

AAPS Planning Education Toolkit: The Informal Economy

Appendix A: Informal Economic Sector Livelihood Profiles

Street Vendors (by Sally Roever)

Home-based Workers (by Shalini Sinha)

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Introduction

Street vendors are an integral component of urban economies around the world. As distributors of affordable goods and services, street vendors provide consumers with convenient and accessible retail options and form a vital part of the social and economic life of a city. Street vending as an occupation has existed for hundreds of years, and is considered a cornerstone of many cities' historical and cultural heritage. Street trade creates jobs not only for millions of street vendors worldwide, but also for other occupations, such as porters, trolley operators, and night watchmen. In some cities, street traders account for as much as 20% of total employment.

Although street traders have formed an integral part of city life for hundreds of years, they operate in unstable policy environments and have little voice in city planning. Because it is difficult to know how many there are in any given city, and because they are often viewed as a nuisance, they tend to remain invisible in urban planning processes. Street vendors in many cities are organized, but their organizations usually lack access to municipal bargaining forums where their voices can be heard. And without legal status, street vendors' livelihoods are constantly at risk. Strengthening street traders' voice and visibility through their organizations, and elevating their status as valid economic actors and partners in urban planning, can help overcome these challenges.

Definitions

Broadly defined, street vendors include all those selling goods or services in public spaces. The term 'street vendor' may refer to vendors with fixed stalls, such as kiosks; vendors who operate from semi-fixed stalls, like folding tables, crates, collapsible stands, or wheeled pushcarts that are removed from the streets and stored overnight; vendors who sell from fixed locations without a stall structure, displaying merchandise on cloth or plastic sheets; or mobile vendors who walk or bicycle through the streets as they sell. Street vendors work in many types of public spaces: regulated street markets or hawking zones; natural market areas; transportation hubs; sidewalks; medians; and in and alongside the streets themselves.

Size and Significance

The size of the street vending population in any given locality is exceedingly difficult to measure. Most existing estimates undercount the total number of people working in street trade, often because they exclude those who use street trading as a secondary, seasonal, temporary, or part-time occupation. However, in each region of the world, one can find both official and unofficial estimates of the number of street traders. The following are estimates from official statistics:

Africa¹

- In African cities, official statistics usually estimate street traders to form between 10 and 20 percent of total employment, and 15 to 25 percent of total informal employment.
- Nationwide, street vendors account for 14 percent of all informal non-agricultural employment in Ghana and 15 percent in South Africa.
- Informal traders – of whom about half are street traders – account for more than 40 percent of total informal employment in Cotonou, Ouagadougou, Abidjan, Bamako, and Lomé.
- The informal sector accounts for 85 percent or more of total trade employment in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Mali, and Tunisia.
- Informal traders contribute between 46 and 70 percent of total trade value added in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Mali, and Tunisia.
- Women constitute more than two-thirds of street traders in the main cities of Benin, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, and Togo, and more than half in Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal, and South Africa.

Asia

- In India, street traders represent about 3 per cent of total non-agricultural employment. According to official statistics, this translates to more than 3.1 million street traders countrywide (Unni, 2010). Unofficial estimates suggest there are closer to 10 million (Bhowmik, 2010).
- In the Vietnamese cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, street vendors account for over 11% of total informal employment. In these cities informal traders as a whole comprise 26 and 35 percent of total informal employment, respectively (Herrera et al, 2011).
- According to city authorities, academics, and local NGOs, there are about 90,000 street vendors in Dhaka (Bangladesh); 10,000 in Colombo (Sri Lanka); 100,000 in Bangkok (Thailand); 50,000 in Singapore; 47,000 in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia); 50,000 in Manila (Philippines); and 800,000 in Seoul (South Korea) (Bhowmik, 2010).
- The informal sector accounts for more than 90% of total trade employment in India and Indonesia.
- Women comprise more than two-thirds of street vendors in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. In Ahmedabad (India) women account for about 10 percent of street vendors.

Latin America

- In Lima, Peru, street vendors account for about 9 percent of total informal employment. This translates to about 240,000 vendors, of whom 65% are women. (Herrera et al, 2011).
- In Bogotá, Colombia, street vendors represented nearly 20 percent of the informal labour force in 1996. The raw number of street vendors has increased dramatically since that year, from 220,000 in 1996 to 558,000 in 2005.²
- In Caracas, Venezuela, census data show that street vendors account for over 5 percent of the total economically active population. This includes nearly 49,000

¹ These official statistics on street traders in African cities are drawn from Herrera et al (2010) and ILO (2002).

² Roever (2010), based on data from the national statistical department, DANE.

street vendors, as well as vendors who work in kiosks (4,600) and markets (8,150). (Roever, 2010 and Rincon, 2010)

- Street traders comprise about 9 percent of total non-agricultural employment in Guatemala, and 3-4 percent of total non-agricultural employment in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela (ILO, 2002).
- Brazil is home to about 2 million informal traders.³ In São Paulo, estimates of the total number of street vendors range from 73,000 to 100,000.⁴
- Women form about 30 percent of street vendors in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela; 45 percent in Mexico; and 55 percent in Guatemala.⁵

Earnings

Earnings among street vendors vary widely. However, a few patterns are common across regions. Most street vendors are poor. Available data show that street vendors' earnings often place them at or below the \$2 a day poverty threshold. Women street vendors typically earn less than men, and in many countries less than half as much as men. Vendors of food generally earn less than vendors of non-food products. Some street vendors are able to earn a good living. Vendors of durable products like hardware and electronics, for example, are less exposed to asset loss and price fluctuations than other types of vendors. These vendors often have relatively secure livelihoods. However, most street vendors in developing countries work long hours and earn very little. Their incomes fluctuate significantly from season to season and from week to week, and they are vulnerable to price fluctuations, police confiscations of merchandise, and other forms of asset loss. Vendors of fresh produce are particularly vulnerable to unstable prices and may see their goods spoil before they are sold.

Working Conditions, Constraints, and Risks

Street vendors' working conditions are a function of both the physical environment and the policy environment in which they work.

Physical Environment:

Street vendors work in open-air environments. In doing so, they are exposed to a range of occupational hazards that put their livelihoods and well being at risk.

- Their places of work typically lack proper infrastructure, such as running water, toilets, and solid waste removal systems.
- They are exposed to physical harm from the improper provision of fire safety equipment and the improper regulation of traffic in commercial areas.
- They are also exposed to a high concentration of air pollutants, to the hot sun, and to inclement weather.
- Children who must accompany their mothers to vend in the streets are especially vulnerable to these physical risks.

³ Budlender (2010); Roever (2010).

