

Building a More Inclusive and Prosperous Dakar:

Recommendations from Informal Workers

By Olga Abizaid



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I. Informal Workers in Dakar and Their Contributions

In recent years, policymakers and urban planners have developed strategies to enable Senegal's economic emergence and to make Dakar a prosperous city that amalgamates new urban poles of modernity.¹ Both the national and city governments recognize that the informal economy² is the most important source of employment in Dakar, and have worked towards developing initiatives to promote the formalization of informal operators. Nevertheless, there is a need to look more closely at the issues facing informal workers and the linkages between the formal and informal economies. Doing this would represent a unique opportunity to make solid progress towards building a modern, prosperous and inclusive Dakar.

While there is wide recognition of the need for better statistical data on the magnitude of the overall contributions of the informal economy to Senegal, some estimates are available. For example, in 2011 it was estimated that the non-agricultural informal sector³ alone had contributed 41.6 per cent to the gross domestic product (GDP) and represented 57.7 per cent of the non-agricultural value added (ANSD 2013: 9). That same year, informal employment represented more than 60 per cent of non-agricultural employment, with larger concentrations in urban areas (République du Sénégal 2014: 7). This is consistent with the data from Dakar — the country's economic engine — where informal employment⁴ as a percentage of non-agricultural employment was 74 per cent (65 per cent of which was employment in the informal sector) in 2003 (Herrera *et al.* 2012: 27 and 5. Based on data from Table A1 and Table 3, respectively.).

Beyond the statistics, the presence and magnitude of informal workers are tangible in Dakar's everyday life. With their activities, they bring important benefits to Dakar and its citizens, including to the most vulnerable among them. It is sufficient to walk out and see street vendors on the adjacent streets to the Sandaga market and other streets, as well as street food vendors⁵ throughout the city and the outlying communities offering products at affordable prices and in convenient places; laundresses washing and drying clothes; and taxi drivers who, filling in the gaps left by the public transportation system, provide services within Dakar and connect the city to surrounding municipalities. Waste pickers working at the Mbeubeuss dump located in the local municipality of Malika — the largest dump in West Africa — recuperate recyclable materials from it to sell to industries and, in so doing, they provide the city an essential environmental service. Market vendors and fishmongers offer households and other vendors affordable products that constitute a staple of households' food traditions. Carpenters are key in the construction industry and other economic areas.

¹ See République du Sénégal 2014, and République du Sénégal/JICA 2016a and 2016b.

² The informal economy encompasses all informal economic units, activities and workers (Chen 2012: 8).

³ "According to the definition endorsed by the 1993 International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), the informal sector refers to the production and employment that takes place in unincorporated, small, and unregistered **enterprises**" (Chen 2012: 8, our emphasis).

⁴ "According to the definition endorsed by the 2003 ICLS, informal employment refers to **all employment that does not include legal and social protection both inside and outside of the informal sector**" (Chen 2012: 8, our emphasis).

⁵ In Senegal, street food vendors — known as restauratrices — are a separate occupational sector from street vendors, although they often coincide in the same physical spaces. This group of workers specializes in the preparation and sale of prepared meals that they commercialize on the streets, near market areas, office areas, construction sites, and markets.

And women home-based producers (*femmes transformatrices*)⁶ have a very important role in the processing, packaging, and sale of a wide variety of local produce, including local cereals, and the elaboration of other products from their homes or nearby workshops. Less visible to the public eye, yet no less important, are domestic workers, who engage in housekeeping and care giving for children and elderly people so that other members of the household can engage in other activities.

Yet, despite these contributions, informal workers face discrimination, stigma, and even harassment from society and authorities in Dakar. They are not included or taken into consideration in the design of policies and urban development projects that affect their lives and livelihoods. And misconceptions about them (e.g. they are not law-abiding, or that they do not pay taxes) continue to shape the legal framework and regulatory environment impacting their livelihoods.

Unlike formal workers, informal workers do not have access to the rights and protections granted under Senegal's **Labour Code** (Law No. 97-17 from December 1997), given that they mostly work on their own and do not have an employment contract.

Laws regulating informal workers' activities are, in most cases, biased against them, are not responsive to their realities, or are not properly enforced. For example, notwithstanding the economic contributions of that sector and despite the fact that the right to work is enshrined in the Constitution, **Law 67-50 of November 1967**, and its amended version, **Law 75-105 of December 1975** regulating activities undertaken in public spaces, prohibit street vending in public spaces. Perceived as criminals, street vendors face stiff penalties, including fines and imprisonment, under this law. And while street vendors have been the most visible targets of this legislation, other occupational sectors that work on the streets are also affected by it, including food vendors, laundresses, and carpenters. The **Ministerial Order No. 974 of January 23, 1968**, regarding the working conditions of domestic workers — the only legislation contemplating a particular occupational sector within the informal economy — establishes a different labour regime for domestic workers as compared to other informal workers. However, even when it comes to guaranteeing the protections that the legislation does provide to domestic workers, compliance remains an issue.⁷ Despite domestic workers' organizations' advocacy efforts, supported by trade union federations, Senegal has yet to ratify **ILO's Convention 189** (C189) on decent work for domestic workers.

