



# WIEGO

## Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

# WIEGO MBO Newsletter

A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations of  
Informal Workers

April 2019

### Greetings friends and colleagues!

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of the WIEGO MBO Newsletter. We love to hear from you! Megan MacLeod is coordinator of this newsletter. If you have questions or comments about this newsletter, or if you would like to submit content for the next issue, please email Megan at [megan.macleod@wiego.org](mailto:megan.macleod@wiego.org).

### Contact us at WIEGO!

#### Address:

Women in Informal  
Employment: Globalizing and  
Organizing (WIEGO) Limited  
79 JFK Street #32,  
Cambridge, MA 02138 USA

**Tel.:** 44-161-819-1200

**email:** [wiego@wiego.org](mailto:wiego@wiego.org)

**Web:** [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)

#### Facebook:

[facebook.com/wiegoglobal](https://www.facebook.com/wiegoglobal)

**Twitter:** [@wiegoglobal](https://twitter.com/wiegoglobal)

### What's going on at WIEGO?

Take a look at our [recent](#)  
and [upcoming](#) events and  
activities!

### WIEGO's 7th General Assembly

By Megan MacLeod

With the theme, "Organizing for Change", [WIEGO's seventh General Assembly \(GA\)](#), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a lively affair. A total of 130 people, including WIEGO individual and institutional members, leaders, activists, researchers and policymakers, and so on from 41 countries around the world, attended the event.

Held every four years, [WIEGO's GA](#) is a place for membership-based organizations to reflect on the progress WIEGO has made, to share the work that they are doing, to build relationships with other workers from around the world, to make future plans and to elect members to the [WIEGO Board](#).

Some of the highlights included the [Public Dialogue on Forging a Path towards Recognition and Inclusion of Informal Workers](#) to discuss the implementation of Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, and the [keynote address given by Marty Chen](#).

As WIEGO continues to push forward into 2019 with the mandate from its members, we wanted to build on the theme from the GA by highlighting stories focused on global movement building. We hope you find inspiration here in the voices of informal workers striving for change around the world.

### Movement Building from the Ground Up! Waste Integration in South Africa's (WISA) first worker exchange

By Vanessa Pillay

In a three-day worker-to-worker exchange organized by WIEGO's [WISA Project](#) (Waste Integration in South Africa), waste pickers from Argentina, Brazil and Colombia met their counterparts in three South African cities: Tshwane (the capital), Johannesburg and Sasolburg. Held in November of 2018, the exchange gave workers the chance to share experiences, struggles and organizing strategies in their respective countries and cities.

This exchange, the first one held as part of the project, is part of WIEGO's strategy to empower waste pickers through organization, education, and capacity-building so that they can advocate for their own rights in their countries and cities.

Following the event, workers (both hosts and visitors) reflected on their experiences and what they had gained from the exchange:

*"Hosting our visitors was an honour and a wake-up call to many of us who had given up hope about our future as waste workers. But hearing the [vast] experience of our visitors Severino de Lima from Brazil and Nohra Padilla from Colombia inspired us to think, if they can do it, then we should also be able to organise to win our demand."* — Palesa Maloisane, Sasolburg

*"I've learned the value of unity, leadership, to believe in what we are doing and to be even more proud as a reclaimer. Being encouraged by other women leaders to continue in this struggle has helped me to stay strong as a newly elected woman leader."* — Eva Mokoena, Johannesburg

*"I was very impressed to know about South Africa's apartheid and their long resistance. I only knew about Mandela. ... When I met my comrades in the Meeting, I was shocked because I felt that it wasn't really over. Of course it is, but my WP [waste picker] comrades are still living the same injustices. ... In Argentina, we accom-*

*Continued on page 2*



Participants in WIEGO's GA listen carefully to presenters. Photo: Jonathan Torgovnik

## Home-based workers: progress in building the global movement

By Chris Bonner, poem by Patricia Coñoman

Home-based workers have taken another step forward in their journey towards the formation of a global network of Home-based workers. In November 2018, the International Working Group, composed of representatives from Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and South East Asia, met in Johannesburg, South Africa.

We shared information and experiences about activities in our countries and regions that are contributing towards strengthening the movement. We began discussions on what the global network would look like as a starting point for the development of a constitution. In particular, we debated which organizations would be eligible for membership and what would be the criteria. We also decided to focus on visibility and recognition of home-based workers as workers, making important economic and social contributions, as a theme to unify and mobilize around. And we were unanimous in our recommendation to call the network HomeNet International!

