



**Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing**

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR T-WEE: INTERSECTIONALITY, INFORMALITY & GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

**MARTY CHEN
WIEGO NETWORK
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

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REMARKS

- ❑ **Reflections on Transformational Feminist Approach to WEE..**
 - definition of WEE
 - principles of WEE
 - neglected areas of WEE programming
- ❑ **Intersectionality, Informality & Grassroots Organizations: Two Illustrative Cases**
 - home-based producers
 - waste pickers
- ❑ **What do Women Informal Workers Want & Need?**

REFLECTIONS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH TO WEE

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❑ **Definitions of WEE**

- ability to shape enabling policy and regulatory environment
- decision-making ► policy-influencing

❑ **Principles of Transformation Feminist Approach**

- structural causes ► "economic norms" regarding what work is legitimate
- agency ► collective voice & action
- organizations & movements of women workers = key pathway
- intersectionality of gender & work & class = future analysis & action

❑ **Neglected Areas of WEE Programming**

- building/strengthening organizations of women workers & their representative voice/bargaining power
- analysing and addressing intersectionality
- influencing economic & employment policies
- focus on *paid* care workers
- addressing violence *at work/transit* – by state & vested interests

INTERSECTIONALITY

- **Intersectionality:** Transformative WEE (T-WEE) needs to address the structural disadvantages - social, economic and political - that women face:
 - *as women* – in their families, communities, workplaces & organizations
 - *as workers* – within specific segments of workforce
 - *as members of different classes:* high, middle or low-income – including whether they live in underserved urban settlements or rural villages
 - *as members of specific groups:* race, ethnicity, caste or religion

INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT, GENDER & EQUALITY

- **First-Ever Global Estimates**
 - 60 per cent of all workers, women and men, are informally employed (ILO 2018)
 - 50 per cent of all workers, women and men, are self-employed (UN 2015)
- **Equality** - for women workers in the informal economy means...
 - not only equality with men workers in the informal economy
 - but also a fair deal for both women and men workers in the informal economy
- **Equality with men workers in the informal economy** - requires addressing
 - restrictive gender norms and relationships
- **A fair deal for women and men workers in the formal economy** - requires addressing structural barriers that affect both men and women in the informal economy, including...
 - dominant narratives which stigmatize all informal workers as being non-compliant, having low productivity or being illegal
 - lack of legal identity and rights
 - lack of voice and bargaining power
 - inappropriate economic models and policies
 - hostile legal and policy environment

GLOBAL MOVEMENT OF WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS

- SEWA
- International Domestic Workers Federation
- 4 Regional HomeNets (Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia)
- StreetNet International
- Global Waste Pickers Alliance

Total: over 1000 affiliated organizations in 90 countries with over 3.5 million members

WOMEN HOME-BASED WORKERS: INTERSECTION OF DIFFERENT IDENTITIES/SOURCES OF INEQUALITY

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- ▣ as *women* - **gender norms and relationships** reflected in...
 - **limited time availability & physical mobility of women:** more women, than men, do market-based work from home
 - **low valuation of work done by women:** dominant actors, and women themselves, tend to see women home-based workers as not being gainfully employed
- ▣ as *workers* – factors which affect both women and men home-based workers
 - **isolation:** undermines ability to organize and act collectively
 - **invisibility:** undermines valuation of work done
- ▣ as *residents of underserved settlements:* productivity of both women and men whose *home=workplace* undermined by...
 - **insecure housing rights**
 - **small size of house**
 - **poor quality of housing**
 - **limited, if any, basic infrastructure services**

WOMEN WASTE PICKERS: INTERSECTION OF DIFFERENT IDENTITIES/SOURCES OF INEQUALITY

- as *women* - **gender norms and relationships** help determine which tasks are done by women and men within the waste collection-sorting-recycling-processing-disposal system
 - among waste pickers, in most countries, women (and children) are more likely to do the primary collection and sorting while men are more likely to sell recyclables and/or own processing units
- as *workers* – factors which affect both women and men waste pickers
 - **city rules & regulations**; which determine who is entitled to collect waste and bid for solid waste management contracts
 - **abuse of authority** by police and local officials: harassment, confiscation of waste and vehicles used to transport waste
 - **dependence on waste dealers**: for setting the price for - and buying - recyclables
- as *residents of underserved settlements*: productivity of both women and men street vendors is undermined by...
 - **small size of house/housing plot**: which serve as storage space
 - **long distance and limited access/high cost of transport**: between collection point, home/storage space and point of sale

CITY CONTRACTS FOR WASTE PICKERS: BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

Asociacion Recicladores Bogota (ARB) (founded in 1990)
co-founded by Nohra Padilla and Silvio Ruiz



Legal Campaign (20 years)
technical support from pro bono lawyers and NGOs led by
Nohra Padilla who wrote many legal briefs



First Global Waste Picker Conference, Bogota (2008)
hosted by ARB, organized by international planning committee



Constitutional Court Victory (2011)
right of waste pickers to bid for solid waste management contracts



Successful Bid for Solid Waste Management Contract (2012)
technical analysis of appropriate costs for waste services
research on conditions and trends in the waste picking sector
policy dialogues with mayor and city officials



Waste Picker Integration Model Launched in Bogota (2013)
Goldman Environmental Award to Nohra Padilla (2013)
**National Ruling to Replicate Bogota Model throughout
Colombia** (2014)



WHAT DO WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS WANT & NEED?

- ❑ Legal Identity & Recognition
- ❑ Organization & Representation
- ❑ Economic Rights:
 - right to work/livelihood
 - freedom from harassment/penalization
 - property rights: home + workplace
 - labor rights
- ❑ Social Protection – health + child care + pensions
- ❑ Access to public space/natural resources + public services + public procurement
- ❑ Access to financial & business development services

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

- Support grassroots organizations of women informal workers
- Support statistical and research work that generates the evidence these organizations need in their on-going legal struggles & advocacy efforts
- Create opportunities for these organizations to engage with government, private sector, international agencies and donors
- Support documentation & analysis of these organizations and their strategies