Other legal changes have affected informal workers as well. The **decentralization** process (of which the **III Act of decentralization of 2013** is the latest chapter), aimed at devolving powers to local municipalities⁸ — sub-local administrative entities — as a means to foster more effective

⁶ For the purposes of this document, a decision was made to label the occupational sector known as *femmes transformatrices* in Senegal as home-based producers, even if this concept is not used in the Senegalese context. The way in which these women work fits into the definition of own-account, self-employed home-based workers, understood as workers who produce a variety of goods for the market from their homes or places nearby. For more information on home-based workers, visit WIEGO's website: <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/home-based-workers>.

⁷ In the meeting with domestic workers from the Dakar and Thiès regions convened by WIEGO (held on 17 September 2017) to identify the problems faced by domestic workers, these workers expressed that they rarely have labour contracts and do not benefit from the protections they are entitled to according to the legislation.

⁸ Senegal is divided into 14 regions, which are divided into 45 departments, which contain municipalities (these can be urban, urban sub-districts (*communes*) — referred to here as local municipalities — or rural). Increasingly since the 1990s, the politico-administrative landscape in Senegal has been reshaped by the decentralization process, which has attempted to bring government closer to citizens by devolving powers to local governments. In practice, this has meant the endowment of increasing responsibilities to sub-local entities, namely local municipalities or rural municipalities in nine main areas: land registry; natural resources and environment; health and social care; education; culture, sports, and recreation; planning and territory development; and urban planning and housing. To be able to assume their responsibilities, local municipalities have different sources of income, including grants and transfers from the national government, fiscal resources collected through taxes in the areas of municipal property and use of public spaces, and they can charge for the provision of public services and impose fines (OECD/UCLG 2016: 42-43).

local governance, has created, in practice, overlapping responsibilities among the different levels of government, making it very difficult for informal workers to identify which level of authority they need to engage to resolve their problems.

More recently, the national government launched a strategy to promote a gradual transition towards the formalization of the informal sector with the intention of creating more dignified jobs with better working conditions and of extending social protection to workers in this sector. The strategy was included in the national development plan “**Sénégal Emergent.**”⁹ However, the strategy’s concentration on mostly informal tradespeople, transport workers, and street vendors (the latter perceived as micro-entrepreneurs), leaves many informal occupational sectors outside. For example, in a project spearheaded by the Ministry of Commerce, the Informal Sector, Consumption, Promotion of Local Products, and SMEs, the “**Programme d’appui du secteur informel**” (PASI) — a flagship within the strategy to promote formalization — was designed only for informal micro and small enterprises and not for self-employed workers. Insufficient outreach has also made it very difficult for many informal workers to know about the programme and to understand how it works.



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

⁹ The plan *Sénégal emergent* is a development plan promoted by the national government with the intention of setting the ground for Senegal to become an emerging country by 2035. For more information, visit the plan’s website: <https://www.sec.gouv.sn/dossiers/plan-s%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal-emergent-pse>

