

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACT  
FOR SPECIAL SESSION

**A 21<sup>st</sup>. CENTURY SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR INFORMAL WORKERS:  
AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT, LEGAL & SOCIAL PROTECTIONS  
AND PUBLIC SERVICES THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

**TRACK IV: BUILDING AND RENEWING INSTITUTIONS:  
A SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

This Special Session will focus on five components of a social contract for informal workers: – appropriate policies and regulations; legal and social protections; fair hiring, sub-contracting and commercial practices; public goods and services; and collective bargaining. Informal workers represent 61 per cent of all workers globally and 90 per cent of all workers in developing countries. A large share of informal workers are self-employed – 64 per cent globally and 79 per cent in developing countries. Hence, the need for a social contract which includes organizations of informal workers in social dialogue and addresses the relationship between informal workers, the state and the market (not just an employer): promotes appropriate economic policies and regulations (not just labour regulations) for informal workers; governs the commercial and sub-contracting transactions (not just employment relations) of informal workers; and extends access to public goods (including public space) and public services for informal workers.

To illustrate how this multi-component social contract should be promoted, this Session will place special, but not exclusive, focus on two groups of informal workers: homeworkers in global supply chains and street vendors in cities and towns. Homeworkers illustrate the working conditions and relations of dependent contractors who are often misclassified as independent contractors because they supply the equipment and/or the workplace needed to produce a good or service and tend to work without direct supervision but depend on dominant actors to secure work orders and set prices. Street vendors illustrate the working conditions and relations of the informal self-employed whose livelihoods are impacted more by economic and sectoral policies than by labour regulations: in this case, urban planning and byelaws. Both groups also illustrate the need of informal workers for access to public goods and services to pursue their livelihoods: homeworkers need secure tenure and basic infrastructure services for their homes-cum-workplaces which are often in underserved informal settlements; and street vendors need secure vending sites in centrally-located public space. .

This Special Session will be organized by the global action-research-policy network WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) which is known for its ability to bridge grassroots realities and mainstream academic and policy discourse. This Session will feature WIEGO's unique knowledge of and perspective on homeworkers in global supply chains and

the informal self-employed, especially in urban areas: based on two decades of research, policy analysis and policy dialogues and other support to organizations of informal workers in more than 50 countries.

This Special Session will be chaired by Marty Chen, Co-Founder, International Coordinator Emeritus and Senior Advisor of the WIEGO Network. The authors of the papers to be presented at the WIEGO Special Session, as well as the research topics and questions they will address, are as follows. One author will present each paper in the session.

**Marlese von Broembsen, Director, WIEGO Law Programme and Jenna Harvey, Coordinator, WIEGO Focal Cities**

***Realizing Rights for Homeworkers Participating in Global Supply Chains: A Review of National and Global Governance Mechanisms***

Following the Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013, the labour rights violations in global supply chains, and indeed the governance of global supply chains, has become a pressing global issue. This paper evaluates key existing global and national supply chain governance mechanisms from the perspective of the most vulnerable workers in supply chains—informal homeworkers. Our argument is for a plural overlapping governance perspective that focuses on regulatory mechanisms at local, national, regional and global levels; and for the participation of representative organisations of homeworkers in all rule-making processes.

**Caroline Skinner, Director, WIEGO Urban Research, Sally Roever, International Coordinator, WIEGO and Pamhidzai Banu, Deputy Director, WIEGO Law Programme**

***A Social Contract for Street Vendors: Insights from the Ground Up***

Despite providing essential goods and services to the urban poor, street traders around the world are excluded from urban plans, and often subject to constant harassment. Drawing on the work of WIEGO, this paper starts by outlining the size and contributions of the street trading sector as well as policy and practice trends, with a focus on Africa. Using the lens of a social contract, the paper goes on to reflect on WIEGO's work with street vendors in Ghana and South Africa. In Accra, Ghana WIEGO has long worked with vendor organisations and facilitates dialogues with municipal authorities. In Durban, South Africa, WIEGO has worked with partners on inclusive urban planning and challenged laws that criminalise vending. In both countries WIEGO's law programme has trained vendors to use administrative law, with good effect. Reflecting on these experiences, the paper will outline key elements of a social contract that would secure street vendor livelihoods.

**Laura Alfers, Director, WIEGO Social Protection Programme & Rachel Moussie, Deputy Director, WIEGO Social Protection Programme**

***Social Protection for Informal Workers: Social Dialogue to Improve Access to Health, Child Care and Pensions.***

Social protection has come under intense scrutiny in debates about the nature and form of a social contract for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly as the employment relationship on which social protection has traditionally been founded continues to erode. This paper focuses attention on three

forms of social protection which are key to protecting the incomes of informal workers: health, child care and pensions. It provides an overview of the forms of social dialogue in which membership-based organisations of informal workers have been involved in relation to these three areas, using these examples to reflect on the implications for collective bargaining institutions which are inclusive of the needs of informal workers.

**Jane Barrett, Director, WIEGO Organization and Representation Programme**

***Influencing the Policies and Processes of Formalization: Collective Bargaining by Informal Workers***

This paper will explore the contribution of collective bargaining by informal workers to the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Drawing on case studies of collective bargaining conducted by membership-based organisations of informal workers, the paper will demonstrate how such organisations are participating in and influencing the design, implementation and monitoring of laws, regulations and policies related to formalization and reduction of decent work deficits in the informal economy. The paper will demonstrate that collective bargaining can help stem the informalisation of formal wage jobs, result in the formalization of previously informal wage employment, improve working conditions for informal self-employed workers, and produce consensus between social partners on strategies to implement ILO Recommendation 204.