⁴ Itikawa (2006), Roever (2010).

⁵ Esquivel (2010); ILO (2002).

Policy Environment:

Street vendors work in unstable policy environments. The rules that affect their work change frequently, and their inconsistent and non-transparent enforcement opens the door for policy abuses.

- The most pressing and ongoing risk for many street vendors is the possibility that local government authorities will forcibly remove them from the streets or confiscate their merchandise.
- This risk of displacement often occurs in the context of elections, mega events, and campaigns to beautify historic city centres.
- The ever-changing policy environment makes it difficult for vending organizations to secure legal status and sustain their own initiatives.

Social Protection:

- Only a very small percentage of street vendors access any kind of state-sponsored social protection regimes. (For example less than 20% of street vendors in Lima, Peru are enrolled in a pension scheme and/or are affiliated with a health care system.⁶)
- Only a minority of street vending organisations has managed to sustain group insurance schemes. The Self-Employed Women's Association in India is one example.
- Where government-supported group savings schemes exist, the savings are often used to purchase off-street lots – adding a new dimension of insecurity to the most vulnerable vendors.

Needs and Demands

To increase earnings, street vendors need

- Business development training that is appropriate to their status as informal workers;
- Legal status to protect them from bribes and fees, arbitrary confiscations of merchandise, and evictions;
- Policy visibility that emphasizes the positive contributions that street vendors make to the life of cities.

To improve working conditions, street vendors need

- Appropriate physical infrastructure, such as water systems, toilets, and waste removal systems;
- Protection from the most extreme forms of inclement weather;
- Stable and sustainable policy environments that secure their legal status as workers.

To improve access to assets, markets, and social protection, street vendors need

- The ability to secure loans at reasonable interest rates;
- Affordable, accessible, and secure places to store merchandise during off hours;
- Access to natural market areas where stable clienteles exist;
- Legal status as workers and citizens.

To address other constraints, street vendors need

⁶ Roever and Aliaga (2008).

- Urban planning approaches that recognize the positive contributions of street vending and that include street vending organisations;
- Capacity building within their organisations;
- Leadership training for women;
- Access to affordable and accessible child care facilities, particularly for very young children;

To address risks specific to the sector, street vendors need

- Clear legal status, including transparent and fair licensing and permitting systems;
- Appropriate forms of shelter for vendors, their clients, and their merchandise;
- Access to street markets for emergency vehicles;
- Simplified, appropriate, and transparent tax schemes.

Policy and Programme Responses: Why

Bromley (2000) in his sweeping global review of public policy and street vending outlines the following rationale for supporting street vendors includes the following:

- **Welfare:** Street vendors contribute directly to the overall level of economic activity. They create jobs for themselves and for others. When street vendors are not allowed to work productively, consumers and related businesses suffer along with vendors and their dependents.
- **Equity:** Street vending is one kind of entrepreneurial opportunity that is available to those who cannot afford to buy or rent fixed premises or raise capital to meet other business start-up needs. In many countries, it enables the working poor to enjoy the constitutional right to work when they otherwise would not be able to.
- **Efficiency:** Street vending increases the overall level of competition in the trade sector by providing a diverse range of retail outlets with wide geographic coverage. Its delivery of low-cost goods and services in extremely small quantities enables poor households to consume what they otherwise would not be able to. The flexible hours, levels of activity, and work locations associated with street vending enable the working poor to earn an income while simultaneously meeting needs for dependent care and unpaid household work.
- **Environment:** Street vending takes place in an open-air environment. In doing so it provides a way for the trade sector to diversify without generating the carbon footprint that brick-and-mortar retail establishments do through energy use. Where properly regulated and supported, street vendors help keep the streets clean at and around their stalls.
- **Other:** Street vendors contribute to the cultural vibrancy of cities by forming a vehicle through which social, economic, and cultural ties are forged among everyday citizens. They also represent a major attraction for foreign tourists. Street vending provides a low-cost social safety net that supports income and provides an alternative to criminal activity.

Policy and Programme Responses: How

Some examples of innovative approaches to supporting street vendors include:

To increase earnings:

- The Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)⁷ Bank provides financial services to street vendors that help them manage risk. Over the period of a decade, loans from SEWA Bank accounted for two-thirds of the total amount borrowed by 12 case study households for business purposes. Investments in business help bolster earnings by enabling vendors to increase their stock or purchase equipment such as pushcarts and balance scales and weights. (Chen and Snodgrass, 2001).

To improve working conditions:

- The Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project in Durban, South Africa developed a participatory, consultative model in which street traders and city planners planned and implemented projects to improve the working conditions of street traders. Among the many issues tackled were shelter, water delivery and management, public toilets, street lighting, and childcare facilities. (Dobson and Skinner, 2009).
- The Professional Union of Market Vendors of Valdivia, Chile launched a pilot project in 2010 to develop a network of citizens’ organizations to manage organic waste in the city’s street markets. The project is designed to train street vendors to select and dispose of organic waste for composting and provides appropriate composting infrastructure, reducing costs and public health hazards.

To improve access to assets, markets, social protection, legal rights:

- SEWA provides financial services (through SEWA Bank), insurance (through Vimo SEWA), health care, childcare, legal services, and capacity building to street vendors and other informal workers.
- StreetNet and WIEGO have begun to develop an observatory of laws related to street vending worldwide. This observatory is envisioned as a resource for street vending organizations engaged in processes to secure their legal status. (See <http://lawandtheworkingpoor.pbworks.com>.)

To address other constraints or barriers:

- The Women’s Network (Red de Mujeres) of Lima, Peru provides capacity building to strengthen the position of women within the leadership ranks of street vending organizations. (Roever, 2010)

To address risks specific to the sector:

- SEWA and the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI)⁸ used legal strategies to secure vendors’ constitutional right to work, resulting in reduced harassment on the part of local authorities. These legal strategies included petitioning the Supreme Court and helping formulate a national policy on street vending.

Organisation and Voice

Scope and Scale of Street Vending Organizations

- As of August 2010, StreetNet International⁹ has 37 affiliates with a total membership of 353,988 street vendors.

⁷ See www.sewa.org.

⁸ See www.nasvnet.org.

⁹ See www.streetnet.org.za

- The Self-Employed Women’s Association of India has organized about 30,000 women street vendors. Street vendors account for about 6% of SEWA’s overall membership and 20% of its urban membership (Chen, 2006).
- The National Alliance of Street Vendors of India has 373 affiliates representing 292,452 members.
- The Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders, formed in 2005, has more than 6,000 members in 175 local associations.