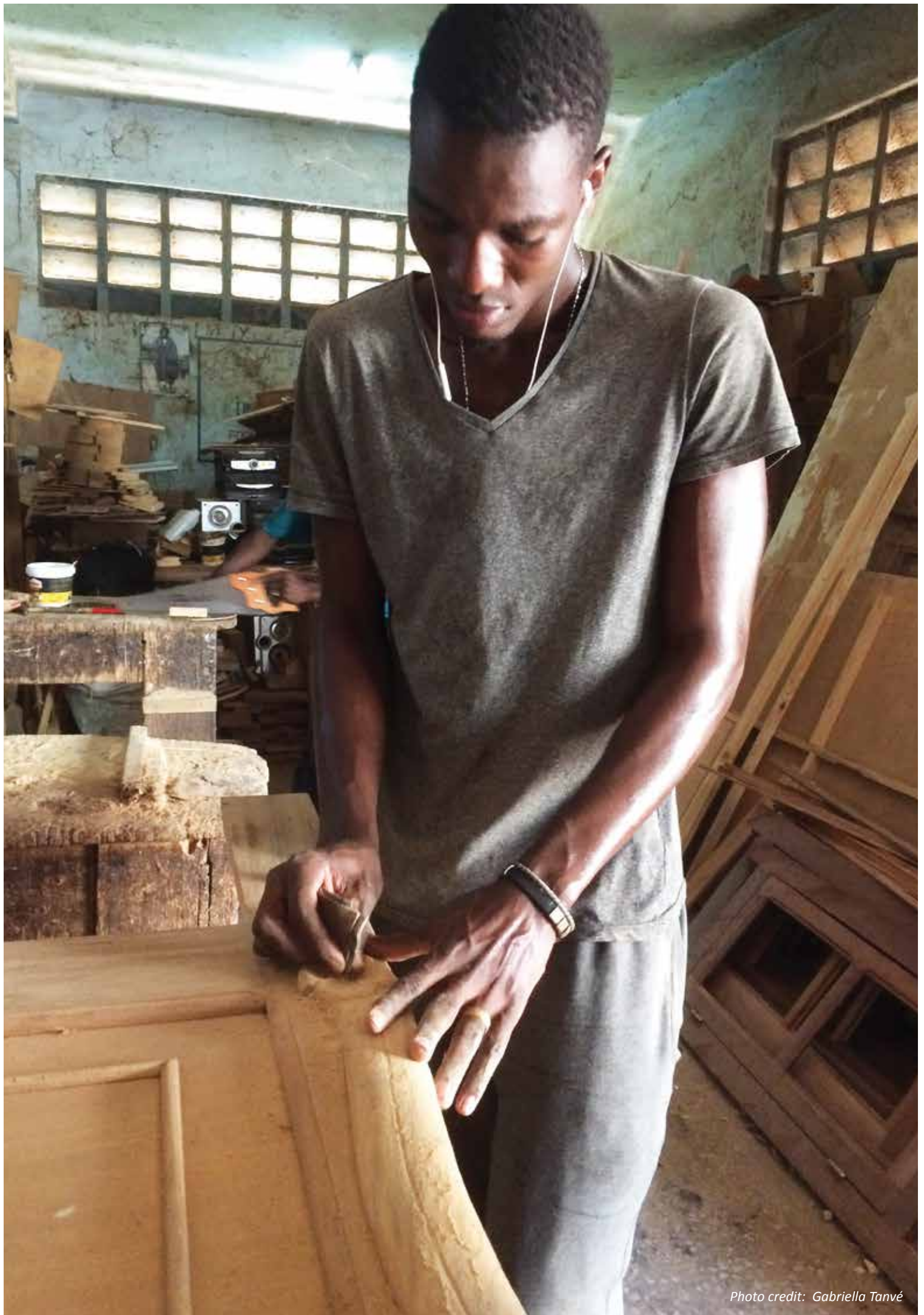


Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

Informal Workers Create Their Own Jobs to Provide for Their Families

The informal economy is the largest source of employment in Senegal, employing more than 60 per cent of the people currently active (République du Sénégal 2014: 7). Informal workers often come from poor families. In the absence of other alternatives, they start working in the informal economy to find an honest and dignified way to earn their livelihoods and to provide for their families. Informal workers are mostly young — two in three are between 15 and 35 years old (ANSD 2013: 29) — and their households have four children in average according to information provided at the national level by Senegal’s statistics agency (NASD 2013: 55). While women represent 46 per cent of those working in informal non-agricultural employment in Dakar, 87 per cent of women who work do so in informal employment (Herrera et al 2012: p 27. See Tables 1.5a and 1.5b). Most informal workers do not have many years of schooling. Sixty-four per cent of informal sector workers did not go beyond elementary school, and of them, 26 per cent do not have any type of schooling (NASD 2013: 30). Informal workers create their own jobs and work mostly on their own (91.8 per cent are sole operators, NASD 2013: 10) — only very few among them have been able to establish microbusinesses with assistants.

“We were born in a poor family. You have to find something to do to make some money to take care of your family.”¹⁰

Some informal workers arrived from other places in Senegal and from other countries looking for work opportunities in Dakar. But living in the city is difficult: transportation and rent are very expensive. That is why many informal workers live on the outskirts of the city and commute to the city every day to work. In the outskirts, however, the local municipalities do not have the same amount of financial resources and there are significant deficits in the provision of basic services, including health care, child care, infrastructure, public transportation, and housing.

Informal workers’ earnings are low and are often not enough to cover their families’ basic needs, even when there is more than one person contributing to the household economy. Capturing information about earnings in the informal economy is challenging, but Senegal’s statistics agency estimated the monthly average earnings of informal sector workers in 2011 at 42,150 CFA (US\$ 89.3) (See ANSD 2013: 9).¹¹ Women are in a more vulnerable situation, working in more precarious jobs, as self-employed or family assistants — only 20 per cent of them can be counted as informal entrepreneurs (ANSD 2013: 19).

Generally, they will spend most of their earnings on their children’s health and education. However, women within the informal economy typically face greater difficulty in accessing working capital and loans and, in absence of adequate and affordable child care services, they have less available time to undertake economic and productive activities (See Moussié 2016).

¹⁰ The data presented in this document was collected in 10 focus group (FG) discussions that took place between September and October 2017. See Note on Methodology at the end of this document for more information.

¹¹ The exchange rate used was 471.87 CFA for US\$1, which was the estimated exchange rate in 2011 when the survey was done, according to CIA 2017: 201.

“The salary is not sufficient. At the end of the day it is already gone.”

Informal workers’ work conditions are precarious. For those who work on the streets, finding shelter to protect themselves from inclement weather conditions or to have access to toilets is more than a difficult task. Sewage and sanitation problems in markets create health risks for informal workers as well as vectors of disease. Working at the dump involves a series of occupational health and safety risks, and waste pickers do not have protective gear and equipment. Waste pickers labouring there have had accidents (cuts with sharp materials, injuries carrying heavy materials or while walking in the dump); have gotten diseases from inhaling the fumes at the dump or from handling waste; and some have even died. Working in isolation in their employers’ houses, domestic workers face additional risks and are sometimes victims of abuse, violence, and rape.¹²

Informal Workers in Dakar: Who They Are and What They Do

To be able to respond to the challenges they face, informal workers in Dakar have decided to organize. At the outset, they created informal self-help and solidarity groups to provide support among themselves. But, in order to have access to financial and other types of support, or to undertake certain activities, including managing projects, being formally registered as an organization is a must — be it under the form of associations, labour unions, cooperatives, or groupings with an economic intention (*groupements d’intérêt économique*). Formal registration is also essential if they want to be heard by the authorities. In fact, some of the more long-standing informal workers’ organizations were created with the objective of engaging with authorities to defend their rights.

Organizations from nine occupational sectors contributed to this document. Among these, some have either national representation and/or presence in Dakar — achieved over decades of existence; others are emerging, transitioning from *ad-hoc* — yet long-standing — groups to formal organizations in Dakar’s outlying communities. Some of these organizations have decided to join large central trade unions like the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal (CNTS), and the Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes (CSA).

