



Women in Informal Employment:
Globalizing and Organizing

MBO NEWSLETTER

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A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations
of Informal Workers

Produced by: WIEGO Organization & Representation Programme

In this edition, we look at climate change. Who and what causes climate change? How does it affect people who live and work in poor communities? How are affected communities organizing to challenge the causes and impacts of climate change?

Discuss the questions raised here in your organizations, and follow the links for more information and reading material. If you have questions, please send them to taylor.casstalbott@wiego.org



What Do We Mean by Just Transition?

The term Just Transition comes from the [trade union](#) movement and environmental justice groups. Workers whose jobs in industries that are destroying the environment demand justice and job security as the economy transitions towards environmental sustainability.

A Just Transition recognizes the importance of transitioning from fossil fuels – such as oil, coal and gas – to renewable energy, which uses sources that do not run out – such as wind, solar and hydro. Renewable energy resources are “clean” because they do not emit carbon into the atmosphere. At the heart of a just transition is to replace all non-renewable energy sources with renewable sources.

One of the problems with the term Just Transition is the different ways that it is understood by society. Some use the term Just Transition but the policies and practices they propose have no justice.

A Just Transition should recognize and address global inequalities.



Why Just Transition Matters

Workers in informal employment will be affected by many of the efforts being made to reduce carbon emissions to slow climate change.

Homeworkers, street and market vendors, and waste pickers are at risk of serious disruptions to their work as efforts to reduce transport emissions result in locations of production being moved closer to home – and consumer backlash to pollution puts pressure on industries like fast fashion, packaging and electronics to reduce production and make materials easier to repair. Also, policy shifts in heavy industries, such as mining and petrochemical production, towards more environmentally sustainable solutions will have a cascading effect on workers in informal employment.

A just transition framework must consider protection and promotion of **secure jobs** and **social protection** for workers in informal employment by including membership-based organizations of workers in informal employment (MBOs) in decision-making processes regarding this transition.

The problem is that many national and global tripartite partners lack data, research and meaningful engagements with workers in informal employment to define a long-term road map for a just transition.

An Inclusive Transition Framework

A first step towards an inclusive just transition framework for workers in informal employment is recognizing their work and their tremendous current and potential contribution to reducing carbon emissions, as well as to mitigating the impacts of climate change and other forms of pollution. Many operational and organizational forms of work by informal workers are environmentally and socially sustainable – they are **part of the solution**.

An inclusive just transition framework must value the contribution of workers in informal employment and support their legal recognition in labour and social protection regulations. In the following pages, we summarize some of these contributions.





Domestic Workers

Domestic workers all over the world are the backbone of care systems. In the absence of high quality and accessible public care services, domestic workers are frontline workers who directly shoulder the care work brought on by more frequent and severe climate disasters and environmental pollution.



No Just Transition Without Social Protection for Domestic Workers

IDWF POSITION PAPER FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE 2023

The International Labor Conference this June will hold a General Debate on the just transition of labor transition. It is important for the labor world to ensure that the rights of domestic workers are protected and that the transition to a green economy will be smooth. The issue is general in nature and will be discussed in the context of the conference. The issue is general in nature and will be discussed in the context of the conference. The issue is general in nature and will be discussed in the context of the conference.

Download the [International Domestic Workers Federation \(IDWF\) Position Paper](#) on just transition.



Home-Based Workers

Many home-based workers are involved in producing goods made from local raw materials and sold in local markets. This means that their reliance on carbon-emitting motorized transport is limited. They are also involved in making goods with environment-friendly raw materials, reusing discarded materials, and the sorting of e-waste.



Read [HomeNet International's work on supply chains](#)





Street Vendors and Market Traders

In many countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, legal provisions were made for street vendors and market traders to work during COVID-19 lockdowns to ensure food security in communities. Their services have a lower carbon footprint and are more redistributive than those of large supermarkets.

Many street vendors and market traders sell goods that are locally produced and therefore have not travelled long distances by carbon-emitting motorized transport.

Resolution on Climate Change and Just Transition

The 1st International Congress of StreetNet

Notes

Climate change threatens the lives and livelihoods of street vendors, market traders and all those in the informal economy.

StreetNet International (SNI) therefore resolves to embark on a dedicated programme to tackle climate change and secure livelihoods.

SNI and affiliates will educate members about the impact of climate change and effective mitigation and adaptation strategies and actions.

SNI and its affiliates will pressure governments at a local, national, regional and international level, to develop and implement interventions that tackle climate change and improve livelihood security.

Download [StreetNet International's Resolution on Climate Change and Just Transition](#)





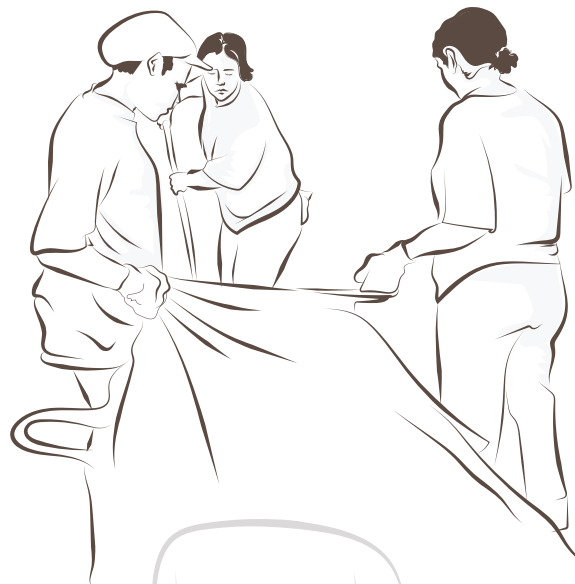
Waste Pickers

Through their recycling work, waste pickers contribute directly to reduced carbon emissions and reduced pollution. This is because recycling reduces the demand for new production, removes polluting plastics from the environment, and decreases the volumes of waste in carbon-emitting landfills/dumps.

Their way of working is labour intensive and is significantly less polluting than the means used by large “waste collection, transportation and management” companies.



Download: [Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Inclusive Recycling, an interactive calculator tool](#)



How Workers in the Informal Economy Address a Just Transition

The informal nature of the occupations and employment in the informal economy keeps workers and their households vulnerable to climate-change-induced disasters and perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty.

As a result, MBOs are actively engaging with national governments to seek meaningful inclusion in just transition processes.

A clearer mandate from the United Nations would support social partners as they advocate for a voice of MBOs in tripartite social dialogue structures and other planning processes where a just transition is defined and debated.

In the following pages, we identify the impacts of climate change on workers in different sectors of the informal economy, and propose ways to address these impacts.



Sector-Specific Proposals

Domestic Workers

Climate change impacts



Greater and more intense workloads due to energy and water shortages in employers' households, and greater care needs among employees due to ill health brought on by extreme weather conditions and pollution.



Involuntary migration from rural areas to cities in search of employment increases the prevalence of harmful working conditions, child labour and forced labour for sectors with low barriers to entry, such as domestic work.

Inclusive just transition proposals



Inclusion of domestic workers in labour codes so they can benefit from labour and social protections as per the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (C189).



The International Labour Organization (ILO) can promote the adopted conventions intended to protect migrant workers, such as Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (Revised) (No. 97), the Migrant Workers Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and C189, and accompanying Recommendations.

Sector-Specific Proposals

Home-Based Workers

Climate change impacts



Energy and water shortages at home limit productivity, curtail incomes and increase unpaid care responsibilities.



Heat-related stress, respiratory infections and the need to care for ill family members – related to extreme weather conditions and pollution – make it difficult to work from home.



Industries shifting away from countries with low productivity and poor infrastructure would lead to job losses.



Increased taxes on imports of raw materials and exports of finished goods result in less income for home-based workers, especially the self-employed.



Climate change affects home-based workers' access to raw materials, such as natural fibres used for weaving.

Inclusive just transition proposals



Extension of labour and social protection to homeworkers in national and global supply chains as per the Homeworkers Convention, 1996 (No. 177).



Active labour policies for home-based workers in industries that are shifting modes and/or locations of production.



Access to social protection for self-employed home-based workers that protects them against loss of income and productive assets.



Inclusion in urban planning processes and decisions that affect the introduction and design of climate-resilient infrastructure in neighbourhoods, collective workspaces and housing to accommodate safe work from home.



Supporting policies for cooperatives and other forms of social solidarity economy (SSE) units owned by home-based workers.

Sector-Specific Proposals

Street Vendors and Market Traders

Climate change impacts



Extreme weather conditions and pollution make it difficult to work in public spaces, and street vendors and market traders who sell perishable goods are particularly vulnerable.



Lack of access to water and energy in public vending spaces limits production and sales.



Greater competition for public vending spaces with access to energy, water and shelter can lead to higher rates of violence and harassment at work.

Inclusive just transition proposals



Inclusion in urban planning processes and decisions to improve access to public space for working and regulated access to public natural resources for subsistence livelihoods (R204 11.o) and introduce climate-resilient infrastructure in public spaces used by vendors.



Recognition and representation as essential workers in food production and distribution chains and their low-carbon status.



Access to social protection that protects street vendors and market traders against loss of income and productive assets.

Sector-Specific Proposals

Waste Pickers

Climate change impacts



Extreme weather conditions and pollution make it difficult to work in open spaces and negatively impact waste pickers' neighbourhoods and homes (which often double up as work spaces).



Extreme weather conditions, such as floods, provoke landslides in open dumps – often resulting in casualties and destruction of workers' equipment – and affect production in recycling sorting centres.



Governments' concerns about the carbon intensity of open dumping and landfilling lead to the closure of dumpsites and landfills, in many instances without consulting the waste pickers who work at these sites. Waste pickers are being displaced without any alternative livelihood and many governments are omitting the work of waste pickers from the norms of Extended Producer Responsibility policies.

Inclusive just transition proposals



Integration and opportunity for advancement within solid waste management systems with recognition of waste pickers' contribution to reducing carbon emissions.



Extended Producer Responsibility should require waste picker integration in both planning and implementation, be based on fair remuneration for workers, support the organizing of informal economy workers, and be funded – but not implemented – by producers.



Include waste pickers in urban planning processes and decision-making on climate-resilient infrastructure in the public spaces they use, and in developing systems to warn workers of extreme weather conditions.



Develop a participatory process that allows waste pickers who work on dumpsites and streets to transition to door-to-door collection schemes and other modalities.



In line with the submission made by the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, commitment to a UN global plastics treaty that ensures waste pickers benefit from a just transition “in ending plastic pollution in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no-one behind”.

Workers' Impacts

Waste pickers are at INC-2 to demand recognition of their occupation and definition of Just Transition



Paris, France, May-June 2023

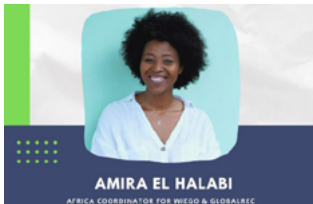
2nd Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-2) on Plastic Pollution, Paris, France, 29 May-02 June 2023. <https://globalrec.org/global-meeting/inc-paris/>

MAKE JUST TRANSITION
A CORE OBLIGATION
OF THE TREATY



<https://globalrec.org/global-meeting/inc-paris>

Day 2 of INC-2: Make Just Transition a Core Obligation of the Plastics Treaty! <https://globalrec.org/2023/05/31/day2-inc-2-just-transition-core-obligation/>



The International Alliance of Waste Pickers at COP27, Egypt
<https://globalrec.org/2022/11/08/the-international-alliance-of-waste-pickers-at-cop27-egypt/>



Legal assessment of systematic violation of waste pickers' human rights <https://www.wiego.org/waste-pickers-and-human-rights>

Workers' Voices



English

Betty Lunkuse, HomeNet International

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJjtCJOP00s>



Español

Alberto Santana, StreetNet International

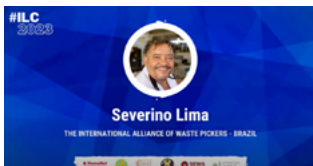
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50gx2nmquf0&list=plodx-1pdw0yxkbcjcgfii2uveknrx26ina&index=2>



Français

Chiepo Emma Sandrine, International Domestic Workers Federation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X00G4-c6Bn4&list=-PLOdX1pDW0yXKbJcgfII2uVeKnRx26INA>



Português

Severino Lima, International Alliance of Waste Pickers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEEX9avIJQ0&list=-PLOdX-1pdw0yXKbJcgfII2uVeKnRx26INA&index=9>