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Introduction

Home-based work is a growing global phenomenon, with over 100 million people working from their homes, in countries both rich and poor. With the rise of complex global chains of production over the past half-century, home-based work has grown exponentially. The term “home-based worker”(HBW) is used to refer to the general category of workers who carry out remunerative work within their homes or in the surrounding grounds. It does not refer to either unpaid housework or paid domestic work. Home-based work encompasses a wide diversity, ranging from traditional embroidery and weaving to tele-work. Home-based workers may work in the new economy (assembling micro-electronics) or the old (weaving carpets).

The growth of homework in manufacturing especially can be linked to the logic of global competition that pushed the bulk of manufacturing first from developed countries to developing countries, and then out from the factories into workers’ homes, as employers cut costs by passing off responsibility for rent, electricity, equipment and other production costs onto workers.

Definition

There have been some debates on evolving a universally accepted definition for the home-based workers. While it is the location or place of work that characterizes this type of work, within the group of home-based workers, a further distinction can be made between ‘piece-rate workers’ and ‘own account workers’. Piece rate workers could be contracted by a firm, an individual entrepreneur, traders, subcontractors or other intermediaries, are usually given the raw materials and are paid a stated amount per piece produced. These workers do not have any direct contact with the markets for the goods they produce. Own-account workers are those who are generally in direct contact with the market and buy their own raw material.

Size and Significance

- Of the world’s estimate 100 million home-based workers, more than half are found in South Asia, and 80 percent of these are women. (Sinha, 2006:10)
- In some countries, home-based workers represent between 10 to 25 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce: Guatemala (26 per cent), India (16 per cent), Kenya (15 per cent), Mexico (17 per cent), Philippines (14 per cent), Tunisia (11 per cent), and Venezuela (18 per cent)¹⁰. (ILO, 2002: 47: 48).
- In *Benin*, which has made special attempts to improve its official statistics in this area, the share of home-based work in non-agricultural employment is 66 per cent (ILO, 2002:48).

¹⁰ In one of these countries, the Philippines, only homeworkers were counted, while in Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico, Tunisia, and Venezuela attempts were made to count all home-based workers, both those who are self-employed and homeworkers.

- In *India*, the NSS Employment and Unemployment Survey (1999-2000) estimated for India that homeworkers were nearly 8.2 million: home workers were thus about 7.4 per cent of the unorganized non-agricultural workers.¹¹ (GOI 2007: 5, 80)
- In *Indonesia*, it is estimated that one out of every three households is engaged in home-based work: China's estimate is 20 million: Vietnam, one in three households (Mehrotra and Biggeri: 2002: 2)
- In the *Philippines*, multiple surveys (Joshi, 1996: ILO 2002) have estimated home-based workers ranging from 2 million to 7.8 million.
- In most *South Asian* countries, home-based workers account for a majority share – 60 to 90% - of selected key export industries, including: the agarbatti and bidi industries in India, the football industry in Pakistan, and the coir industry in Sri Lanka. (Carr and Chen, 2000)

Table 1: Home-Based Workers in Fourteen Developing Countries

	Number of home-based workers	% of non-agricultural workforce	Women as % of total
Home workers Only			
Chile (1997)	79,740	2	82
Philippines (1993-5)	2,025,017	14	79
Thailand (1999)	311,790	2	80
Self-Employed Only			
Brazil (1995)	2,700,00	5	75
Costa Rica (1997)	48,565	5	45
Morocco (1982)	128,237	4	79
Peru (1993)	128,700	5	35
Both Categories			
Benin (1992)	595,544	66	74
Guatemala (2000)	721,506	26	77
India (1999-2000)	23,496,800	17	44
Kenya (1999)	777,100	15	35
Mexico (1995)	5,358,331	17	43
Tunisia (1997)	211,336	11	38
Venezuela (1997)	1,385,241	18	63

Source: International Labour Organization. 2002:47

Home-based work has increased in many countries. Jhabvala, Unni and Sinha's (2007:9) analysis of India identified an increase in female workers operating from their own dwelling between 1999-00 and 2005-05, amounting to a 15.8% increase over the five year period studied – the largest percentage increase for any place of work for female workers.

Gender

Wherever they are found and regardless of the industry, the vast majority of home-based workers are women.

- In Bangladesh, 71% of all women workers are home-based, in contrast to only 20% of all male workers who are home-based. (Jhabvala, Unni and Sinha 2007: 9)

¹¹ Note: this figure does not include own account HBW.

- In Pakistan, 65% of all women workers are home-based, in contrast to only 4% of all male workers who are home-based. (Jhabvala, Unni and Sinha 2007: 9)
- In India, 51% of all women workers are home-based as against 11% of all male workers who are home-based. (Jhabvala, Unni and Sinha 2007: 9)
- In Thailand, one official survey found that 294,290 households included 440,251 workers living off homeworking incomes - 76.7 % of these workers were female. These estimates have been questioned by activists who estimate the number at closer to 2 million home-based workers in Thailand based on export values and production capacity. (Survey on home based workers by National Statistical office in 2007, as cited by HomeNet Thailand, 2009, 2)
- 85% of home-based workers in the clothing and footwear industries in Argentina are women. (Chen, Sebstad and O'Connell, 1999:606)
- In 2000, among all urban homeworkers in Chile, women were over-represented in manufacturing and retail trade at 90 and 98 per cent, respectively. (ILO, 2002:47)
- 90% of *bidi* workers (cigarette rollers) in India are women. (ILO, 2003:13)
- A study in Ahmedabad city estimated a total population of home-based garment workers to be 34,957, of which 78 per cent were women. (Unni et al 1999:25).

Contribution

Overall, much of what we know about the contribution of home-based workers is still largely drawn from micro studies. More work is needed, at the 'meso' level of city or sector, and especially research that seeks to capture the dynamics of change, interaction between formality and informality in the processes of economic growth, and the changing organization of production.

- In 2007, one study of around 600 sub-contracted home-based workers drawn from three sectors in India found that the average contribution to household income across all sectors of homework was 35.6 per cent in urban households. (Sudarshan et al 2007:189)
- In Bajaj's 1999 study, an attempt was made to estimate women home-based workers' contributions in a few sectors across South Asia. The study reports that:
 - The *agarbathi* (incense stick) industry in India in 1989-90 had total annual domestic sales of a value of approximately \$198 million US and exports of \$42 million US, and employed approximately 500,000 workers. 90 % of the labour in the industry is supplied by women, 80% of them home-based workers. (p 11, 13)
 - Garment exports in Bangladesh by 1990-91 earned approximately \$380 million¹² per annum for the economy, being the country's principal export earner and fourth largest employer. 80 % of the labour within this industry is that of women workers. Estimates for HBW were not available, but their substantial presence is confirmed by activists. (p-19)
 - Pakistan is the single largest manufacturer and exporter of match grade footballs in the world and accounts for over 80% of total world production.