Informal workers seek recognition: as workers who make valuable contributions to the city’s society and economy, as citizens with rights and responsibilities, and as legitimate stakeholders in the design of policies that affect their livelihoods.

Below is a description of what informal workers from these organizations do and who they are.

¹² Information about domestic workers’ working conditions was based on the focus group discussions and was complemented with data collected during the workshop convened by WIEGO to diagnose problems among domestic workers from several local municipalities in the Dakar and Thiès regions. The workshop took place on 17 September 2017.

Carpenters and woodworkers are mostly men tradespeople who work both in the construction industry building wood structures (carpenters) and servicing other clients with wood products like windows, doors and furniture (wood workers), oftentimes on the streets. Their main clients are real estate developers and businessmen, public and private schools, and the national government (through public tenders). Some of them have been working in the sector for many years. Before engaging in this profession, they received training by Coopérative des Artisans du Bois de Grand Yoff (CABGY). Some of them also engage in training future generations of tradespeople in this profession.

The Ministerial Order No. 974 on domestic workers' working conditions puts **domestic workers and laundresses** in the same sector. However, the tasks these two groups do and the way in which they work are different. **Domestic workers** are salaried workers working at their employers' house (albeit most often they are not provided with a signed contract nor any work-related protection). Some domestic workers are live-in workers, but not all. Without a contract, their tasks and responsibilities are broad, varied, and flexible; they can involve cleaning, housekeeping, cooking, buying groceries, taking care of children and/or elderly people, among others. Their schedules depend on their employers but they receive no additional payment for extra time worked. Their main clients are single people, families, and foreigners. **Laundresses** are own-account workers who provide door-to-door washing, drying, and ironing services. Sometimes they perform their activities in their own homes or at their clients' houses, but most of the time they perform them on the streets. They charge by piece at a pre-agreed rate. Payment arrangements may be weekly or monthly, depending on what was agreed. Their main clients are single people and families. Both domestic workers and laundresses are often paid late or paid incomplete amounts for their services and generally have no options for recourse when this is the case.

Food vendors are mostly women who sell prepared foods on the streets, markets, outside of office buildings, taxi garages, and construction sites both in Dakar and its outskirts. Because of the places where they work, they often share the space with either street vendors or market vendors. Food vendors buy their supplies mostly from formal establishments. Their main clients are people passing by, labourers, households, and other informal workers, among others. Because they sell perishable goods, they need to sell them fast.

Fishmongers¹³ working in Dakar's Fish Wholesale Market are small-scale intermediaries within the supply chain. But despite having been working in this occupation for many years, they have not been able to amass enough capital to be able to buy fish products in large volumes, to create a stock and/or to obtain better prices, which illustrate the hardships they face to move up in the chain. They also lack access to affordable credit and to the equipment to properly store and refrigerate the fish, so they need to sell their merchandise as fast as they can. Their main clients are households and hawkers who resell the fish either within Senegal or in other countries in the West-Africa region. Larger clients, like the food processing industry, occasionally come to them when they need to complete an order.

Market vendors — most of whom are women — sell a diverse selection of merchandise in formal markets in Dakar and on its outskirts. However, many among them sell perishable goods that need to be sold rapidly. They often acquire their merchandise from formal establishments. Their main clients are people passing by, labourers, households, other informal workers, among others.

¹³ The French word *mareyeur* means both fisherfolk and fishmonger. The women who participated in the focus group discussion were fishmongers.

Taxi drivers — both formal and informal — complement the public transportation system by transporting people within Dakar and between Dakar and outlying communities. Formal taxi drivers have permits to operate as such and comply with all the necessary legal and administrative requirements; they work mostly on their own. Yet, despite that, they lack any social or legal protection. Informal taxi drivers work as own-account workers as well, but in most cases, they do not own the car they drive — they have to pay a daily quota to the owners of the vehicle to be able to use it and are responsible for all maintenance costs. Regardless of whether they have their documents in order or not, formal and informal taxi drivers are constantly harassed by municipal police forces and by the volunteers hired by local municipalities.¹⁴ The poor state of streets and roads, which damage the cars — their main work tool — as well as relentless traffic problems result in losses of earnings for them. Their clientele includes business people, public officers, families, labourers, unemployed people, and other informal workers.



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

Street vendors, including those who work on the streets and those who have informal stalls on the streets adjacent to the Sandaga market (and other markets) sell a variety of products, although women vendors are more likely to sell perishable products and hence have lower earnings. Street vendors often earn barely enough to replenish their merchandise and find themselves needing to take out loans from fellow vendors or, in the worst case, from informal money lenders. But they try to avoid recurring to informal money lenders because they charge very high interest rates and can also be violent when collecting payments. With the prohibition of street vending, street vendors cannot have certainty in terms of the spaces they use and are vulnerable to frequent harassment, confiscation of merchandise, and evictions from municipal authorities (which sometimes entail violence). Their main clients are public officers, foreigners, students, labourers, informal workers, and unemployed people.

¹⁴ Local municipalities resort to volunteers to perform public tasks, such as traffic control at certain hours, among others.

