

## **WIEGO CONSTITUTION AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE**

To mark its fifth anniversary in April 2002, WIEGO undertook a yearlong strategic review and planning process. The stated purpose of this process was to review our longer-term vision for the informal economy and for WIEGO. We specified four important aspects of our work that needed to be addressed: our conceptual and strategic approach; our progress and effectiveness; our institutional structure and relationships; and our financial resource base. The one major event in this process was a weeklong retreat at the Rockefeller Foundation Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, in July 2002.

During its first five years, the flexibility and informality of WIEGO's structure served it well: allowing WIEGO to grow rapidly and to move nimbly. At the Bellagio Retreat, the Steering Committee began to question the merits of retaining a flexible and informal structure. This rethinking was driven by several related concerns. The first had to do with questions of what and who we are. Is WIEGO a research policy network or a support organization to an international movement of informal workers? More importantly, who gets to participate in WIEGO? Does WIEGO have members or associates or affiliates? What roles and responsibilities do they have? A second concern had to do with issues of accountability and transparency. To whom is WIEGO accountable? to its grassroots members? to all of its members? Whether and how is WIEGO held accountable? The third had to do with the issue of whether or not to register.

At the Bellagio Retreat, a major share of the discussion time – both in small groups and in plenary – was devoted to addressing these concerns. Early on, it was decided that WIEGO should have a constitution that spells out the criteria of membership, the terms and conditions of leadership, and the procedures for accountability and transparency. After some discussion on each of these aspects, a Drafting Committee of three persons (Dan Gallin, Renana Jhabvala, and Biff Steel) was charged with drafting a constitution. Also at Bellagio, the Steering Committee decided upon a transition process leading to a final decision regarding registration; the formal adoption of the Constitution; the selection of individuals and member-based organizations to be invited to become Members; and the convening of the first General Assembly including a Delegates Assembly.

At its next meeting in 2003, the Steering Committee set up a Transition Committee (comprised of Marty Chen, Dan Gallin, Renana Jhabvala, and William Steel) to oversee the transition process and to develop guidelines and processes for institutionalizing the new structure mandated in the draft Constitution. The Transition Committee developed concrete criteria and guidelines for various provisions in the Constitution, including: selection of individuals and member-based organizations to be invited to become Members; size and composition of delegations from Institutional Members to the General Assembly; the nomination-consultation-ratification process for the new Management and Steering Committees and for candidates for the constituency representatives on the new Nomination Committee. At a key meeting in January 2005, the Transition Committee

also reviewed the WIEGO data base to identify who met the concrete criteria for Membership that had been specified and approved by the Steering Committee.

In October 2005, at its meeting in Accra, Ghana, the Steering Committee ratified the Constitution; reviewed the list of individuals and institutions selected for Membership; and established an Interim Nominating Committee (Jacques Charmes, Chris Bonner, Dan Gallin, Rakawin Lee, and Joann Vanek) to select persons for the new Management and Steering Committees and to nominate candidates for the constituency representatives of a new Nominating Committee.

What follows are the core provisions of the WIEGO Constitution:

### 1. Constituencies

The WIEGO network is comprised of individuals and institutions from three basic constituencies: member-based organizations of informal workers; research and statistics institutions; and development agencies. The latter category includes non-governmental organizations; government agencies; multilateral, bilateral, and other donor agencies; and inter-governmental agencies, including the specialized agencies of the UN, the ILO, and the World Bank.

### 2. Membership

Members are selected by decision of the Steering Committee, upon nomination by Programme Directors or Steering Committee Members. Members are expected to participate actively in WIEGO activities, and are consulted on and ratify selection of members of the Nominating, Steering and Management Committees. Members are individuals, except for member-based organizations representing informal women workers, which may have institutional membership, and whose representatives to Membership Meetings are to be called “Delegates.” Non-governmental organizations that wish an institutional affiliation may do so as Associates.

### 3. Leadership

#### *Steering Committee*

The Steering Committee has primary responsibility for policies, staffing, funding, and overall direction of WIEGO. It decides on WIEGO Membership, partnerships with other institutions, Coordinator, Program Directors, and any other key staff, and it is responsible for managing the process of selecting the Steering and Management Committees. The Steering Committee is responsible for reporting to and consulting with the WIEGO Membership. The Steering Committee may establish Committees as needed to carry out its functions.

## **Composition**

- Management Committee (Coordinator, Chair, and three members, all selected from constituencies)
- Programme Directors (ex-officio)
- Three individuals selected from each of the three constituencies
- Up to two individuals appointed by the Steering Committee, as needed.

The same person is to be Chair of both the Steering and Management Committees, and is to be from a member-based organization. All members of the Steering Committee have equal status, except that the Coordinator and Program Directors are excluded from voting on issues concerning their performance and conditions of employment.

### *Management Committee*

The Management Committee is responsible for overseeing implementation of WIEGO programs; budget planning, allocation and monitoring; fund-raising; and publications. The Management Committee advises the Coordinator and represents the Steering Committee with respect to program implementation.

## **Composition**

- Five persons, including the Coordinator and the Chair of the Steering Committee, selected from and endorsed by each of the three constituencies, with at least two from member-based organizations and at least one from each of the other constituencies.

### *Coordinator*

The Coordinator is responsible for coordinating implementation of the programs and decisions made by the Steering and Management Committees and for overseeing the work of the Secretariat. The Coordinator consults closely with the Management Committee and reports to the Steering Committee.

The Coordinator shall not be the Chair of the Steering or Management Committees.

### *Secretariat*

The Secretariat is responsible for technical program support, administration, communications, dissemination to the general public, and such other tasks as may be assigned by the Coordinator. The Secretariat consists of paid staff as established by the Steering Committee, assisted by short-term workers who may be engaged by the Coordinator as needed.

### *Programme Directors*

Programme Directors are appointed by the Steering Committee to develop and manage implementation of specific program areas. Program Directors nominate individuals and organizations active in their program areas to the Steering Committees as candidates for selection as Members. Program Directors report to the Coordinator.

The number of Program Directors is established by the Steering Committee.

### *Other*

The Steering Committee may establish other positions as needed for program implementation.

## 4. Governance Procedures

The following positions are selected through a process of consultation, nomination, and endorsement, managed by the Steering Committee:

- Management Committee, including the Chair and Coordinator
- Three individual members of the Steering Committee;
- Three individual members of the Nominating Committee.

### *Nominating Committee*

The Nominating Committee consists of five people, two appointed by the Steering Committee and one each elected by the three Constituencies at the General Assembly.

The Nominating Committee establishes a procedure for consultation with the constituencies in order to nominate persons for the above positions. Each constituency elects its own representative on the Nominating Committee at the time of the General Assembly, normally by consensus, but if necessary by a simple majority of those Delegates and Members present and voting.

Following consultations, the Nominating Committee proposes to the Steering Committee for approval a slate of nominees for positions to be filled. In selecting the nominees for the Steering Committee, the Nominating Committee shall be guided by the principle of achieving reasonable balance in the Steering Committee as a whole of members from the different constituencies. If the Nominating Committee lacks consensus on nominees, it will submit alternative candidates to the Steering Committee for it to make the final selection.

### *Terms of Office*

For those positions filled through the selection process, the term of office shall be four years, or until the next General Assembly after the four-year period. Terms are renewable, subject to satisfactory performance and adequate funding.

## 5. Membership Meetings

### *Delegates Meeting*

The Steering Committee reports every other year to a meeting composed of Delegates of the constituent member-based organizations, up to a limited number of Delegates to be specified by the Steering Committee. The purpose of this meeting is to verify that the activities of WIEGO continue to be relevant to informal women workers, and to receive input from them on the direction for WIEGO over the next two years.

### *General Assembly*

The General Assembly, composed of the Delegates of member-based organizations and the Members of the Researcher and Development Community constituencies, shall meet every other year in conjunction with the Delegates Meeting. The agenda shall include a report on activities, a two-year plan for future activities, a financial report, and a two-year projected financial plan. Also, at the time of the General Assembly, the three respective constituencies will meet to elect their respective representatives on the Nominating Committee. Decisions by the General Assembly are taken by consensus or, if necessary, by simple majority of those delegates and members present and voting.

It should be noted that all levels of leadership stipulated in the Constitution have been in place since WIEGO was founded in April 1997. In the past, an Executive Committee has played the role of what is now called the Management Committee. However, to date, there have been no explicit procedures for accountability and transparency. Members of the Steering Committee include the self-selected founders of WIEGO and others recruited by the Steering Committee; and members of the Executive Committee were selected by the Steering Committee. Under the new structure, to be institutionalized at the Durban General Assembly, the members of the Management Committee would be selected by the Nominating Committee in consultation with the Steering Committee and approved by the Members at the General Assembly. And the three constituencies among WIEGO Members would each elect a representative to a new Nominating Committee.

Finally, another concern – whether to register as an independent non-profit organization – has been reviewed periodically by WIEGO. There appear to be at least three reasons to register: *institutional* - to give WIEGO an independent identity and status; *political* – to allow WIEGO to apply to participate in UN meetings or to be on the ILO's special list of collaborating institutions; and *financial* – to allow WIEGO to receive and manage funds independently (rather than through partners or through an intermediary). At the Bellagio Retreat, the Steering Committee decided to investigate the legal requirements of registration in different countries to determine where (and how) WIEGO might register without having to change its new structure outlined above. The Steering Committee appointed a Registration Sub-Committee to investigate registration options. That sub-committee looked into what would be required to register in both the USA and the UK, including the requirements regarding governing bodies and general meetings. At its meeting in October 2005, since the new Constitution gives WIEGO an institutional identity and since WIEGO has found a good intermediary (the Tides Center) to manage its funds, the Steering Committee decided not to register until there is a compelling need to do so.