¹² At an exchange rate of USD 1= 71 Taka, December 2010

An estimated 58% of football stitchers in the industry are home-based women workers. (pp25, 27)

Working Conditions

Low Income

Home-based workers earn very little: they are paid on a “piece rate”, at very low rates: and are often highly dependent on middlemen for work and wages.

- The average daily wage for home-based women workers (piece rate workers) in India is Rs.27/-, as compared to the non home-based average daily wage of Rs.58/-. (Unni and Rani, 2004)
- Home-based work plays a critical role in globalized value chains, yet receives a marginal percentage of the final profit. Within India, for a commodity that costs Rs.100 to a consumer, the worker receives Rs.15 for zardoshi (gold thread embroidery) work and Rs.17 for bidi work, but only Rs.2.3 for agarbatti. (Mehrotra and Biggeri, 2007:76)
- In the prawn peeling industry in Pakistan, a home-based worker’s rate per prawn is 2.5 per cent of what a consumer pays in the domestic market. (Mehrotra and Biggeri, 2007:76)

Seasonality affects home-based workers, with wide variations in the hours of work available per day and also wages received per day. A study conducted among home-based workers in different sectors and locations in three Indian states presents the average income earned in peak and lean seasons as a ratio of the state minimum wage. In this study, the range is from 6–46 per cent of the state minimum wage in the lean season, and from 18–116 per cent in the peak period. (Bhattacharya and Nandi 2006)

Lack of Social Security

Typically, home-based workers have little or no legal and social protection, poor working conditions, minimal or no workers benefits. The diversity of employment and the geographically dispersed nature of the workplace pose real challenges. Employment relations vary considerably, and a major obstacle to introducing contributory social insurance schemes is the difficulty in identifying the employer. Because a large proportion of home-based workers are women, they also have child-oriented needs. Social security matters because workers may improve their incomes in the short-term only to lose their assets and earning power when faced with a health crisis or other disaster.

Low Productivity, Poor Technology

Low productivity also arises because of the low levels of technology used by home-based workers. Their remuneration is irregular and so it is difficult to save money to invest in new machinery or in training. For example, garment making for export markets requires a range of sophisticated cutting and sewing machines. Most small units in the informal sector operate with simple sewing machines capable of doing mainly one or at most two kinds of

stitches. This reduces the productivity and also limits the nature of markets to which the worker can cater.

Lack of Capital

Many of the production and service activities in home-based work yield low incomes. Poor home-based workers venturing into self-employment and entrepreneurship need enough financial resources in combination with other inputs such as technical and marketing assistance (as opposed to micro-credit alone) in order to sustain their initiatives beyond income-generation and basic livelihood towards a level that would enable them to break out of the poverty cycle.

Home as Workplace

Home-based workers work from their own homes under poor and cramped conditions, with bad lighting and seating. The need most often articulated by home-based workers themselves is the lack of adequate housing. This is a dual disability because their house is also the work place, and as such a productive asset. Inadequate housing has a deleterious effect on work ability, in addition to it being very unhealthy for the family. The other issue is of health, particularly occupational health and safety. Many home-based workers are overworked, and exposed to dangerous chemicals, poor working conditions and unhealthy postures. Home-based workers also bear overhead costs such as electricity. Poor infrastructure and living conditions (water and sanitation, waste disposal) eat into their earning time – as it does for all slum dwellers.

Constraints and Risks

Invisibility

The invisibility of home-based workers manifests itself in several ways. No policy for home workers exists. When the work place is at home, most labour laws cannot offer protection -- they are designed for the 'employee' or for a labour market where the employer-employee relationship is clear. Home-based workers tend to remain isolated from other workers and, therefore, have less voice vis-à-vis employers or public authorities than other workers. The lack of a specific employer has also made mobilization of these groups of workers very difficult since there was no common 'enemy' against whom they could be organized. Invisibility and lack of recognition (with no formal contracts or identity cards) gives rise to other insecurities such as access to credit, raw material, infrastructure facilities, etc.

Education and Skills

The level of education is an important influence on the kind of activity and employment in which a worker engages. Under-investment in human capital, which is compounded over generations, is a major insecurity faced by home-based workers, leading to a basic lack of marketable skills. The low levels of skill with which they operate also leads to low earnings. Illiteracy and low levels of education (and related low earnings) are more severe problems for women. The bias against girls' education and higher dropout rate from schools among girl children handicaps a woman severely when she tries to enter the labour market.

Lack of Voice

The challenges faced in organizing home-based workers are deep and complex. Home-based workers lack worker rights, in large part, from the absence of a clear or ongoing employment relationship, and a failure by government, business, and others to recognize these workers as 'workers'. The absence of a clear employer-employee relationship, non-existence of a common work place as in the organised sector, high incidence of under-employment, multiple employers, absence of protective laws etc., form the major hurdles in organizing home-based workers.

Home-based -women workers work in isolation. In some instances, both the women themselves and their work are often hidden within long production chains. Many are so busy surviving that finding the time to devote to an organization is hard. They are also weighed down by the double burden of income generating work and unpaid care work.

Needs and Demands

To increase visibility, home-based workers need:

- To institutionalise the systematic collection of data on home-based workers and their contribution to national economies:
- To evolve a universally accepted definition of home-based workers:
- To ensure the participation and voice of home-based workers in the formulation of macro-and micro-economic policies.

To increase earnings, home-based workers need:

- Legal status and recognition as workers;
- Adoption and implementation of national minimum wages for home-based workers paid by piece-rate;
- To access to bigger markets;
- Inclusion under social protection policies and schemes;
- Policy visibility that emphasizes the positive contributions that home-based workers make to the life of cities;
- Opportunities to build trade-related capacity through investment in the areas of skills upgrading, technology access and upgrading, design development, market access and product development.

To improve working conditions, home-based workers need:

- Appropriate physical infrastructure, such as housing, water systems, toilets, and waste removal systems;
- Stable and sustainable policy environments that secure their legal status as workers;
- The ability to secure loans at reasonable interest rates;
- Access to affordable and accessible child care facilities, particularly for very young children;
- Capacity building within their organizations;
- Leadership training for women;
- Urban planning approaches that recognize the home as a work place;

- Appropriate occupational health and safety measures;
- Social protection, including insurance, health, pension and maternity protection.

To increase voice, home-based workers need:

- Recognition – as workers, and for their organizations as workers’ organizations;
- Recognition of home-based workers organizations and alliances as representational bodies at the national, regional and global levels;
- Support for collective bargaining and for advocacy campaigns;
- Participation in the formulation of macro-and micro-economic policies.

Policy and Programme Responses: Why

Home-based work is on the rise around the world and it is where the poor are, particularly in South Asia. It is difficult to conceive of a meaningful strategy to fight poverty without substantially improving the living and working conditions of home-based workers. Home-based work also demands attention due to the jobless growth of the organized sector witnessed in many developing countries - most home-based products such as handicrafts and textiles have significant employment and export potential. A large number of home-based workers are women who face multiple disadvantages due to poverty, poor habitat, unsuitability of housing from the point of view of storage and working environment, weak educational and health status – and also simultaneously constraints imposed by gendered norms around care responsibilities.

As a category of workers, home-based workers remain invisible, due in part to the tendency to view home-based work as marginal or peripheral economic activity. This challenge can be overcome with adequate official statistics highlighting the size and contribution of home-based worker labour pool. Countries have collected some data nationally but there is still no clear protocol for national data collection on this group.

The development potential of each group of home-based workers is not the same. While many segments are strongly linked to existing growth paths, others may be more in tune with alternative growth paths. Even within the two categories of home-based workers, effective policy responses will vary. While both, typically lack bargaining power and have to provide their own social protection, the self-employed need better access to financial markets and enhanced capacity to compete in product markets. In contrast, sub-contracted home-workers need to strengthen their capacity to bargain for regular work orders, higher piece rates, and overdue back pay. In effect, sub-contracted workers often face problems of exploitation while the self-employed often face problems of exclusion.

Policy and Programme Responses: How

Internationally, an important milestone in the development of policies for home-based workers has been the ratification of International Labour Organisation Convention No. 177¹³, which mandates that all home workers should have basic labour rights – irrespective of the

¹³ The text for the Convention is at <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C177>.

sector in which they work – and guarantees the applicability of core labour standards and other standards to all home workers. Individual governments need to ratify the Convention, and introduce national legislation. To date, seven countries have ratified the convention: Albania, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands. Once ratified, each country responsible for developing and reporting on a national plan to implement the Convention.

At the South Asian regional level, in October 2000, South Asia governments' policy-makers and researchers met and formulated the Kathmandu Declaration for the rights of South Asian home-based workers. The Kathmandu Declaration recommended Formulation of a National Policy and a Plan of Action on home-based workers by the Government of the South Asian Region in consultation with the stakeholders, and urged South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation to address the issues of home-based workers in the region and take measures to enable them to deal with the risks and opportunities of globalization.

WIEGO's Urban Policies Programme is in the process of documenting local policy and planning practices that have led to securing the livelihoods of home based workers (see Rusling for example). Other than the interventions described below a promising development is the tripartite welfare funds in India. The Bidi and Cigar Welfare Fund Act, and the Bidi and Cigar Cess Act were passed in 1976 and finally implemented in the 1980s. These acts, which provides social security schemes such as health care, child care and housing for bidi workers. Similar welfare funds and welfare boards have been implemented for other sectors in India, such as construction workers.

Organization and Voice

The *Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)* is a national labour union of woman workers in the informal economy in India. SEWA currently has the membership of 959,698 in 9 states of India, out of which 214,178 are home-based workers. In organizing garment workers, SEWA has focused primarily on negotiating higher piece-rates and fairer working conditions for sub-contract garment workers. This has involved negotiations with the Labour Commissioner to demand minimum wages, identity cards, and social benefits (childcare, health care and school scholarships) for sub-contracted garment workers. Over the years, SEWA has also helped home-based own account garment makers to acquire new skills, improved equipment and market information to try to compete in the fast-changing local garment market. This has included loans for improving sewing machines, training at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), and installing electricity in the homes of SEWA members.

HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) is a dynamic and vibrant network of 600 organizations representing over 300,000 home-based workers from five countries in South Asia - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The strength of HNSA and its affiliates are with the capacity-building, skills development and technical support the groups extend to their members. At the same time HNSA carries the voice of the home-based workers at the national, regional and international levels, to influence legislation, policies and programmes.

The membership-based organization *PATAMABA*, in the Philippines, has approximately 17,000 members, of whom 9500 are home-based workers. The group works in 28 cities in 15 provinces and nine regions. Its urban chapters support home-based workers to develop social enterprises, participate in local government policy debates, develop community housing, pursue training and new production methods and access social services. *PATAMABA* supported home-based workers to organize for the purpose of accessing the Social Security System (SSS) to allow self-employed home-based workers to access social insurance via an Automatic Debit Account arrangement whereby members can use the facilities of partner banks to make their social insurance contributions.

Across both South and South-East Asia a large number of *self-help groups* are now in existence, and these form a base for further organizing, as *SEWA* for example has found helpful as it extends to new areas. The self-help groups themselves are a result of considerable mobilization at the village and neighbourhood levels, which may occur spontaneously or, more usually, through the interventions of NGOs or government.

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Introduction

Millions of people worldwide make a living collecting, sorting, recycling, and selling valuable materials that someone else has thrown away. Vital actors in the informal economy, they provide widespread benefits. Waste pickers contribute to public health, reduce the costs associated with municipal solid waste management, and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the environment. In many countries, waste pickers supply the only form of solid waste collection. However, they often face deplorable living and working conditions, low social status and receive little support from local governments.

Definition and Common Aspects

The term waste pickers can be broadly defined as people who reclaim “*reusable and recyclable materials from what others have cast aside as waste*” (Samson, 2009). Some waste pickers collect household waste from the curbside, commercial and industrial waste from dumpsters, and litter from streets, canals and other urban waterways. Others live and work on municipal dumps. Some work as sorters in recycling warehouses (either at conveyor belts or in other capacities) or as processors in recycling plants owned by member-based organizations (MBOs). Finally, some may be involved in cross-border picking, such as the Mexican waste pickers who work on both sides the US border (Medina, 2007).

In this broad working definition then, waste pickers can range from poor people rummaging through garbage in search of food, clothing and other basic needs for daily consumption to informal private collectors of recyclables for sale to middlemen or businesses, as well as organized collectors/sorters of recyclables linked to unions, cooperatives or associations.

In spite of the different categories and across countries and regions, the work of waste picking shares common aspects, outlined below:

- Workers are subject to social stigma, face poor working conditions, and are frequently harassed.
- Waste picking is highly responsive to market driven conditions for recyclables.
- Waste picking is often a family enterprise. It offers flexible working hours (inclusive to women) and a high level of adaptability.
- In some cities, most waste pickers are migrants, such as in Delhi where waste pickers are often Bangladeshis. In other places, they are likely to be from marginalized groups or rejected from global economic processes.
- Work appears to be chaotic but is in fact very organized.
- Numbers fluctuate due to economic conditions and urban processes.
- They are often not part of public solid waste systems, they are socially invisible and therefore they are seldom reported in official statistics.

- Usually the activity does not require literacy, and is easily learned. However, when working in a collective endeavour, some activities (for example, administrative) do require literacy.
- Non organized pickers are often recruited by middlemen.

Size and Significance

There are millions of waste pickers worldwide, but little reliable socio-economic or statistical information exists. The nature of the activity makes estimation of the total population difficult, since waste pickers are mobile and their population fluctuates in many places by season. Also, there is a natural tendency to avoid researchers as they fear information will be passed on to public officials; this makes it harder to collect sound data. Most studies for this sector are of a qualitative nature (ethnographies or social profiles of workers for particular cities/sites). In the case of existing quantitative studies, they are frequently based on very small samples, making generalizations difficult.

A World Bank study however did estimate that waste pickers comprise 1-2 per cent of the world's population (Bartone, 1988). A more recent study in India estimated waste pickers in that country numbered 1.5 million (Chaturvedi, 2010).

Brazil is the only nation that systematically captures and reports official statistical data on waste pickers. In Brazil, activism and efforts to organize waste pickers and improve their livelihood has been ongoing for many years. This work led to the official recognition of waste picking in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO). As a result, national databases now include data on waste pickers: specifically, the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), Brazil's main source of social and economical data. PNAD¹⁴ provides data on waste pickers both in informal and formal employment¹⁵. In 2006 PNAD estimated that there were 229,568 waste pickers. Sixty seven per cent of those reporting to be waste pickers were men and only 10,272 had formal contracts. The national movement of waste pickers in Brazil, the MNCR, however estimates that there are 800,000 waste pickers, suggesting there may well be undercounting. Those engaged in waste picking in Brazil, while a small proportion of the overall population, are responsible for the country's high rates of recycling.

Earnings and Contributions

Waste pickers' earnings vary widely between regions and the type of work they do, as well as by gender. Though waste picking is the lowest paid in the recycling chain in many places,

¹⁴ PNAD is carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE – on an annual basis between the Censuses. It provides information on work, population, education, etc. The fact that it is household based permits identification of the population that works informally, and even those who have a contract but work in households, such as maids. The PNAD enables, therefore, a view of the waste picker collected in his/her own home and *according to his/her own statement*.

¹⁵ The distinction of formal and informal in Brazil is directly linked to a body of legislation called CLT that contains rules for fair labour relations, including work hours, minimum wage and other rights. Formal workers are those who are employed through a contract registered in a specific document called *carteira de trabalho (CT)*. Informal work under Brazil's definition refers to workers without a CT as well as own account workers and unpaid workers.

these workers can earn more than the minimum wage; in Brazil and Mexico, some can earn many times minimum wage.

Regardless of their earnings, waste pickers consistently make a significant contribution to the economy by saving municipalities money in their management of solid waste.

Table 1, drawing on a wide range of sources, gives numbers of waste pickers and earnings and, where available, information on gender, percentage of organized waste pickers, as well as their value added to formal solid waste (SW) systems in terms of cost-savings to the disposal of wastes and/or environmental savings for some cities worldwide.

Table 1: Size, characteristics and earnings of waste pickers and their contribution to Solid Waste Systems

City/Country	Total Numbers	Gender	No (%) organized	Gender organized	Average earnings	Savings to formal SW	Source
Latin America							
Montevideo (Uruguay)	15,000*	78.6% male; 21.4% female*	3% **	n.a.	US\$75*	US\$43,500 daily in collection and disposal costs	MIDES, 2006 & Fernández, 2007, 2010
Belo Horizonte (Brazil)	2,685*	67% men; 33% women	401 (15%)*	56% women and 44% men**	34% 1-1.5 times minimum wage (US\$298 – 447 month)***	US\$4, 320 year**	Dias et al, 2010 (extrapolation based on official database PNAD 2006); **FELC 2009 *** FELC 2008 ¹⁶
Antofagasta (Chile)	200 (dumpsite)	56% men, 44% women	n.a.	n.a.	38% US\$543 and over; 30% between US\$365- US\$543	n.a.	Ciudad Saludable 2010
Santa Cruz (Bolivia)	3,000	55% men, 45% women	18%	n.a.	59% receive earnings below the national minimum wage	n.a.	Ciudad Saludable 2010
Mexico City	1,700	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3-4 times Mexico's minimum wage	US\$2,652,000 annual	Medina, 2007

¹⁶ FELC MG 2007 (internal ppt).

City/Country	Total Numbers	Gender	No (%) organized	Gender organized	Average earnings	Savings to formal SW	Source
Asia							
Cambodia	330 (dumpsite only)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1 dollar a day	n.a.	ILO 2004
Africa							
Msunduzi (South Africa)	Over a hundred (dumpsite only)	Majority are women	n.a.	n.a.	Between R800 and R1000 (US\$116-145)	n.a.	Samson, 2009
Europe							
Belgrade (Serbia)	9,470 to 16,070	n.a.	n.a.		6000 dinars month (US\$100)	n.a.	Simpson-Hebert et al (2005)

The GTZ/CWG study “Economic Aspects of the Informal Sector in Solid Waste 2007” shows that it makes sense for countries to build their SW systems upon the strength of their informal workers. The research examined six cities on four continents. The focus of the study was on the relationship between formal and informal solid waste activities. The table below shows the value of the informal workers as a key ally in solid waste management systems.

Table 2: The contribution of waste pickers in six cities

City	Number of waste pickers	Average earnings (Euro per day)	Child earnings (% of adult)	Women earnings (as % of men's earnings)	Total recycled (formal) %	Total recycled (informal) %	Total avoided cost for waste system (x Euro 1000/year) ¹⁷
Cairo (Egypt)	40,000	4,3	-		13%	66%	14,473
Cluj–Napoca (Romania)	3,226	6,28	-	87%	5%	9%	63
Lima (Peru)	17,643	5,4	25%	60%	0.3%	20%	15,758
Lusaka (Zambia)	402	6,52	80%		4%	3%	1,472
Pune (India)	8,850	2,8	30%	56%	-	22%	2,218
Quezón City (The Philippines)	10,105	6,26	63%	100%	2%	23%	4,210

Source: GTZ/CWG,

- More than 80,000 people and their families are responsible for recycling about three million tons per year of waste.