Waste pickers recuperate, sort, clean, and prepare recyclable materials to be sold to industries that process and reuse them, including plastic, metals, tires, cardboard, glass, among others. Both men and women have some rudimentary tools that they use to recuperate materials, and some of them — mostly men — have separated spaces where they can sort and store the materials they recuperate. For women waste pickers, the lack of access to storage spaces for the materials they recuperate means that they have smaller volumes to sell. There is a certain division of labour between men and women (e.g. women tend to wash plastic and glass containers), although that does not mean that they exclusively concentrate in doing those activities. Generally, buyers go to the dump to buy the recuperated materials; most of them are intermediaries, who either work on behalf of industries processing and reusing recuperated materials or who work on their own. In the past, waste pickers would sell directly to the industries that recycled materials. However, recently the national government allowed the entry of intermediaries, particularly the ones representing Chinese interests, which has resulted in significantly reduced earnings for waste pickers. Waste pickers are in a weak position when selling their materials *vis-à-vis* the intermediaries, who set the prices — their lack of bargaining power and alternatives mean they must accept the prices the intermediaries set. Women waste pickers' main clients are smaller intermediaries, typically home-based workers (*femmes transformatrices*) — who are looking for empty containers for their products — and hawkers.

Women home-based workers (*femmes transformatrices*) engage in various activities: production, packaging, and sale of a diversity of products. In most cases, these are agricultural and food products (e.g. local cereals, syrup, and preserves), although they can also make soaps, clothing, jewelry, among others. They define themselves as producers. They work from home or in workshops nearby. Some of them have received training at the Institut Technologique Alimentaire or have received other government support for their economic activities. Despite the support received on the production side, these workers find that additional support is desired to link production with commercialization. A few among them have managed to establish microenterprises with assistants, but the vast majority of these women work on their own. Their main clients are small businesses and shops at gas stations, but they also sell door-to-door.

In brief, despite the widespread belief that the informal economy acts independently and in isolation from the formal economy, it is clear that the two are intrinsically linked. For example, informal workers sometimes buy and/or sell their products from/to formal businesses and participate within a range of supply/value chains — in the lowest link and with very little possibility to move up. Informal workers assume all the risks of work but receive no legal protection — they have no way to enforce agreements or have access to legal recourse when payments are withheld, for example. They do not have access to social protection through their work. Policies and programmes designed to promote formalization need to consider this reality. Also, while informal workers make important contributions to the city, their needs are often not considered in the conception of urban development plans and the provision of public services.

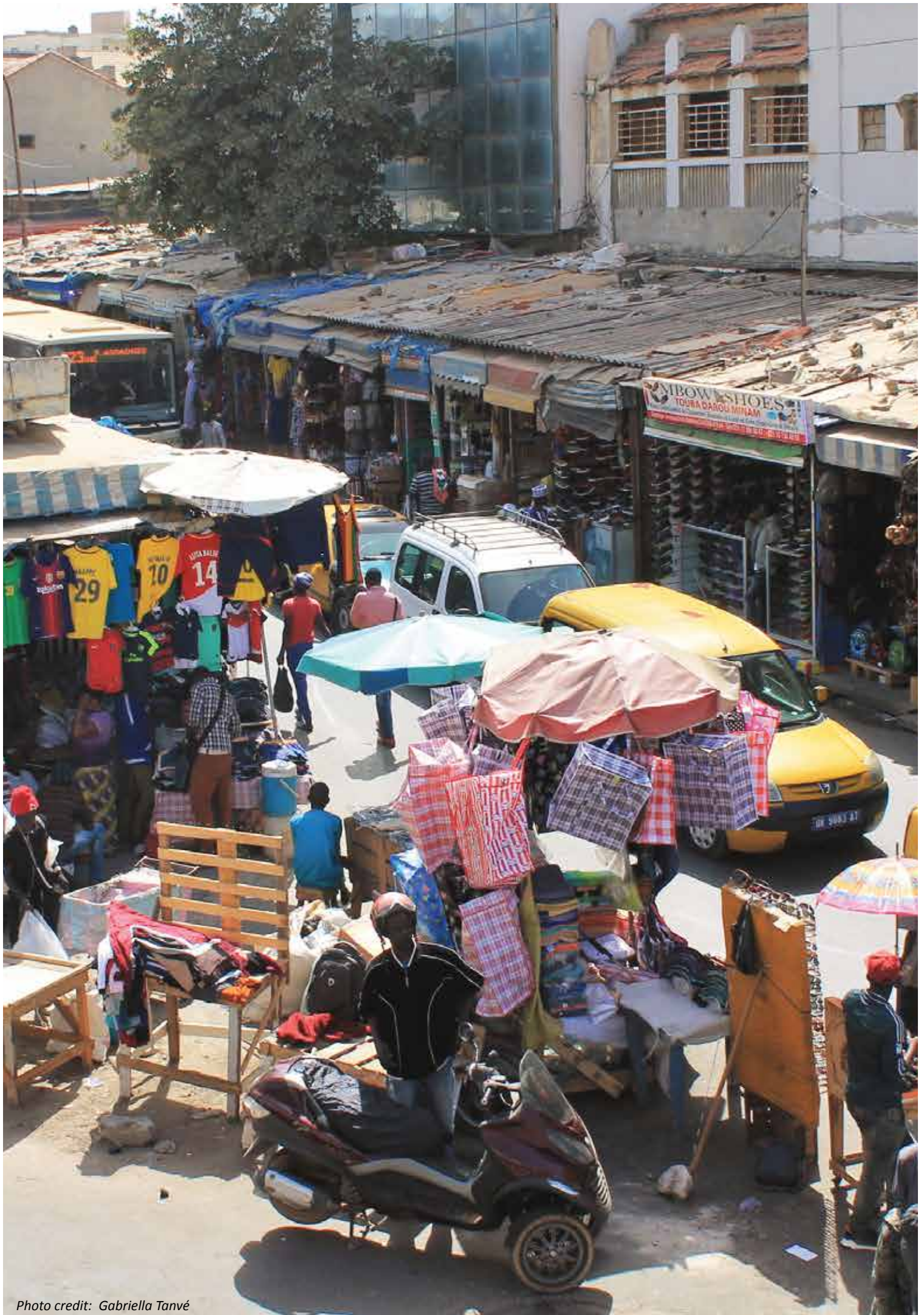


Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

II. Barriers to Informal Workers' Incomes and Wellbeing

Informal workers' ability to increase their earnings is limited by a set of structural and market factors. While workers in each of the afore-mentioned occupations face specific challenges to augment, or even maintain, their earnings, the table below presents the cross-sectoral challenges they all identified as the three most important ones.

In a context of increasing unemployment and relatively low entry barriers to participate in the informal economy, increasing numbers of people are finding their livelihoods in the informal economy. For those engaged in vending, this growing competition means that in order to retain their clientele they need to reduce their prices and sell on credit, even if they do not have the same leverage with their own suppliers — many of which are in the formal economy — to obtain a similar discount. Those who sell perishable products — who tend to be women — are even more affected by this because, in addition to those challenges, they need to ensure that the products are sold quickly. Informal workers' strategies to build clients' loyalty (e.g. selling on credit) to mitigate the reduction of their earnings often entail risks: oftentimes the clients do not make the payments as agreed, or worse, never buy from them again.

For waste pickers who depend on access to quantity/quality of recyclable materials, competition for these materials becomes a critical factor affecting their earnings. This competition comes particularly from those working with the private contractors responsible for domestic waste collection in Dakar who remove the best materials before the waste arrives at Mbeubeuss dump. Waste pickers' position at the bottom of the waste value chain further enhances the relative weakness they have *vis-à-vis* the intermediaries who determine the prices they will pay for the materials they recuperate — regardless of the actual market price. Carpenters complain that more and more people are engaging in carpentry work but they are not formally trained, thus driving down the prices clients are willing to pay for their services.

Another important limitation to informal workers' activities is their lack of financial means — as well as the lack of access to credit and working capital, which would allow them to increase the volume of their economic activities — to buy in bulk to obtain better prices, and/or have access to equipment/technologies. With low earnings, and increasing household expenditures, saving money is almost impossible.

In addition to those factors, lack of access to capacity-building and strengthening of occupational skills inhibits informal workers' ability to expand their operations and increasing their earnings. Apart from all of these inhibiting factors that relate to the position informal workers have within markets and their labour situation, they also face significant barriers that are the result of **city and government policies and practices**.

While some informal workers (e.g. tradespeople like carpenters and women home-based workers) have received some government support and access to capacity building, the majority still struggle because they lack support — be it financial, for capacity-building and skills upgrading, or accompaniment.

Table 1. Main barriers to increase income as identified by focus group participants, by relevance

<i>Value/supply chain and market</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competition • Problems/absence of clients • Sales/payment Instability • Supply of/access to quality/affordable raw materials
<i>Restrictions of working capital</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of own capital/means • Lack of savings • Lack of credit/financing • Lack of materials/equipment/technology • Capacity building and occupational skills (lack)
<i>City/Government policies/practices and public infrastructure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support • Punitive legal framework • Police harassment/abuse • Taxes (too high) • Lack of public infrastructure (lack of adequate public transportation routes/poor maintenance of streets and roads) • Lack of vending and exhibition spaces
<i>Health and working conditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems • Work-related accidents • Inadequate workspaces
<i>Recognition</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trust • Lack of respect
<i>Costs of doing business</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed charges (overhead) • Cost of using a third person's car • Maintenance

Source: Data collected during the 10 focus group discussions that took place in Dakar and Malika in September and October 2017.

The lack of an adequate affordable public transportation system that responds to their needs, as well as overall deficits in public infrastructure, also directly affects informal workers' activities and creates increasing costs for them.

But, to date, what affects informal workers the most is the existence of **punitive legal frameworks** that limit and criminalize their activities and which local municipalities use to permit police harassment and abuse against them.

Contrary to general belief, informal workers pay a variety of taxes and duties, including the daily tax (*douti*), the minimum fiscal tax (annual tax imposed to private persons), the *patente* (annual tax imposed to legal persons), as well as for licences for the right to work in public spaces, among others. Yet they do not receive services or social protection, nor do those contributions give them any security in their work, particularly when they work in public spaces.

Social protection

Informal workers have no social protection through their work and this puts them in an even more vulnerable situation. When it comes to social protection services, having **access to quality public health care** was identified as the first priority.

Having good health is one of informal workers' vital assets. When they are sick, they are unable to work, and therefore they cannot provide for their families. And although the government set up Universal Health Coverage (UHC), granting free health-care services to young children and basic health-care coverage through mutual insurances, and despite the government's stated goal of extending social protection to informal workers, most informal workers remain uninsured.

“Personal health, because if you are sick you cannot work and that will reduce your earnings.”

A very important barrier informal workers face when accessing **health-care services** is the fact that most of them cannot afford the contributions to mutual insurances because they lack the means to do so. In the past, some informal worker organizations have created health mutual insurance schemes for their members, but they have struggled to maintain them because most of their members were unable to make their contributions; eventually, the mutual insurance schemes were rendered unsustainable and were dismantled.

In the absence of health insurance coverage, informal workers must pay for all the health services they require, which is difficult with low earnings. In effect, when they get sick, informal workers receive a double hit: they lose the earnings of the day because they are unable to work and they also must spend money to pay for medical consultations and medicine. Having low earnings also prevents informal workers from setting money aside for health contingencies, which means that they are very often in a situation where they must choose between seeking medical assistance or covering other household expenses.

Table 2. Main barriers to access quality health care as identified by focus group participants, by relevance
<i>Lack of means</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of means/lack of savings/other household needs
<i>Deficits in public health-care services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources in hospitals (human and material) • Discrimination from health-care personnel for being poor • Lack of staff depending on the season/hour of the day • Lack of quality health-care facilities/medical personnel's negligence
<i>Accessibility of health care services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to pay upfront for services/costs of services/costs of medicines • (Lack of) Available services nearby • Lack of support/financial assistance
<i>Lack of support from the authorities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from municipalities • Lack of government support/will • Lack of information on health/health services
<i>Working Conditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate workplace/lack of protection • Premature aging because of work
<i>Prevention</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness about health care • Healthy diet

Source: Data collected during the 10 focus group discussions that took place in Dakar and Malika in September and October 2017.

When medical attention is sought out, workers face a series of obstacles concerning the quality of treatment. In some situations, workers said that these facilities faced a shortage of staff and medical equipment, especially during nights, weekends, and holidays. The local municipalities outside of Dakar are not equipped with well-funded medical facilities for different levels of medical services. So, to access sanitary attention, informal workers are often required to travel long distances — something that for some of them may not be possible.

“The state covers for health care for young children but the hospitals are far away. One has to travel to have the children checked and that is difficult.”

Addressing occupational safety in a preventative way is a means to ensuring the wellbeing of informal workers, who are often exposed to health risks given the precariousness of their working conditions. Even in contexts where their workspaces are under the responsibility of government authorities, they continue to face dangerous and inadequate health and safety conditions that can lead to serious injuries, illnesses, and even death. Investments in basic infrastructure (e.g. in sewage and sanitation in market spaces) and other improvements to working conditions at the Mbeubeuss dump, for instance, are badly needed.

Table 3. Main barriers to quality child care services as expressed by focus group participants, by relevance
<i>Lack of means</i>
<i>No one to take care of the children</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults’ absence because of work • Lack of family network/support (including older siblings) • Kidnapping of children on the streets/accidents on the streets/insecurity • Lack of babysitter
<i>Poor child care services (by a person)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-qualification • Negligence • Violence
<i>Lack of parents’ responsibility</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of maturity of parents • Distraction of the mother • Lack of culture
<i>Lack of public services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor child care or school • Lack of information on nearby child care services • Lack of child care centres/schools • Transportation problems to bring the children to child care centre
<i>Bring children to work</i>
<i>Having children with disabilities</i>
<i>Child labour</i>

Source: Data collected during the 10 focus group discussions that took place in Dakar and Malika in September and October 2017.

For informal workers, discussing social protection also requires asking the question of who will care for their children while they work. Since **child care** responsibilities have traditionally fallen disproportionately on women, a lack of child care options especially affects women workers and their ability to increase their earnings and economic mobility.

Despite the growing participation of women in the labour market, in Senegal there is no offer of **public child care services** and the costs of private services are beyond what informal workers can generally afford. The very few among them that have access to these services must often deal with poor quality services in facilities that are located far away from their work places or from where they live. Most informal workers are not aware of the possibility of accessing child care services because of a lack of information.¹⁵

***“If there was information about childcare services,
I could leave my children there.”***

For women informal workers, having access to quality child care options would enable them to maintain their earnings and livelihoods, while also ensuring the development and safety of their children. In the absence of child care services, however, they are faced with addressing child care needs with the limited resources they have. For many of them this means that, when they cannot rely on family networks, they must choose between not working, leaving their children alone at home unattended, or bringing the children with them to work. All these options either affect their productivity/earnings or entail important security and safety risks for their children.



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

¹⁵ During one of the focus group discussions, one participant also mentioned that having access to information on, and/or to, child care services for children with disabilities was even more difficult.



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

III. Relations with Authorities

To address these issues, informal workers want to engage with the authorities at all levels of government to make possible the changes they need. Informal workers want to be recognized as workers; they want their voices to be heard.

In the context of the decentralization process, deciding which level of authority to engage to resolve their issues has become confusing for informal workers. But they see municipalities as the natural counterparts because municipal policies and practices are the ones that affect them most directly. Informal workers want to move away from only engaging municipalities when dealing with problems of harassment and potential evictions and move towards a more constructive dialogue. They want to be able to fully participate in the design and implementation of the policies affecting them; to be able to participate in the discussions within local assemblies as they draft regulations and ordinances.

Because informal workers know that in certain areas more than one level of government is involved, they also think that municipalities and other levels of government need to work in tandem. The establishment of spaces for dialogue (*cadres de concertation*) involving informal worker organizations and all pertinent authorities with jurisdiction on these matters would be useful for constructing solutions together aimed at ensuring decent work for informal workers and the overall wellbeing of the communities where they live and work.

Informal workers' livelihoods and wellbeing also depend on how the future of the city takes shape. A prosperous modern Dakar needs to recognize the connections between the city and outlying communities. Building a prosperous city implies inclusive urban development that ensures the injection of resources to the local municipalities where informal workers live — allowing for investment in health, education, infrastructure, and social protection. It implies recognizing informal workers as citizens and promoting the improvement of informal livelihoods.

Recommendations:

Inclusive cities are those that take into consideration the voices and needs of informal workers to ensure their livelihoods and to extend social protection to their families. When cities are inclusive, everyone wins. To help build a truly inclusive modern city, informal workers would like to put forward the following recommendations to the pertinent authorities.

Recognition:

- Recognize the work informal workers do and the benefits they bring to the city and country, thus removing the existing stigma around their work.
- Ratify ILO Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers.
- Develop adequate and enabling legal frameworks for informal workers' activities that remove the criminalization of their activities and provide certainty and legal protections.
- Stop police harassment and forced evictions (local municipality, by ensuring as well that this is abided by other levels of government that have authority over these decisions).
- Establish effective, statutory, and institutionalized spaces for dialogue between informal workers and pertinent authorities at the municipality of Dakar, and the national government, including the Ministry of Commerce, Informal Sector, Consumption and Promotion of Local Products, and SMEs; the Ministry of Territory Governance, Development and Regional Planning; and the Ministry of Urban Renewal, Habitat and of the Living Environment.
- Include representatives of informal workers' organizations in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies and urban development plans affecting their livelihoods, including participation in the city council's committees from the local municipalities.
- Guarantee that relocations are negotiated and that they ensure access to natural market vending spaces, are affordable, and are provided with all basic infrastructure and services (national and local government).

Promotion of economic activities:

- Provide support for entrepreneurial initiatives and financial assistance, through the improvement and development of financial mechanisms for informal workers (Ministry of Commerce, Informal Sector, Consumption and Promotion of Local Products, and SMEs; Ministry of the Solidarity Economy and Microfinance).
- Provide access to credit at preferential rates (national government).
- Offer capacity building for several areas, including norms, requirements and occupational skills (ensuring equal participation of women workers and youth), and support to informal workers' organizations (national government).
- Promote synergies among the different levels of governments in the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at informal workers, and greater outreach and information on programmes and services available to informal workers.
- Implement adequate tax policies that take into consideration the needs of both workers labouring in informal economic units and own-account workers (national and local municipalities' governments).

- Ensure that municipal efforts to ensure/increase tax collection are also accompanied by greater clarity regarding the services informal workers receive and the rights they have as contributors.
- Develop an adequate, affordable, and efficient public transportation system (national and local government).
- Include waste pickers in the collection of waste in local municipalities and in the national solid waste management system.
- Develop an efficient separation-at-source system to increase the quality of recuperated materials (national and local governments).

Provide financial support and subventions for low income families (General delegation of Social Protection and National Solidarity, from the Presidency of the Republic).

Social protection:

- Provide access to quality, efficient, affordable, and well-funded public health services close to informal workers' workplaces and homes that are adequately able to meet the needs of informal workers (National government — Ministry of Health and Social Action — and local government).
- Give support for the creation of health mutual insurance schemes (national government: agency responsible for the Universal Health Coverage from the Ministry of Health and Social Action).
- Provide access to child care services near their workplaces (local government).
- Improve access to information on services available to informal workers (health) (national government: Ministry of Health and Social Action).
- Improve workspace conditions in facilities under government administration through the implementation of adequate occupational health and safety (OHS) measures in the Fish Market and the Mbeubeuss dump (national government: Ministry of Health and Social Action, Ministry of Territory Governance, Development and Regional Planning; Ministry of Labour, Social Dialogue, of Professional Organizations and Relations with Institutions).

A Note on Methodology

The data presented in this document was collected in 10 focus group (FG) discussions that took place between September and October 2017. In total, 57 people participated (22 men, 35 women), from the following occupational sectors: carpenters (FG 1), taxi drivers (FG 2), women home-based workers (FG 3), food vendors (FG 4), market vendors (FG 4), street vendors (women FG 5; men FG 6), fish vendors (women FG 7), domestic workers and laundresses (FG 10), and waste pickers (women FG 8; men FG 9). The development of the tools used in the FGs was coordinated by WIEGO and was adapted to the specific context of Dakar, Senegal. A decision was taken to separate men and women in those occupational sectors that were not gender-specific to open up spaces for women's voices. Participants to the FGs included both members and leaders of informal worker organizations. The selection of the participants in the FGs was left to the organization's leaders, with the recommendation to invite their base members. However, the main criteria used by them was the workers' availability. The information presented in this document is representative of the participant organizations and offers an overview of issues confronting informal workers in these occupational sectors. The data was also complemented with information from work visits with the different informal worker organizations since the launching of the Dakar Focal Cities project in 2017, as well as from two sessions with membership-based organizations from different sectors devoted to capturing their demands in February and May 2017, all of which were convened by WIEGO.



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

Participating Organizations

List of participating organizations:

- AVER-B
- Bokk Diom
- Coopérative des Artisans du Bois de Grand Yoff (CABGY)
- Femmes Actrices pour le Développement (FADEL)
- Regroupement de chauffeurs clandestins de la banlieue
- Regroupement de chauffeurs de taxi de la banlieue
- Regroupement des domestiques et lingères Ressortissantes de Guinée Bissau et de la Casamance
- Syndicat Unique et Démocratique de Mareyeurs du Sénégal (SUDEMS)
- Synergie des marchands ambulants pour le développement (SYMAD)
- Takku Liguey



Photo credit: Olga Abizaid

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Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

AURANT CHEZ M



Photo credit: Gabriella Tanvé

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About WIEGO:

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce.