



Women in Informal Employment:
Globalizing and Organizing

MBO NEWSLETTER

September 2021

A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations
of Informal Workers

Produced by: WIEGO Organization and Representation Programme

Building a Global Movement

Global events are the focus of this second edition of our new-look MBO Newsletter. Single-sector global events, such as the launch of HomeNet International, and multi-sector events, such as participation in the International Labour Conference, are all part of building a global movement of workers in informal employment.

But movement building can't happen without the struggles of workers on the ground. In this edition we highlight the struggle of waste pickers in Johannesburg against a threat to their livelihoods. We invite our readers to share similar stories of victory for the next edition of the MBO Newsletter. Email them to Sope Ogunrinde at sope.ogunrinde@wiego.org

Happy Reading!

Launch of HomeNet International

On February 23 and 24, 2021, HomeNet International was launched virtually, with 36 affiliates from 20 countries representing more than 600,000 home-based workers. Home-based workers' organizations decided that the COVID-19 pandemic could not disrupt their plans to form their global network; global solidarity was even more important at this time—and so HomeNet International was born.

Take a look at the HomeNet International [website](#) to find out more about the launching [Congress](#), including the congress [report](#).



Also, in two WIEGO blogs, Chris Bonner, Advisor to WIEGO's Organization and Representation Programme and member of the HomeNet International Working Committee, and Janhavi Dave, International Coordinator of HomeNet International, talk about the [creation of a global network](#) for home-based workers and [plans](#) for the future.

Integrating Waste Pickers into Policies



Waste pickers and organizers from around the world met in Argentina in 2018 as part of an exchange facilitated by WIEGO and the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers. During this exchange, several groups expressed an urgent need to understand and better respond to proposals for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), a policy framework that holds companies responsible for funding, and sometimes also implementing, the recovery of their products and packaging for recycling and disposal. These policies are primarily

threatening waste-picker livelihoods around the world, but could improve livelihoods if they were designed to integrate informal workers.

Many waste-picker organizations struggle to respond effectively to EPR proposals because governments are not adequately including them in training and planning processes. Since 2019, WIEGO has been working with the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers to facilitate an ongoing working group that has been developing case studies and workers' education materials, and conducting workshops at the local, regional and global level to engage waste pickers on EPR. In early September, the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers launched their campaign for EPR that integrates workers in the informal economy.

Extended Producer Responsibility and other circular economy policies like plastic bans impact more workers in the informal economy than just waste pickers. They can have positive or negative impacts on street and market vendors, artisans, farmers, reuse and repair operators, among others.

If your organization is interested in getting involved, please email Taylor Cass Talbott: taylor.casstalbott@wiego.org. And follow the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers' EPR campaign: <http://globalrec.org/epr>

Waste pickers (catadores) in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, collect recyclable materials throughout the city's Bahian festival.

Photo courtesy of Cata Bahia



ARO Strikes a Blow Against City Authorities

Early in 2021, the City of Johannesburg, South Africa, announced its intention to charge households in middle and high-income suburbs a fee of ZAR50 a month (USD3.50) as part of a plan to privatize the collection of recyclables. The plan [threatened the livelihoods](#) of street reclaimers by robbing them of access to recyclables, in favour of contracted private companies. The tax also made no sense to residents, who were about to be charged for the service of these private companies, over and above what they already paid to the City.

African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) members in Johannesburg embarked on a campaign against the tax. They launched a petition and engaged residents in the suburbs. They did media interviews and posted objections on social media. After collecting nearly 3,000 signatures, ARO submitted the petition to the City of Johannesburg on May 7. A week later, the City and Pikitup (the City's waste collection subsidiary) issued a statement announcing the suspension of its R50 tax plan.

Joint action and collaboration with residents they collect recyclables from is one of ARO's organizing strategies. The defeat of the City's R50 household levy is proof that it works!

Read more and take action [here](#)



The truck ARO uses to collect household recyclables in Johannesburg.

Photo: Jane Barrett

RedLacre Manifesto Against Dump Closures

During the first semester of 2021, waste picker leaders from national organizations and movements belonging to the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Waste Pickers met every two weeks to discuss structural concerns for waste pickers and their organizations in the region. The closure of dumpsites by authorities and the consequent expulsion of waste pickers is one of the pressing issues felt by waste pickers, particularly in the Central American region. This manifesto contains the eight non-negotiable RedLacre principles regarding the protection of the livelihoods of waste pickers in situations of dumpsite closure. This is an important contribution to waste pickers in other regions of the world who face the same threat. Read more about it (in Spanish) [here](#).



Waste pickers at a dumpsite in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.

Photo: Federico Parra

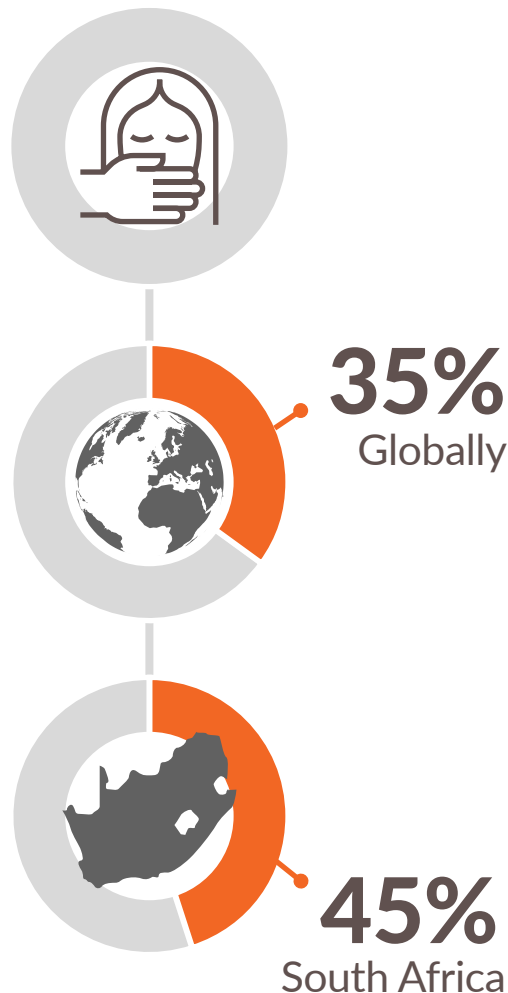
Gender-Based Violence Workshop for Home-Based Workers in South Africa

In South Africa, the incidence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is considerably higher than the global average.

Globally, 35% of women report having experienced gender-based violence in their lifetime, compared to 45% of women in South Africa. Domestic violence often goes unreported, but – based on South Africa’s reported figures – every six hours a woman is assaulted by her intimate partner (statistics presented in POWA workshop, December 8, 2020).

Home-based workers in South Africa raised the issue of increased incidents of domestic violence during the 2020 lockdown.

Home-based worker leaders were aware of the problem but unsure of how to address it with their members.



In response to the need expressed by home-based worker leaders, WIEGO partnered with national NGO People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) to provide information and advice on where and how to access support. POWA adapted its five-day, face-to-face course on understanding gender-based violence to a virtual programme that could be offered to the HBW leaders. The course became three online sessions that covered:



- Understanding domestic violence



- Causes of domestic violence



- Cycle of domestic violence



- Reasons why women stay in abusive relationships



- Practical and legal steps that survivors can take to leave abusive relationships

Every country has organizations similar to POWA. Find out who they are and partner with them to raise awareness among members and offer them support. No woman should feel trapped and alone.

Voicing Issues at International Labour Conference

For [25 years](#), WIEGO and its allies have supported workers in the informal economy to voice their issues at the International Labour Conference (ILC). This year, on the agenda for the first part of the June 3-19 [ILC 109th Session](#), there was a [discussion on the strategic objective of social protection](#). A delegation of workers representing the [Global Alliance of Waste Pickers](#), the [International Domestic Workers Federation](#) (IDWF), [HomeNet International](#) (HNI), [Self Employed Women's Association \(SEWA\)](#) of India, [StreetNet International](#) (SNI) and [WIEGO](#) participated in the virtual meetings to amplify the voices and experiences of workers in the informal economy.

Delegates shared with ILO participants their position on the need for [Extending Social Protection to Women and Men in the Informal Economy](#) and expressed the importance of recognizing and including workers in the informal economy in all negotiations on social protection, the need for national protection systems, and solidarity principles in the financing of such systems. The main aim was to guarantee that the social protection needs of workers in the informal economy were reflected in the adopted conclusions of the discussion. Social protection coverage must be extended to the 61% of workers in the global workforce who are currently largely excluded because they work informally.

Read our [Global Network's Statement](#)

International Labour Day

On May 1, WIEGO's global network, representing over 2.1 million workers in the global informal economy, called on governments to accelerate [investments in social and labour protections needed for economic recovery](#). COVID-19 lockdowns and associated government restrictions have had a disproportionately negative impact on workers in the informal economy and their livelihoods. Workers in the informal economy have faced limited government relief, ongoing exclusion from recovery plans and policy, and continued violence and harassment. The lockdowns also revealed the critical role that many workers play in society. As a result, the global networks representing these member-based organizations will continue urging policy makers to:



- Invest in policies to connect workers to social assistance, inclusive social insurance, health and child care.

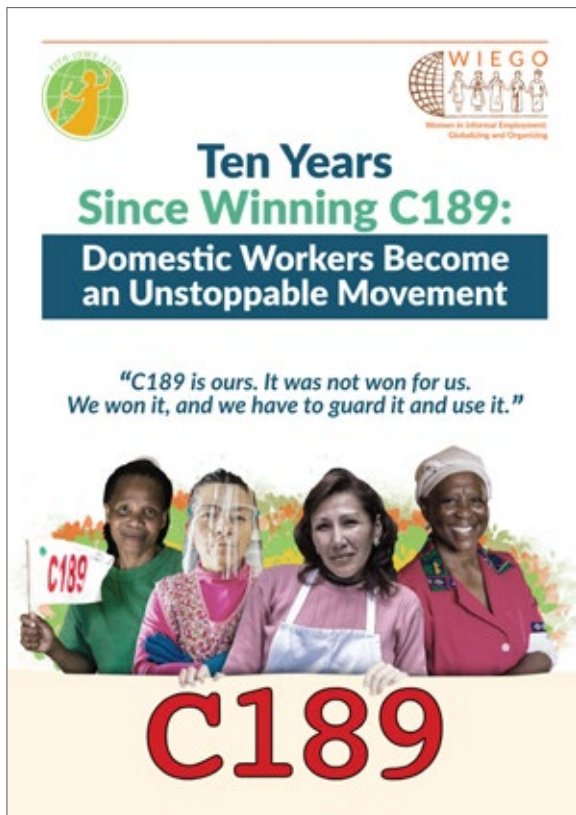


- Ensure that social protection policies and labour protections work together to protect workers from poverty.



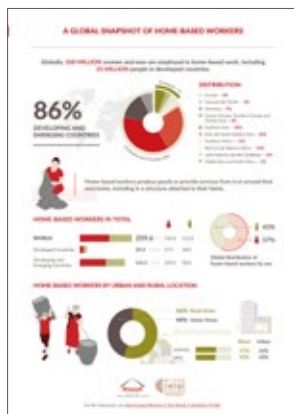
- Recognize the critical role that organizations of workers in the informal economy have played in the COVID-19 relief effort and must play in recovery.

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of C189



June 16, 2011 was a significant moment in the lives of the 70 million domestic workers across the globe. They had finally won the right to be recognized as workers, winning the basic rights enjoyed by all other workers in an employment relationship. That day, the International Labour Organization agreed to adopt Convention No. 189 – Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which sets out the rights of domestic workers. In celebration of the C189 10th anniversary, IDWF and WIEGO [produced a publication](#) that looks at the progress made since the adoption of C189.

MBO Resources



Pocket Tools for Homeworkers Working in Garment Supply Chains is part of a series produced by the **Home-based Workers Organizing for Economic Empowerment** project.

➔ Webinar:

“There is no recovery without informal workers: Towards a better deal for the global working poor”

- July 2021

[English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Thai](#)

➔ Podcast:

[Social Protection on ILC Reflections](#)

Social Protection Glossary



English: <https://www.wiego.org/es/resources/social-protection-glossary>

French: <https://www.wiego.org/fr/ressources/glossaire-sur-la-protection-sociale>

Spanish: <https://www.wiego.org/es/resources/glosario-de-proteccion-social>

We'd like to hear from you....

Please share your experiences of engaging on different online platforms while face-to-face engagements are restricted due to COVID-19!