever global estimates of informal employment

OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- **Informal Sector = narrower concept:** production and employment in *unincorporated enterprises that are also unregistered (with national authorities) or small* (ICLS 1993)
- **Informal Employment = broader concept:** *employment without social protection (OR paid annual and sick leave) through work - both inside & outside the informal sector* (ICLS 2003)
- **Informal Economy = broadest concept:** *all units, activities, and workers so defined + output from them*

ICLS = International Conference of Labour Statisticians convened every 4 years by the International Labour Organization

FIRST-EVER GLOBAL ESTIMATES: Informal Employment as Percentage of Total, Women's & Men's Employment

Countries by Income Level	Total	Women	Men
World	61	58	63
Developing countries	90	92	87
Emerging countries	67	64	69
Developed countries	18	18	19

Source: ILO 2018, WIEGO and ILO 2019

INTERNATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS FEDERATION (IDWF)

Platform of four demands:

- *Right to safe and hazard-free workplace*, including the provision of protective gear and training to use these appropriately
- *Right to information on the pandemic*: information on preventive and protective measures *needs to be translated into languages that migrants understand*.
- *Right to paid sick leave and access to healthcare*, including those who are in quarantine and infected
- *Right to wages and all compensation* according to their contracts and the law, if they are dismissed

STREET VENDOR PROJECT

NEW YORK CITY

Platform of demands for all street vendors for duration of crisis, *regardless of immigration status*

- *free healthcare access*
- *emergency cash grants or relief funds*
- *suspension of fees and regulatory costs*
- *suspension of rent, mortgage, and utility payments*
- *unemployment insurance for vendors who are employed by food cart or truck owners*

ALLIANCE OF 10 ORGANIZATIONS OF INFORMAL WORKERS, SOUTH AFRICA

Platform of demands for all informal workers, *regardless of nationality*

- *Living Cash Grant*
- *Measures to make work safer* for those who are allowed or have to work:
 - ▣ mass provision of protective masks and gloves
 - ▣ mass provision of water, soap and sanitizers in public spaces, especially where informal workers work
 - ▣ issuing of health guidelines for different sectors of the informal economy.

SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INDIA

Platform of four demands for the duration of the crisis:

- *income support* to the families of all informal workers so that they are able to sustain their basic needs
- *compensatory payment of 5,000 rupees per month* to all workers registered under existing Labour Welfare Boards, including the Building and other Construction Workers Welfare Board
- *free food rations* under Public Distribution System
- *six months postponement on repayment* of all loans

COMMON ELEMENTS

Health Measures

- ▣ protective health measures & protective gear
- ▣ free health testing & treatment

Economic Relief: food & income security

- ▣ food distribution
- ▣ emergency cash transfers
- ▣ waiving or postponement of fees and compliance costs; rent, mortgage and utility payments; loan repayments

IWs as Providers of Essential Goods & Services

- ▣ allowed to work
- ▣ provided with protective gear

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *Leave No One Behind* – ensure relief & recovery mechanisms benefit...
 - ▣ informal wage workers – not just formal wage workers
 - ▣ informal enterprises – not just formal enterprises
- *Do No Harm*
 - ▣ do not penalize informal workers
 - ▣ do not destroy their homes & workplaces
 - ▣ do not reverse legal and policy gains made by informal workers
- *Honor “Nothing for Us, Without Us”*
 - ▣ design of relief & recovery measures: listen to demands of informal workers
 - ▣ delivery of relief & recovery measures: partner with informal worker organizations

RELIEF ► RECOVERY

- ▣ *funds for recovery*: loans or grants for working capital
- ▣ *valuation of and support to informal workers* who produce essential goods and services in essential supply chains
 - food care construction
 - health garments transport
- ▣ *public procurement of essential goods and services* produced by informal workers
- ▣ *pressure on lead firms in global supply chains to rebuild their supply chains* and support informal workers in the bottom links of those chains
- ▣ *continuation of humanitarian assistance* through recovery period
OR *extending coverage/targeting of existing cash grants* to informal workers

RECOVERY ►

REENVISIONING & RESETTING

WIEGO plans to...

- *formulate a vision for the informal economy*, and indeed the world, in the medium and longer term in the wake of COVID-19
- *develop a manifesto and a dedicated campaign* – calling for a new *social contract* for the working poor in the informal economy in the post-COVID world
- ground the visioning and messaging by *focusing on the role of informal workers in the supply chains for essential goods and services* during and after the crisis: health care + food & milk + clothing & footwear + child & elderly care + construction + transport supply chains



THANKS TO YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

For comprehensive package of demands and responses from organizations of informal workers and social activists in India, kindly see:

<https://www.wiego.org/blog/die-hunger-or-virus-all-too-real-dilemma-poor-india-and-elsewhere>

For more and regularly updated information, blogs, podcasts and other resources on informal workers and COVID 19, kindly visit:

<https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis>