

A close-up shot of a person's hands, wearing a red and white patterned long-sleeved shirt, working with a large, dense bundle of dried palm fronds or similar natural fibers. The person is sitting on the floor, and the fibers are being manipulated, possibly for weaving or basketry. A red thread is visible, being used to secure the bundle.

Building Resilience to Create a Fairer World of Work

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024

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About WIEGO

WIEGO is a global network supporting the movement of workers in informal employment, especially women and people living in poverty. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, and protections.

Our mission is to improve their working conditions and to challenge the systems that cause poverty, inequality and injustice, to build a fairer world of work.

WIEGO works to:

- Expand research and statistics on the informal economy
- Promote change through policy advocacy
- Support workers to use our research and engage directly in policy advocacy
- Build collective voice by supporting, strengthening and connecting organizations of workers in informal employment

Our values, which centre respect, solidarity, care and inclusivity, inform the way we support workers in informal employment and serve the wider labour movement.

After completing her household chores, 54-year-old Chhoeut Loeut joins fellow home-based workers in Sangke District, Battambang, Cambodia, to craft broomsticks. Photos credit: Aura Sevilla, WIEGO

The Year In Review

Organizing women workers in informal employment for voice, visibility and validity is at the heart of everything we do at WIEGO. In that sense, 2023/24 was a special year for WIEGO and its constituency of worker organizations. Together we celebrated three International Congresses in one year: those of HomeNet International, StreetNet International, and the International Domestic Workers Federation.

So many hours and days, so many weeks and months went into those milestone events! They were a moment for worker delegates to pause from their day-to-day struggles and experience the extraordinary power of the collective in person. Workers celebrated with gusto and joy! At their Congresses, workers elected their leadership, set out their priorities and connected around a common struggle for workers' rights and dignity. Women workers make up more than half of the elected leadership across the three global networks.

Yet the challenges they returned to at home are significant. Basic goods became unaffordable during and even after the pandemic, and prices continue to rise. Many workers are struggling to afford rent, food, school fees and basic services. In addition, the inequality gap has increased almost everywhere, and in several countries, workers' rights are being rolled back. Furthermore, the wars in several regions of the world are bringing untold suffering and hardship to millions, including workers.

Here in India, we felt not only the pinch of high prices this year, but also record-breaking high temperatures brought on by climate change. For women workers in informal employment, earning a living is becoming ever harder.

WIEGO's role in bridging the lived experience of workers with the global policies that affect them has never been more important. As we find ways to contend with inflation, inequality, climate change and other challenges, we find strength and hope in solidarity and collective action.

We offer you this report on our progress alongside our enduring recognition and appreciation of the 2 billion workers in the informal economy who power our households, communities, villages and cities around the world.

In solidarity,



Mirai Chatterjee



Mirai Chatterjee
Chair, WIEGO Board
of Directors



Sally Roever
WIEGO International
Coordinator

One year ago, WIEGO adopted a new five-year strategic plan committed to strengthening and streamlining our research and advocacy in support of workers' organizations. We have now begun to implement that plan by sharpening our work on the pressing themes of climate justice, inequality and formalization.

Addressing the impact of heat stress on workers in informal employment is one example. In Brazil, we partnered with the UK's University of Sheffield to *map climate impacts* on waste pickers, leading to a policy dialogue featuring a government commitment to use our *greenhouse gas calculator*. In Peru, we worked with street vendors to develop guidelines to prevent heat stroke. These and other projects in Ghana, Senegal, India and elsewhere informed our global advocacy on a *Just Transition* for the world's 2 billion workers in informal employment.

Overcoming the historic levels of inequality currently facing workers requires innovative collective action. We believe that emerging social solidarity economy (SSE) models prioritizing solidarity and community represent one such innovation. This year we *deepened* our understanding of SSE models; contributed to StreetNet International's groundbreaking *workshop* on SSE practices; and extended support to waste cooperatives in Senegal, Ghana, Brazil and elsewhere.

We also have sharpened our lens on formalization pathways by advancing our work challenging orthodoxies in mainstream economics. To that end, we supported work this year on the relationship between *social protection and informality* and the need to *shift debates* surrounding that relationship. Alongside that research, we have supported formalization pathways through paralegal training with domestic workers in Zimbabwe; social protection training with home-based workers in Laos; and a policy dialogue with workers to discuss the *cost-of-living crisis* in Thailand.

As always, we remain committed to improving official statistics on informal employment through partnerships at global, national and local levels. This was an important year for international statistics, as we contributed to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adoption of *revised statistical standards* for measuring informality. The conference outcomes will help to harmonize national data on informal employment and make the data more accurately reflect employment realities.

In this last Annual Report letter from me as WIEGO's International Coordinator, I want to express my profound gratitude to the multitude of workers in informal employment — especially women — who have joined hands with WIEGO over the years. We are, and will remain, stronger together. It has been a great honour to be part of this movement.

In solidarity,



Sally Roever

Worker Wins

Domestic Workers Achieve Improved Working Conditions After Legal Empowerment Training in Africa

In many countries, domestic workers face challenges in reporting and seeking redress for violations of their labour rights. Low levels of legal awareness and the high costs of legal professionals present practical problems, such as identifying violations and gathering evidence. Domestic workers' fear of retaliation from their employers, especially in cases where they depend on them for housing and legal status, is difficult to overcome.

To address these challenges, WIEGO, together with the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), is piloting a training programme to equip domestic workers with basic legal knowledge and related skills. Once trained, they **support fellow domestic workers to realize their rights** by providing paralegal services through their unions.

Lessiwe Madhambi, a domestic worker and member of the Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU) talks about what the training has done for her.



“I started working as a domestic worker in 2021 and I worked three years without leave. I didn't know that as a domestic worker I had the right to leave. When I received training with this programme, I realized I have the right to leave. So I negotiated with my employer for my leave and I was given two months' pay for the three years I worked in full. When I did the training I was more empowered and I gained confidence.

“At our workplace there are 10 domestic workers. I asked for protective clothing for cleaning the bathrooms. They bought it only for me. I asked them to buy sandals for everyone. So this programme has given me confidence, it helped me a lot, even my fellow domestic workers they now have trust in me. When they face a challenge, they come to me. I now have a mask and gloves, I am not afraid of germs and getting sick. We all have this.”



Lessiwe Madhambi, a domestic worker and member of the Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU) at work. Photo credit: WIEGO

Domestic Workers

Worker Wins

Improving Home-Based Workers' Access to Social Protection in Southeast Asia

With HomeNet Southeast Asia (HNSEA), WIEGO developed a research project to assess the status of inclusive social dialogue in relation to social protection in the region. The research process was designed to enable relationship-building between HNSEA, WIEGO and the Senior Labour Officials Meeting, a key institution within ASEAN for realizing labour rights.

Working together with HomeNet Laos and the International Labour Organization (ILO), WIEGO conducted training to enable home-based worker leaders to recognize and understand social protection rights and thereby engage more effectively in the country's ongoing social protection reform process.

Khanthone Phamuang, President of the Environment Conservation and Community Development Association (ECCDA), and Lamphan Nanthapanya, Executive Director of the Informal Worker Advancement Association (IWAA), explain what this training has done for home-based workers.

“WIEGO supports home-based workers and informal workers to become members of the VSS [voluntary social security scheme] and it supports HomeNet Laos to participate and influence Social Protection reforms in Lao PDR. After the training, HomeNet Laos leaders had the capacity to organize training on social protection for other leaders and for home-based workers in the villages. More people became members of the VSS after that.”
– Khanthone Phamuang

“Creating awareness and training in social protection for home-based workers has helped with the dissemination of voluntary social insurance: about 350 more home-based workers have been able to get social security insurance cards.”
– Lamphan Nanthanpaya



Lamphan Nanthanpaya, Executive Director of the Informal Worker Advancement Association (IWAA). Photo credit: Aura Sevilla, WIEGO

Worker Wins

Street Vendors with Disabilities Reverse Eviction and Inappropriate Relocation Through Media Advocacy in Lima

In May 2023, street vendors with disabilities were evicted from their place of work in the heart of the historic and commercial centre of Lima, Peru, and relocated to an improvised, alternative location on the outskirts of the city. Associations of street vendors with disabilities and WIEGO showed journalists that the new location was unsuitable for people with disabilities, given that it was a gravel lot where wheelchairs could not manoeuvre. The area also had high crime rates, was not accessible by public transport, had no suitable customers for street vendors and the vending site faced opposition from neighbours.

The mayor issued a public apology and reversed the eviction after strong media coverage, allowing the vendors to return to their place of work, albeit in precarious and unstable conditions. WIEGO conducted research on the working and living conditions of street vendors with disabilities in 2023, with results forthcoming.

“We just want to be able to work, with order, stability and formal regulations, and to be properly treated by municipal officers. Members of our associations have severe disabilities of diverse types. Some of the disabilities are not evident. Other members are working as vendors for a child with a disability for whom they are caregivers. We all face daily work costs regardless of having good or bad sales. Putting the stall together may take two hours because of our disabilities, and we have to pay for help. There are also the costs related to therapies and medicines.

“Working as street vendors is hard for us. We want to present our idea to create an inclusive market for vendors with disabilities to the authorities. Evictions without proper dialogue affect all of us and waste public funds. Dialogue is success, without it we can't come to a consensus for better work. We want to exchange ideas, for the good of everyone.”

– Yngol Ramirez



Yngol Ramirez, president of the Social Organization for People with Disabilities (Santa Catalina), showing how his wheelchair gets stuck in the gravel in the relocation site assigned for vendors from Lima's historic centre. Photo credit: Myriam Arriola, WIEGO

Worker Wins

Documenting Waste Pickers' Experience of the Climate Crisis to Improve Dialogue Between Waste Pickers and Local Governments in Brazil

Waste pickers are at the front line of the climate crisis. While it is well known that their work contributes to environmental sustainability, less is known about the hazards they face at work and at home. Understanding how the climate crisis impacts waste pickers, their adaptation strategies, and the kind of support they need is an initial step towards improving dialogue between waste pickers and government entities. Waste pickers require support to strengthen their responses to the impacts of the climate crisis, and their proposals must be incorporated into urban resilience plans.

WIEGO, in collaboration with the Urban Institute at the University of Sheffield, conducted a [study](#) with waste pickers in three Brazilian cities, to document their perspectives on climate-change impacts and actions.

Mônica Raquel Ribeiro de Souza, an autonomous waste picker in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, talks about the struggles of working during extreme weather events.

“Last year, not once, not twice, several times the wind blew away everything from the place where we stored materials and everything got wet. The little roof we built over the trolleys fell down, it was a struggle to get them all out.

“We don't stay out all morning like we used to, because you can't [work] without water, without a toilet, in this heat. We hardly have any shade. It affects our income, because we don't produce as much. We used to send 300kg every 15 days, now we're sending 400kg, 500kg in just one month. It has reduced a lot.

“One day, another waste picker said: 'Mônica, I'm feeling very dizzy because of the heat.' I said: 'no, let's stop because soon you'll fall and the money won't even be enough to take you to the doctor.' Then we left.”

– Mônica Raquel Ribeiro de Souza



Mônica Raquel Ribeiro de Souza, a self-employed waste picker in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Photo credit: Lina Mintz

Waste Pickers

Statistics, Research and Policy Analysis: The Core of Our Work

We develop statistics, research and policy analysis that serve as powerful evidence for workers' advocacy. This rigorous research and our deep relationships with workers' organizations enable us to influence policy debates and change-makers to improve workers' rights.

Collating Evidence on the Cost of Living, Financing Social Protection and Taxation, for Workers' Advocacy

WIEGO monitored the cost-of-living crisis in Accra, Ghana, and [Bangkok, Thailand](#), and examined how inflation affects workers, the coping strategies they adopt, and the longer-term implications for workers and their households. Using the research, HomeNet Thailand engaged the Ministry of Labour to amend and approve a [ministerial regulation for domestic workers](#). The regulation – which had taken close to five years to develop and approve – provides maternity benefits, minimum wage, working-hour limits and other rights for domestic workers. HomeNet Thailand also requested that domestic workers be included in the compulsory social security system laid out in the 2017 Social Security Act. The Ministry committed to expanding trade fairs to create marketing opportunities for home-based workers, agreed to develop interest-free loans for home-based workers, and included worker leaders on the reinstated subcommittee on voluntary contributions for workers in informal employment.

Our continued **research on the economics of social protection aims to challenge unhelpful assumptions about the informal economy** and the workers who operate within it. We [reviewed the literature](#) and commissioned research to [shift the debate](#) on the idea that social insurance subsidies inevitably drive increases in informal employment – an idea that holds back the roll-out of universal social protection. The findings were shared in written contributions for the [Inter-American Development Bank](#) and the [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#).

While low- and middle-income country governments are looking for funds to finance schemes for social and economic development amid inflation and rising debts, increasing the tax contributions of the informal sector has become a [popular policy choice](#). This choice is often based on the **false assumption that workers in informal employment don't pay tax**. In a [webinar](#) with the OECD, the International Centre for Tax and Development and the University of Ghana's Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, we presented the results of [our study](#), which revealed the many taxes and fees paid by workers in informal employment in Accra. The World Bank and the OECD have both cited WIEGO's research on informal-sector taxation in their own work.



Kanyarat Panya, a domestic worker in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo credit: Pattarapon Virat, WIEGO



A domestic worker in Mexico City during COVID-19. Photo credit: César Parra

Domestic Workers

Statistics, Research and Policy Analysis: The Core of Our Work

Documenting the Effects of the Climate Crisis and Advocating for a Just Transition

2023 was the warmest year on record. Hundreds of millions of people experienced extreme heat, which poses particular challenges for workers in informal employment who lack adequate housing and often work outside, unsheltered from the elements. The impact of the climate crisis is increasingly becoming a key advocacy priority for worker movements. We support worker organizations by conducting research to make visible the effects of the climate crisis on workers in informal employment, especially home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers.

In Brazil, we **shared the findings** from a **mapping of waste pickers' experiences and coping strategies** following extreme weather events in 2023. The report led to a **commitment by the Prosecutor's Office** for Minas Gerais to use **WIEGO's greenhouse gas emissions calculator**, which measures emissions that waste pickers prevent. After discussion in the Municipal Waste & Citizenship Forum – a multi-stakeholder platform comprising waste pickers, local government officials, civil society and WIEGO – the Forum committed to working towards documenting climate change impacts on waste pickers' cooperatives in Belo Horizonte. Going into 2024/25, we will continue to map the impacts of the climate crisis and extreme weather – to enhance coping and adaptation – in Bangkok, Delhi, Lima and Mexico City.

In a **new Workers' Health Strategy** with waste pickers and street vendors, WIEGO committed to developing climate-change and health guidelines to be used by local governments to improve health and safety. Training for workers and research on occupational health and safety for various sectors will further facilitate growing awareness about occupational health and safety. In Lima, WIEGO created **guidelines (Spanish only) to help street vendors prevent heat stroke and heat stress**. They were shared widely, including through the street vendors' WhatsApp group. At the level of policy, we aim to integrate occupational health and safety into primary and public health-care systems.

At the global level, we **supported workers at the International Labour Conference discussions on Just Transitions and Inclusive Labour Protection** to call for the inclusion of workers in informal employment in a just transition towards a green economy. The adopted **International Labour Conference** resolution recognizes that a just transition is important for all countries at all levels of development, and for all economic sectors. It includes the need to design coherent and integrated strategies to facilitate the transition to the formal economy and prevent the informalization of formal economy jobs, paying particular attention to sectors highly impacted by environmental and climate change – a win for waste pickers.

During the 3rd meeting on the UN Plastics Treaty, the newly formed International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) spoke in a unified voice with other international workers unions in a **joint statement for a just transition**.



Waste pickers at the ILC on Just Transitions and Inclusive Labour Protection in June 2023 in Geneva. Photo credit: Sofia Trevino, WIEGO.
Background photo: Unicicla cooperative in Nova União city, Brazil, in January 2020. Poor infrastructure exacerbates the impacts of climate change. Photo credit: Murilo Godoy

Waste Pickers

Statistics, Research and Policy Analysis: The Core of Our Work

Increasing Worker Power and Visibility Through Improved Statistics, Thought Leadership and Advocacy

In October 2023, the 21st **International Conference of Labour Statisticians** (ICLS) adopted the **Resolution Concerning Statistics on the Informal Economy**. It is the culmination of a 5-year tripartite effort by the International Labour Organization's Department of Statistics, with close collaboration from members of WIEGO's Statistics Team. The new Resolution revised and broadened prior standards for statistics on the informal economy, including criteria for classification of dependent contractors and contributing family workers, enabling better measurement. It also recommended an indicator framework to guide national reporting.

The 21st session of the ICLS marked its 100th anniversary. WIEGO had a featured role in the celebration, speaking at the main panel, "Celebrating 100 years of the ICLS," and a side event on Engendering Informality Statistics. The role of WIEGO as a collaborative partner to the ILO Statistics Department was acknowledged in the closing session of the Conference.

The Statistics Programme continued to prepare Statistical Briefs to make data available to workers, policymakers and other users. Briefs on **El Salvador, Mexico** and **India**, and a **flyer** associated with the Mexico brief, provide data on informal employment and groups of workers of special priority for WIEGO, including on the changes in employment brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Programme also responded to the need for better data on waste pickers by preparing a brief describing four efforts to collect data on waste pickers, **Statistics on Waste Pickers: A Case Studies Guide**. Organizations of waste pickers had a collaborative role in all phases of these data collection processes. These efforts are examples of a new initiative led by the United Nations Statistics Division and UN Women: Citizen Data. The term Citizen Data refers to the direct involvement of people or their organizations in the multiple stages of producing the data that describe and affect them.



Waste pickers at the Boitshepi landfill near Johannesburg, South Africa..
Photo credit: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images Reportage

Statistics, Research and Policy Analysis: The Core of Our Work

Supporting Worker Organizations to Build Resilience, Unity and Sustainability

2023/24 was momentous, as years of network-strengthening activity culminated in the international congresses of the [International Domestic Workers Federation \(IDWF\)](#), [HomeNet International \(HNI\)](#) and [StreetNet International \(SNI\)](#). The final stages of a fourth congress, that of the [newly formed International Alliance of Waste Pickers \(IAWP\)](#), were in progress. Fifty organizations with a total of 460,000 members were officially affiliated to the alliance in 2023. The first Congress was planned for May 2024.

With these networks formed, we are now shifting our focus towards developing thematic skills trainings and worker education through the WIEGO School, supporting the organizational development of the global networks, and increasing solidarity across sectors, to build collective voice and influence in the policymaking and rule-setting bodies that affect workers' work and lives.

Progress with the WIEGO School and Support with the Organizational Development of Worker Networks

In 2022, the [WIEGO School](#) was founded to enable WIEGO and the global networks of workers to use coordinated structures and align visions to strategize, fundraise, learn, communicate and build the capacity of worker leaders to improve the terms of informal employment. We have continued to build the foundation for the WIEGO School with the appointment of a WIEGO School Coordinator, along with the establishment of a WIEGO School Advisory Committee to decide on the School's strategic direction, structure and thematic priorities. The School held a collective bargaining training that included participants from all sectors and is planning social protection training in 2024/25.

“We have learned so much, it's enriching because collective negotiation comes with skills. For you to be able to negotiate or debate effectively, you need skills.”
Evelyn Sampson, StreetNet International – Ghana

“It is important to share the experiences we had in this school and implement these in each of our territories, so that we can improve the organizations in our countries.”
Victoria Moron – Focal Cities, Lima, Peru

“As a trainer, I have learned so much about collective negotiation, which is going to help me a lot. I have learned to first know the issues of the workers, then convert them to demands. I will be able to use the materials supplied by WIEGO to teach others.”
Leah Munirat Yahya, IDWF – Nigeria



Alberto Satana at the ILC, Geneva, in June 2023.
Background photo: Fundraising training in Mauritius in 2023 with global networks of workers in informal employment. Photos credit: Sofia Trevino, WIEGO.

Statistics, Research and Policy Analysis: The Core of Our Work

Worker leaders and organizers also received grass-roots training in fundraising and monitoring, learning and evaluation, aimed at improving the documentation of their impact and strengthening their financial sustainability. WIEGO also rolled out online communications training via the RISE platform to support worker leaders in their advocacy work. To ensure that all participants could effectively access and use the tools, we provided tailored technical support and training, and easy-to-follow guides and FAQs in several languages. As a result of the positive feedback we received from participants, we have led the development of five online courses on digital literacy and another five on fundraising.

Thematic Trainings to Build Cross-Sector Solidarity and Collective Power

Our Programmes organized thematic trainings this year focused on helping workers to strengthen their knowledge of the social and solidarity economy and use social dialogue as a tool at the regional level¹.

Our work on the **social and solidarity economy (SSE)** focuses on conducting research on SSE examples and providing support to workers' organizations as they influence global discussions on the relationship between workers in informal employment and the SSE. We contributed to the development of **Resolution 46 on the Social and Solidarity Economy**, which was adopted at the 7th StreetNet International Congress to step up efforts to promote the concept among its members. As a follow-up to the Congress, in November 2023, we co-facilitated an international workshop with StreetNet on "SSE: Sustainability for a Better Future", which culminated in the development of a StreetNet strategy for the social and solidarity economy. At the international level, relationships with the ILO's Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit and Ripess Intercontinental led to our participation in an OECD seminar on the popular economy in Latin America.

WIEGO is working to implement ILO Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy (R204) at the national level in Brazil, South Africa and Senegal. In Brazil, WIEGO and worker leaders met with policymakers and ILO officials to present proposals for the implementation of R204. The various worker organizations have created a cross-sector body to coordinate their strategy and develop a campaign. Their work constitutes a strong and extensive multisectoral commitment to the implementation of R204 by the government and trade union movement.

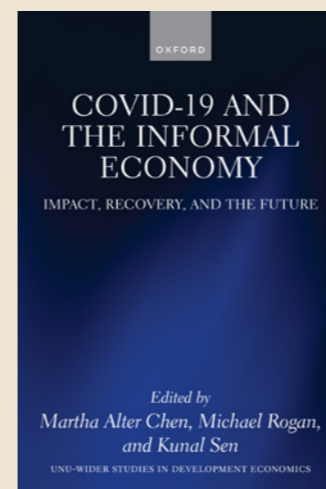
Strengthening Influence with Legal Professionals and Challenging Discriminatory Legal Systems

Workers in informal employment are often excluded from regulatory frameworks recognizing their labour rights. But laws are not static; changing them is a key way workers build institutional power. Labour law, for example, tends to focus on the employer-employee relationship and does not give much consideration to the rights of self-employed workers to organize and bargain collectively. WIEGO's **engagement in labour law forums** is

expanding the scope of labour law to include self-employed workers by engaging influential labour law scholars and practitioners. This is key to building a legal community that supports organizations of workers who are self-employed, such as home-based workers, street vendors and market traders, and waste pickers.

At the regional level, WIEGO, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Waste Pickers (REDLACRE) and MBO partners continue to **document systemic human rights violations against waste pickers** in Latin America and engage with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on this issue. The IACHR Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights visited waste pickers in Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama. On Labour Day, the IACHR issued a press release calling for governments in Latin America to adopt special measures to guarantee waste pickers' rights. With support building within the IACHR, WIEGO partnered with REDLACRE, International Lawyers Assisting Workers, the International Transport Workers Federation, and the Trade Union Congress of the Americas to submit a joint application on the human rights situation of waste pickers and digital platform workers. After years of advocacy by WIEGO and waste picker organizations, the Commission held its first ever **public hearing** on the rights of workers in informal employment in July 2023. This was a critical opportunity for waste pickers to share the challenges they face in realizing their human rights.

Research Highlights



Research is a core pillar of WIEGO's work. UNU-WIDER and WIEGO launched the joint volume **COVID-19 and the Informal Economy: Impact, Recovery and the Future**, which analyzes the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on workers in informal employment, questions whether economic recovery plans and schemes include them, and explores what a more inclusive economic recovery might look like. Six of the fourteen chapters draw on data from WIEGO's global COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Study. The content from the book was also featured in a **UNU-WIDER massive online open course (MOOC)** held in August 2023 on sustainable development targeted at policy makers.

Revised statistical standards for measuring the informal economy were adopted at the **International Conference of Labour Statisticians**. These will strengthen the quality and availability of statistics on informal employment, enterprises and workers worldwide and lead to improved estimates of the contribution of the informal economy to GDPs.

The forthcoming book **Contested Urban Spaces: Urbanization, Law and Informal Work** by WIEGO and the International Research Group on Law & Urban Space (IRGLUS) explores how the law mediates access to urban space which street vendors, waste pickers, newspaper sellers and other workers in informal employment rely on to sustain their livelihoods. The volume will bring together 28 authors, including a number from WIEGO, and covers 15 jurisdictions around the world. The authors will explore gaps and weaknesses in different legal systems, in order to shed light on how legal governance can be reshaped and reimagined to achieve spatial justice for workers in informal employment.

¹ Details of our joint research project with HomeNet Southeast Asia to investigate the status of inclusive social dialogue in relation to social protection in the region is featured in the section on worker wins.

WIEGO'S Key Programmes



Law Programme

By definition, workers in informal employment are not afforded sufficient legal protection. We work to build the legal infrastructure that organizations of workers in informal employment need to change this. Key elements include strong worker organizations that deploy legal tactics creatively to build collective power; robust legal frameworks that strengthen protections and entitlements for workers in informal employment; and effective mechanisms for the interpretation, implementation and enforcement of laws.

Spanning the local to global, the activities we undertake to advance these objectives seek to put law in the hands of workers, as both a shield and a sword for advancing their demands; support lawyers to deepen their collaboration with informally employed workers and their organizations; and persuade those who make and influence laws and policies to promote progressive reforms.



Organization and Representation Programme

Workers in informal employment are organizing to build the power, skills and collective voice needed to improve working conditions and fight for social justice for all.

Collective voice and organization are preconditions for worker organizations to assert their position as negotiating partners – so the Organization and Representation Programme helps workers build strong, democratic membership-based organizations that are led by workers, with women's leadership at the centre.

The programme uses research and education tools to ensure workers in informal employment have the confidence and skills to achieve their goals and be recognized as workers.

We also strengthen the links between organizations of workers in informal employment and the trade union and cooperative movements, the ILO and other global institutions.



Social Protection Programme

Workers in informal employment need access to social security that will protect them, mitigate risks to their incomes, and help them cope after an event or shock. WIEGO's Social Protection Programme is committed to helping workers access these rights through inclusive income-support mechanisms and access to public and workplace services.



Statistics Programme

The Statistics Programme seeks to develop official statistics on informal employment and its workers at the international, regional and national levels and to make these statistics available widely, including at the city level, in easily accessible formats. To do this, the programme works directly with both producers of official statistics – statistical agencies at the international, regional and national levels – and users, such as membership-based organizations of workers in informal employment, policymakers, non-governmental organizations and research institutions.



Urban Policies Programme

The Urban Policies Programme focuses on making visible the size and contribution of the urban informal economy, and the drivers of both exclusion and inclusion. Integration of workers in informal employment into urban systems – planning, infrastructure provision, waste management, retail and food – under favourable terms is a key area of work.

We provide direct support to processes of integration in the places we work – especially Brazil, South Africa and India – and work closely with WIEGO's Focal Cities. Much of our work is done alongside membership-based organizations of workers. We strive to support their advocacy, inform relevant policy processes, and influence key communities of practice. We aim for a local-global virtuous circle where local evidence is used to secure gains that inform key global policy processes that in turn reinforce gains locally.

Focal Cities Highlights

In **Dakar**, WIEGO supports workers in informal employment to secure increased rights and protections and supportive policies. WIEGO's work in the city currently focuses specifically on supporting organized waste pickers.

Awareness-raising on coastal pollution among waste pickers and the local population in Dakar, Senegal. Photo credit: Maguette Diop, WIEGO



In **Accra**, WIEGO supports a local network of workers' organizations representing street vendors, market traders, *kayayei* (women head porters) and waste pickers to secure increased rights and protections and supportive policies.

A waste picker at work in Accra, Ghana. Photo credit: Dean Saffron



In **Lima**, WIEGO supports a local network of worker organizations representing street vendors, market traders, domestic workers, waste pickers, market porters, newspaper vendors and shoe shiners to secure increased rights and protections and supportive policies.

A newspaper vendor in Lima, Peru. Photo credit: Juan Arredondo/Getty Images Reportage



In **Mexico City**, WIEGO supports a local network of worker organizations representing street vendors, non-salaried workers (diverse groups operating in public space such as musicians and shoe shiners), waste pickers and domestic workers to secure increased rights and protections and supportive policies.

A coffee vendor in Mexico City in 2020. Photo credit: Dean Saffron



Progress towards greater MBO autonomy and sustainability

In Dakar and Accra, we supported organized waste pickers in achieving several major milestones in 2023/24, in both organizational development and the strengthening of cooperatives.

In Accra, the Kpone Waste Pickers Association successfully held the first executive leadership transition since its founding, and the Green Waste Pickers Cooperative successfully developed a logistical and financial proposal for doorstep waste collection and secured over US \$50,000 from the Or Foundation to implement the proposal.

In Dakar, the Association of Waste Pickers of Mbeubeuss, known as Bokk Diom, garnered support from the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal (CNTS) to form a union – the National Union of Waste Pickers of Senegal – to create a pathway for affiliation to the trade union federation.

Organized waste pickers in Dakar, Senegal. Photo credit: Maguette Diop, WIEGO



Successful Advocacy to Reverse Punitive Actions Against Workers in Public Space

Thousands of Lima's street vendors work in markets in the Comas district. In September 2023, most of the street markets were notified of an upcoming eviction by the municipality. Legal support provided by WIEGO delayed the process, but one of the markets was shut on New Year's Eve through the destruction of the road where the market operated. A march organized by Comas vendors, as well as media training and other support provided by WIEGO, has helped stall the other threatened evictions in order to create space for a sustainable solution.

In Mexico City, WIEGO's support to raise awareness about the rights of women metro vendors (*vagoneras*) and their collective resulted in a significant shift in recognition and support. The collective, Leonas en Manada, experienced growing interest from other local organizations, Mexico City's Human Rights Commission and potential funders to collaborate with and support the women metro vendors' struggle. These are promising steps towards greater empowerment and sustainable change for the collective.

Street vendors at work in Accra, Ghana. Photo credit: Benjamin Forson



Shifting Mindsets Through an Innovative Multimedia Campaign

We secured **unprecedented gains** with the **Lxs Rifadxs de la Basura** (Champions of Recycling) campaign, which focuses on the struggles of "volunteer" waste pickers in Mexico City. The head of Mexico City's government addressed one of the campaign's key demands, cultural institutions across the city requested screenings of the campaign's **documentary**, and a high-profile media outlet initiated a regular column on waste pickers' livelihoods.

The **documentary** was featured at the prestigious Ambulante documentary film festival in Mexico City and was voted one of the audience's favourites. Waste pickers were invited to speak about the project at the end of each screening, which provided a powerful space to share their experiences and interact with the different audiences. This highlights the critical importance of the issues faced by "volunteer" waste pickers in the city, further amplifying their voices and the project's reach.

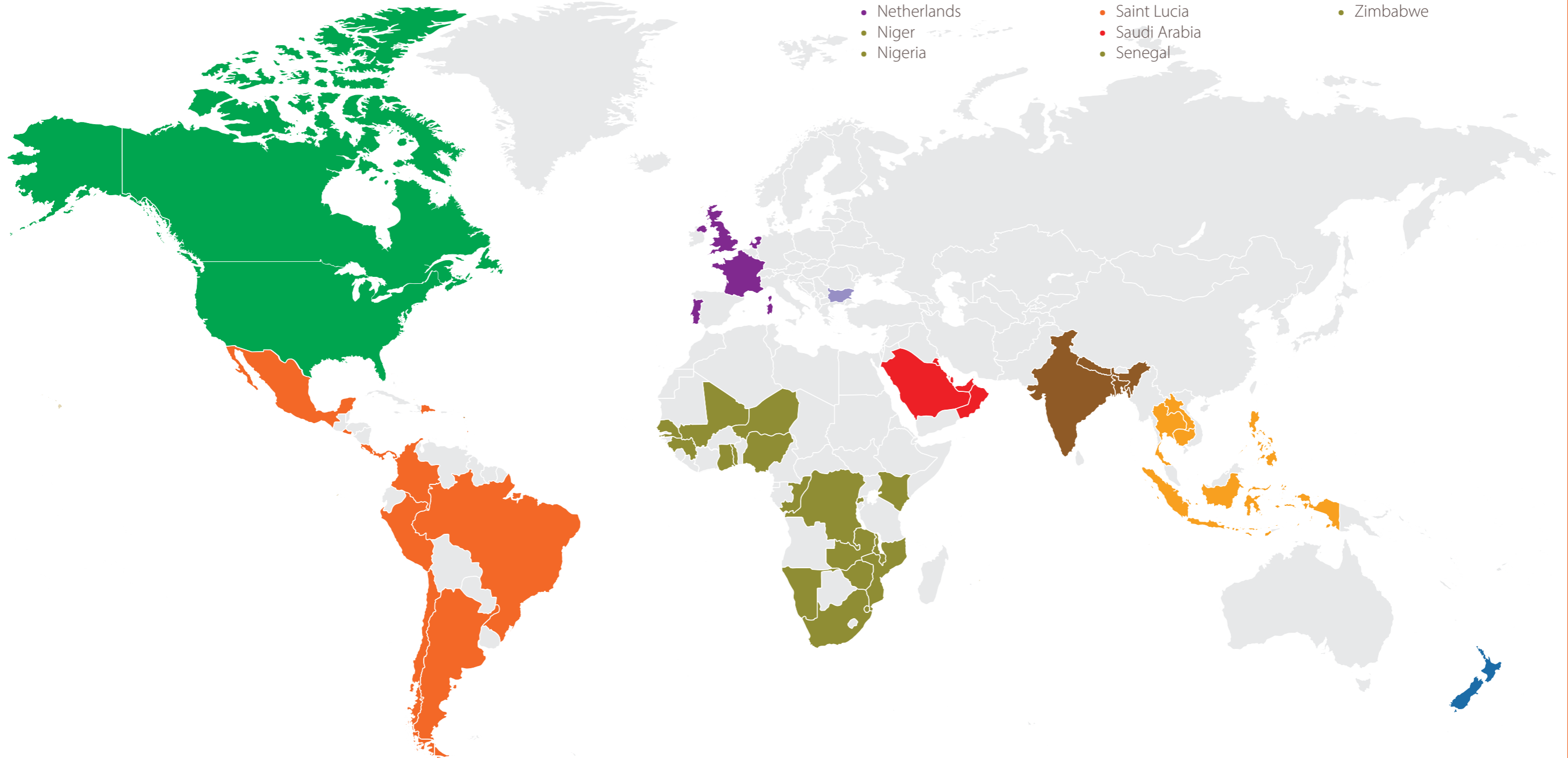
A waste picker reads the comic created for the Los Rifados campaign. Photo credit: Angie Queupumil



Where WIEGO Worked in 2023/2024

This list includes countries where WIEGO has team members and key partners.

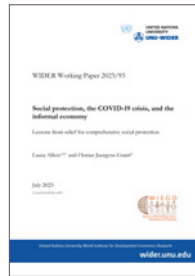
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|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|
| • Antigua and Barbuda | • Canada | • France | • Laos | • Oman | • South Africa |
| • Argentina | • Chile | • Ghana | • Malawi | • Panama | • Thailand |
| • Bahrain | • Colombia | • Guinea | • Mexico | • Peru | • Togo |
| • Bangladesh | • Costa Rica | • India | • Mozambique | • Philippines | • United Arab Emirates |
| • Brazil | • DR Congo | • Indonesia | • Namibia | • Portugal | • United Kingdom |
| • Bulgaria | • Dominican Republic | • Kenya | • Nepal | • Qatar | • USA |
| • Cambodia | • El Salvador | • Kuwait | • New Zealand | • Rwanda | • Zambia |
| | | | • Netherlands | • Saint Lucia | • Zimbabwe |
| | | | • Niger | • Saudi Arabia | |
| | | | • Nigeria | • Senegal | |



Publications and Resources

Highlights from Peer-Reviewed Publications

WIEGO researchers continue to contribute to peer-reviewed academic publications. For a complete list of edited volumes, book chapters, journal articles and peer-reviewed working papers, visit our [website](#).



Alfers, Laura and Florian Juergens-Grant. 2023. *Social Protection, the COVID-19 Crisis, and the Informal Economy: Lessons from Relief for Comprehensive Social Protection*. WIDER Working Paper 2023/93. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

Highlights from the WIEGO Publication Series

Working Papers feature research that makes either an empirical or a theoretical contribution to existing knowledge about the informal economy. All WIEGO Working Papers are peer reviewed by the WIEGO Research Team and/or external experts.



Orozco Corona, Mónica and Roberto Vélez-Grajales. 2024. *Does Social Protection Cause Informality? A Critical Review of the Literature on the Relationship between Social Protection, Formal and Informal Employment*. WIEGO Working Paper No. 48.

Briefs aim to provide user-friendly documentation for those involved in advocacy, policy and research on the informal economy.



Policy:

Dias, Sonia Maria, Ana Carolina Ogando, Vanesa Castán Broto, Breno Cypriano and Juliana Gonçalves. 2023. *Climate-Change Impacts and Adaptation Strategies: Waste Pickers' Experiences from Brazil*. WIEGO Policy Brief No. 29.

Statistical:

Ramírez, Tomás and Joann Vanek. 2023. *The Impact of COVID-19 on Employment in Mexico, 2020 - 2023*. WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 37.



Organizing:

Assis, Mariana Prandini. 2023. *'Whose Law? Our Law!': Critical Reflections on Legalization, Social Dialogue and Street Vendors' Organizing in São Paulo*. WIEGO Organizing (Law) Brief No. 15.

Law and Informality Insights:

Espinosa-Sánchez, Tania. *Waste Pickers and Human Rights in Latin America*. WIEGO Law & Informality Insights No. 8.



Resource Documents include WIEGO-generated literature reviews, annotated bibliographies and papers reflecting the findings of new empirical work. They provide detail to support advocacy, policy or research on specific issues.

Reed, Sarah Orleans and Caroline Skinner. 2023. *Street Vending and Market Trading During the COVID-19 Crisis: Pathways of Impact and Recovery in Nine Cities*. WIEGO Resource Document No. 38.

Highlights from Research on How the Cost-of-Living Crisis is Affecting Workers in Informal Employment

WIEGO undertook qualitative research in cities including Bangkok, Thailand, and Accra, Ghana, in response to alarming reports on impacts of rising food prices and other cost-of-living hikes on workers in informal employment. This work builds on the WIEGO-led multi-city research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath on workers in informal employment around the world.

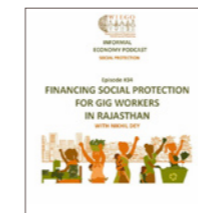


Valdivia, Marcela, Ana Carolina Ogando and Poonsap Tulaphan. 2024. *Shouldering the Burden: Impacts of the Cost-of-Living Crisis on Workers in Informal Employment in Bangkok, Thailand*. WIEGO Policy Brief No. 30.

Social Protection for Informal Workers: Trends and Changes

WIEGO produces briefing notes that aim to support worker movements in their advocacy efforts to expand social protection to workers in informal employment.

WIEGO, 2023. Issue #7: *Challenges and strategies to increase social protection financing for workers in informal employment*.



Informal Economy Podcast: Social Protection

These podcasts offer accessible information that raises awareness of research and debates on social protection for workers in informal employment.

Episode #34: Financing Social Protection for Gig Workers in Rajasthan

All WIEGO's Working Papers, Briefs and Resource Documents, which constitute the Publication Series, can be found on WIEGO's [website](#).

Financial Report: Year Ended 31 March 2023

Financial Governance

The Finance Committee is a subcommittee of the WIEGO Board and has responsibility for overseeing the financial management and audit of the accounts, to ensure the sustainability and future viability of WIEGO. This includes review of annual budgets, as well as continuous review of budgetary and financial controls to reduce the risk of under or overspending, and to mitigate against the possible shortfall in income in any financial year. This risk is further mitigated by the building of designated reserves mainly for the General Assembly, which is held every four years. Consequently, in the current financial year, a provision has been made for US\$125,000, and yearly provisions will be made to meet the costs of the General Assembly to be held in November 2026. Additionally, free reserves as of March 31, 2024, are US\$618,000, which will be used to maintain core programmes for a three-month period in the event of cash flow uncertainties arising from funding problems or other uncertainties.

The Finance Committee reports to the WIEGO Board of Directors for final decisions on budgets and risk management.

Financial Summary

For the year ended March 31, 2024, WIEGO received an unqualified opinion from its auditors Crowe U.K. LLP. The figures in the financial summaries for the Balance Sheet, Source of Funds, and Use of Funds are extracted from the statutory accounts that were approved by the Board of Directors on August 21, 2024. The

auditors have confirmed to the Directors that the extracts are consistent with the statutory financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2024.

These extracts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the company. Therefore, the full statutory accounts should be consulted together with the Auditors' Report and the Directors' Report, which are available from the Company Secretary at the company's registered office in Manchester, United Kingdom. Additionally, the full statutory accounts will be available online, after completion of all regulatory filings.

Balance Sheet

BALANCE SHEET	2023-24	2022-23
	US \$,000	US \$,000
CURRENT ASSETS		
Accounts Receivable	718	1,186
Cash at bank	25,407	30,550
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	26,125	31,736
CREDITORS		
Accounts Payable	-3,663	-1,313
NET ASSETS	22,462	30,423
FUNDS		
Restricted Funds	16,724	22,635
Unrestricted Funds	5,738	7,788
	22,462	30,423

Source: Extract from the statutory accounts

Source and Use of Funds

The total incoming resources were US\$7.2 million for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 compared to US\$14.4 million in the previous year. Total resources expended were US\$15.1 million, compared to US\$13.2 million in the previous year.

Source of Funds

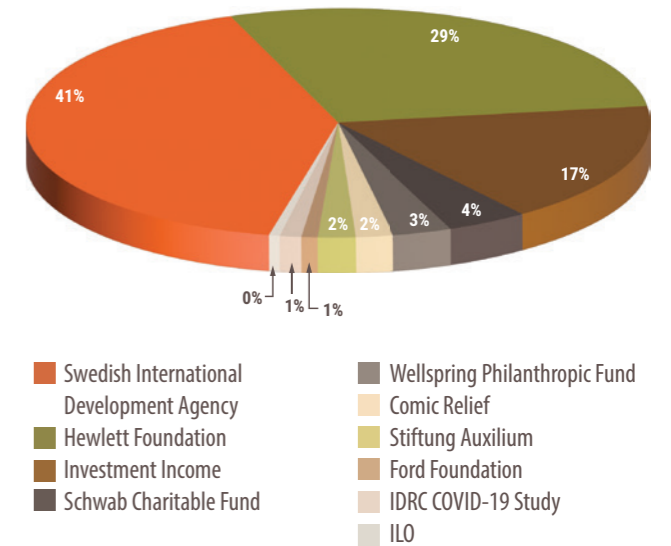
Over the last twenty-five years, WIEGO has been fortunate to receive support from several funders in our efforts to empower workers in informal employment around the globe. During the financial year ended March 31, 2024, WIEGO received funding from eighteen institutional funders. Additionally, US\$1.1 million was received as interest income compared to US\$617,000 in the previous year and is included in "Other Sources."

WIEGO is grateful to the various organizations, foundations, and governments for their generous financial support over the years.

SOURCE OF FUNDS	2023-24	2022-23
	US \$,000	US \$,000
Ford Foundation	49	296
Swedish International Development Agency	2,770	2,684
Schwab Charitable Fund	250	125
International Development Research Centre COVID-19 Study	89	185
Comic Relief	114	137
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund	200	200
International Labour Organization	15	10
Stiftung Auxilium	133	0
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	2,000	2,900
National Philanthropic Trust Fund	0	7,000
Investment Income	1,143	617
Other Sources	389	249
TOTAL	7,152	14,403

Source: Extract from the statutory accounts

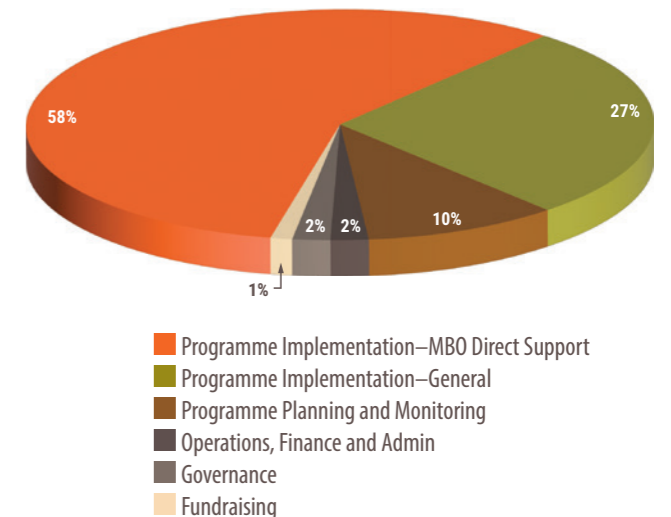
Source of Funds for Year 2023/24



Use of Funds

WIEGO's strategy is designed to ensure that the maximum possible resources are channeled directly into programmes to meet the objective of delivering quality improvements in research, policy advocacy and capacity building. It is worth noting that 95% of resources were expended in the direct and indirect support of MBOs for programme implementation, planning and monitoring.

Use of Funds for Year 2023/24





WIEGO's Work

[Annual Reports](#)

[WIEGO Digest](#)

[WIEGO Membership-Based Organizations Newsletters](#)

[Law & Informality Newsletters](#)

WIEGO Online Resources



[Blogs](#)



[Videos](#)



[Webinars](#)

WIEGO Social Media Channels



ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024