¹⁷ Total cost: avoided costs for collection plus avoided costs for disposal.

- In terms of the *environmental contribution* of waste picking, the study found that in three of the six cities, waste pickers recovered approximately 20 per cent of all materials that enter the waste stream; in one of the cities, they were responsible for an even higher rate due to their collection of organic matter for pig feeding. This means that a significant quantity of materials is diverted from disposal and returned to recycling industries, decreasing the amount of virgin materials needed. This contributes to the conservation of natural resources and energy while reducing air and water pollution. Recovery of recyclable materials and organic matter leads to the reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG) and to the mitigation of climate change, making the contribution of waste pickers invaluable.
- In terms of their *economic contribution*, waste pickers contribute to the reduction of costs in municipal expenses. In some cities in the developing world subsidize formal solid waste systems. This saves the city money and improves the environmental footprint of its solid waste at no cost to the city budget.

In fact, there is a growing consensus that informal recycling supplements formal solid waste management in varied ways. The high rates of recovery of informal recyclers are a “positive externality which the municipality enjoys without having to pay for it because the environmental gain is a by-product of the economic interests of informal recyclers” says WATSAN 2010 (p.131).

The GTZ/CWG findings corroborate what the UN Habitats contention “recycling rates in many developing countries are already competitive with what is being achieved by modern Western systems” (WATSAN 2010:207). In the 20 cities researched for the book an average 29 per cent recycling of waste materials. Some cities such as Delhi (34 per cent), Bengaluru (28 per cent) compare well with Western cities such as Rotterdam (30 per cent), while Bamako, Mali is a stand out at 85 per cent. These high recycling rates are achieved largely through informal workers.

Waste Pickers’ Other Contributions

The work of waste pickers is of value to their communities for other reasons, as well.

They contribute to public health and sanitation: work done by waste pickers can be responsible for between 50 and 100 per cent of all ongoing waste collection activities in some locations. In fact, in many cities of the developing world, waste pickers are the only ones removing waste of all kinds from areas not served by municipal household collection. This contribution to public health and to the environment in many cities of the developing world still needs to be properly acknowledged by local authorities.

Waste picking creates livelihoods: the activity performed by waste pickers in diverting recyclables from the waste stream supports the livelihoods of thousands of poor people who may not have other job opportunities. In the current economic downturn, the job of waste picker has taken on new importance as an employment opportunity for those with limited

education and skills. Penalizing waste picking and those who engage in it has a large social impact and negatively affects poverty alleviation measures.

Working Conditions and Social Protection

Waste pickers suffer poor and hazardous working conditions and are very often harassed.

The handling of waste in general involves many health risks to workers. Occupational hazards can be even greater for informal workers due to their daily unprotected exposure to contaminants and hazardous materials. Waste pickers can come in contact with fecal matter, paper saturated by toxic materials, bottles and containers with chemical residues, health residues, needles, heavy metals from batteries and others (Cointreau, 2006). Unprotected work and poor access to health care aggravate risks.

Waste pickers *face great risks of injury*, especially those who work at open dumps as they are more exposed to the risk of getting run over by trucks or becoming the victims of surface subsidence, slides and fires. They are also exposed to great quantities of toxic fumes on these sites.

Waste pickers are exposed to *ergonomic hazards* as well. Heavy lifting, static posture and repetition may lead to high incidences of low back and lower extremity pains. Some studies indicate a higher prevalence of minor psychiatric disorders amongst waste pickers when compared to other occupations, leading to the conclusion that the stressful conditions they are subjected to leave them more vulnerable to this kind of disorder (De Silva et al).

Treated as nuisances by authorities and with prejudice by segments of the urban population, waste pickers are most often ignored within public policy processes and thus frequently *suffer from low self-esteem*.

They are particularly *susceptible to violence by the police*. They face exploitation and intimidation by middlemen and as a result their earnings may be affected. A significant number of women are engaged in this occupation and are particularly affected by exclusionary policies towards waste picking.

The majority of waste pickers worldwide do not have access to any kind of state-sponsored social protection schemes.

Needs and Demands

The needs and demands of waste pickers are shaped by local contexts, but measures to enhance the lives and livelihoods of waste pickers include the following.

Increase earnings by providing:

- Payment for environmental services (based on indicators of their contribution to the environment);

- Preferential rights to work on source segregation schemes;
- Support to unions, cooperatives/associations and micro-enterprises to enable them to enter new niches;
- Authorized access to waste materials.

Improve working conditions through:

- Capacity building courses: e.g. safety at work, technical aspects of recycling, etc.;
- Provision of infrastructure for sorting, baling, etc.;
- Equipment for individual protection (gloves, masks, etc.);
- Ergonomic manual carts for collection;
- Ergonomic sorting devices at recycling warehouses.

Improved access through:

- Participatory channels: platforms for joint planning and implementation of solid waste programs;
- Capacity building courses on organizing;
- Clear tendering processes for waste collection so waste pickers can be bidders;
- Provision of identity cards;
- Legal frameworks that enable waste pickers to be hired as service providers;
- Health care and social protection schemes;
- Access to micro finance.

Addressing other constraints or barriers by providing:

- Credit lines for equipment (scales, shredders, etc.) and other materials;
- Equitable distribution of profits in the recycling chain, which involves restructuring to make a better position for waste pickers on the chain rather than just improving their basic working conditions;
- Implementation of public educational campaigns to help change biased attitudes towards waste pickers, and also to promote the segregation of recyclables;
- Changes to the environmental sanitation and urban solid wastes paradigms that associate modernization processes with mechanization and privatization of systems.

Address risks specific to the sector through:

- Programs for the eradication of child labour;
- Incentives to help families keep children at school, with compensation programs to encourage eradicating child labour in the sector;
- Provision of work facilities such as crèches (day care services), etc.

Policy and Programme Responses

In spite of the significant benefits to reducing the burden of waste management for cities authorities, and their contributions to public health, the environment and the economy, waste pickers continue to suffer poor working conditions without recognition. Replacement of repressive policies on waste picking and adoption of inclusive policies focused on legal backing, redistributive measures, social recognition and the strengthening of waste picker

organizations is crucial. Some promising examples of legislation and policies are outlined below.

India

National policies clearly recognize the informal recycling sector. The National Environment Policy, 2006, states “Give legal recognition to, and strengthen the informal sector systems of collection and recycling of various materials. In particular enhance their access to institutional finance and relevant technologies.” The National Action Plan for Climate Change, 2009 and other policy documents also refer to waste pickers. Progressive regional legislation has been passed in many states.

In Pune, waste pickers have been authorized to provide doorstep waste collection by the municipal government, which has also endorsed identity cards for waste pickers, helping them to create an identity as workers and thus increasing their self-esteem.

In Mumbai, collection of post-consumer waste involving waste pickers and companies such as Tetra Pak for recovery of paper and plastic-aluminium into separate commodities, or Coca Cola for PET shredding units, can offer a niche for the informal workers.

Peru

Law 29.419, regulating the activity of the waste pickers, was passed in 2010. This law, developed based on a participatory process involving representatives of the movements of waste pickers, establishes a normative terrain for the activity.

Brazil

The National Solid Waste Policy, 2010 recognizes waste pickers cooperatives as service providers and, as a result, institutes a number of mechanisms to support cooperatives and municipalities that integrate informal workers into solid waste systems. A *Social Welfare Project Law* being discussed at the House of Parliament will allow waste pickers to contribute 2.3 per cent of their income for the national pension scheme.

In the city of Diadema, the waste pickers’ organizations included in the municipal source-segregation scheme are paid the same amount per tonne of recyclables collected as a private company would be. This was made possible by Law 2336/04, which entitles organizations to be paid by service rendered. Cities like Araxá, Londrina and Brumadinho pay cooperatives for Environmental Services. As well, the BNDES (Brazilian Bank for Economic and Social Development) has opened a Social Fund that enables cooperatives to access funds for infrastructure and equipment.

Colombia

The Constitutional Court (April 2009) ruled in favor of waste pickers by granting them customary rights to access, sort and recycle reclaimable materials.

Phillipines

The Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) is a program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development that provides assistance to informal workers including waste pickers¹⁸.

The impact of these examples is important. National and regional laws have established the normative terrain for the activity. In some countries, the laws have created special financial mechanisms for capacity building and for access to funds for infrastructure. Also, waste pickers have been able to secure customary rights to wastes at municipal level by using the law.

Corporations and the industry can be supportive of waste pickers. Wal-Mart, for example, has partnered with the CAEC cooperative in the state of Bahia, Brazil. In addition to installing recycling containers at collection points for its customers, it has also invested in the development of the CAEC, giving technical support and improving the cooperative recycling warehouses.

These promising examples have brought positive impacts such as:

- Earnings: waste pickers who are integrated in door to door collection of waste/recyclables or other services have a stable monthly income.
- Welfare: integration in solid waste systems enables improvements in work conditions (uniforms, specially designed carts and buckets for collection of waste; sorting spaces, etc.). In some cases the children of waste pickers can have access to day care or apply for an education scholarship.
- Assets: in some cities waste pickers have access to housing benefits or access to credit for house purchases and/or improvements.

Organisation and Voice

Waste pickers are traditionally known for their independence and individualism. However, they are increasingly motivated to fight for the recognition of their environmental role and for a place within formal waste management systems.

Waste pickers are organizing in many different ways – cooperatives, associations, companies, unions, micro-enterprises but the extent and depth of these organizations of waste pickers varies across countries.

In the Latin American region, some waste picker organizations are as old as the *Cooperativa Antioqueña de Recolectores de Subproductos* formed in the city of Medellín, Colombia in 1962. However, it was in the 1990s that activism really took hold in the Latin American region. (See Dias 2011a, b and c which outlines the role of co-operatives in Belo Horizonte in Brazil.) The late 1990s saw an increase in interactions amongst organizations and national movements within the Latin American region; in 2005 the first meeting of the Latin

¹⁸ CHINTAN (2005). Informal-Formal – Creating Opportunities for the informal waste recycling sector in Asia. CHINTAN Environmental Research and Action Group, Delhi, 2005.

American Waste Picker Network (LAWPN) was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Today LAWPN congregates waste pickers' movements from 16 countries.

In India, Chikarmane et al (2008) differentiate between four organizational forms – trade unions, co-operatives, self help groups and associations. There is also an Alliance of Indian Wastepickers (AIW) – a network of 35 organizations working with, and comprised of, waste pickers and/or itinerant buyers with a presence in 22 cities across India. Their focus is on peer support, advocacy, and cross-learning.

On the African continent, existing evidence suggests waste pickers are poorly organized. (Samson, 2010). There are city wide networks in Pretoria, South Africa and Nakuru, Kenya but only an emerging national association in South Africa, the South African Waste Picker Association, held its first meeting in July 2009. In the case of Egypt, apart from NGOs promoting the interests of informal workers there are as yet no membership based organizations.

Waste pickers around the world are fighting many struggles on many fronts: the threat of privatization of municipal solid waste management services faced by the *zabaleen* in Cairo, and waste pickers in Delhi; legal battles required to defend the right to work as waste pickers such as the *recicladores* in Colombia; and climate change issues on a global level, including the proliferation of waste-to-energy plants that burn materials that waste pickers could otherwise recycle. Waste pickers have found that forging solidarity links across continents is an important strategy and have increased their global networking since the First World Conference of Waste Pickers took place in 2008, in Bogota, Colombia. Networking has helped to showcase experiences of organizing and integration and has served as inspiration to nascent movements.

Organizing has proven beneficial to waste pickers: it raises social status and self-esteem; it raises members' incomes and therefore improves their quality of life; it helps better working conditions and thus contributes to improvements in health quality; it helps the development of networks; it provides institutional frameworks for hiring of waste pickers as service providers to local bodies and/or firms; it helps circumvent middlemen and thus improves gains; and it prevents harassment and violence.

Conclusion

Organizing gives waste pickers visibility and validity as they struggle for their place in inclusive cities, as illustrated by the cases shown above. Examples from around the globe demonstrate that inclusive policies require a combination of pro-poor openness from public officers, as well as strong organizations of waste pickers that can fight for their demands with their own voices.

The benefits of working organized are both tangible and intangible, and include: steady income; improvement of working conditions through access to uniforms, sorting devices, toilets and other things; public recognition and self-esteem. This is why, when asked if

working organized brought better social and economical conditions to their lives, 81 per cent of the organized waste pickers from Cataunidos network in Brazil responded *yes*¹⁹.

Organization and training of waste pickers has been a way to upgrade their ability to add value to recyclables.

Waste pickers' issues need to be tackled by taking into account a combination of (1) waste picker protagonism (having a voice through their collectives); (2) public policies designed to integrate them into solid waste management, planned through real participatory processes, and (3) a re-shaping of the recycling chain towards more equitable distribution of gains in the chain to make the waste pickers' organizations and livelihoods sustainable.

Giving incentives to the organizations formed by waste pickers will contribute to creating and fostering the conditions that will enhance their social and economical well-being.

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