Plans are afoot to hold meetings in each region during 2019 so that home-based workers can participate more widely in planning for the global network. There are also plans for intensive work in the newer regions of Africa and Latin America to reach out to more home-based workers and to strengthen organization in countries where there is already a base, such as Chile, Uruguay, Kenya, among others. The proposed date for the launch of the network is mid-2020, so there is much organizing to be done!

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 1

*plished many rights only by resisting exclusion and fighting it back. [South African] WPs should fight back as we did and be in solidarity with each other and united. Now we are recognized and have salaries. Hope we smoothed the way and inspire struggle spirit. Once more, I was impressed by theirs.* — Paola Caviedes, [FACCyR - CTEP](#)

*“In the cradle of Nelson Mandela, we have to follow his example to keep struggling. ... Institutions and NGOs should support us but they should not lead us. We need to lead ourselves. Our allies give us support. Many will come that want to help you. Be careful, because some might want to use you or your work and take advantage. It’s people who put their hands in the garbage and work in landfills that must lead the struggle. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. ... We didn’t come to tell you the recipe but to share tools with you to develop your own strategies.”* — Maria Soledad Mella Vidal, Chile

*“I had no idea that this work was done in so many places. I have one wish. I would like us to close with the National Anthem of South Africa. We want to send away our guests with a lot of love.”* — Goodman Mamba, Johannesburg

*“God be with you all. We are no longer lost. This experience has meant a lot. If I talk any more I will cry! Thank you.”* — Steven Leeuw, Johannesburg

## United and Strong – Equal Rights, Respect & Justice for Domestic Workers

By Sofia Trevino

Marking its five-year anniversary, the [2nd Congress](#) of the [International Domestic Workers Federation](#) (IDWF) was convened in Cape Town, South Africa, from 16 to 19 November 2018.

Participants included 107 delegates from 69 affiliates in 55 countries, representing over 600,000 domestic workers worldwide and 100 observers from trade unions, labour NGOs, funders, partners and allies. During the Congress, affiliates assessed IDWF progress, elected officials and discussed the direction for the next five years.

In preparation for resolutions, workshops were carried out during the first two days. Among others, resolutions were adopted on protecting migrant domestic workers, organizing in the on-line economy, the care economy and eradication of child labour in domestic work. A composite resolution on addressing discrimination was also adopted, resolving that the IDWF will implement a programme of action to address discrimination according to gender, race, ethnicities and sexual orientation. The resolution on the sustainability of IDWF will involve a project to include all IDWF affiliates in improving their systems with regard to affiliation fees. In addition, two emergency resolutions were adopted: (1) to stand in solidarity with the Central American migrants and call upon the USA government to stop militarization of the border, and (2) to denounce the deterioration of human and workers’ rights in Brazil.



Domestic workers and allies celebrate during the IDWF's 2nd Congress. Photo: Sofia Trevino

Elections for the Executive Committee were carried out on day three. None of the nominated candidates from the six regions were contested and hence the Congress unanimously approved the results. For a full list of the current Executive Committee, please [visit the IDWF website](#).

During the last day, delegates worked in regional groups to define priorities for the next five years. The results were shared in the plenary where Congress then discussed the proposed constitutional amendments and adopted proposals to strengthen the Federation’s objectives and strategic plan.

*“Let us look forward to the next five years. Let us never forget the struggle. Together we will overcome so much more!”* — Myrtle Witbooi, IDWF President address

## Global exchange of waste pickers in Buenos Aires

By Lucia Fernández

In 17-22 October 2018, a global exchange of waste pickers’ organizations, “Recycling in our hands”, was held in CTEP headquarters in Argentina with the support of WIEGO. Waste pickers from ten different countries and delegates from many cities in Argentina participated. During the exchange, participants learned about the Buenos Aires inclusive system where thousands of waste pickers collect and process recyclable materials in exchange for proper salaries and dignified working conditions. A final declaration was made on participants’ intent to keep working together as a Global Alliance — the [Buenos Aires Declaration: Recyclers United in Resistance!](#)

The Declaration, among other things, contains a list of “agreements” that the waste pickers came to during exchange. In summary, these include the following resolutions:

- To “not accept landfill closures without real, true and consulted alternatives for our fellow recyclers who work and live there”;
- To demand the state recognize their work, their contributions to the economy, and their role in waste reduction. This recognition should take the form of paid remuneration and access to rights available to formal workers —

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 2

## SHARED DREAMS

by Patricia Coñoman

We are very fortunate to have a poet in our midst. Patricia Coñoman Carillo from Chile, our Working Group member for Latin America, has written several moving poems about home-based workers and about some of our activities. Here is her poem inspired by one of the introductory meeting activities. We each had to state one word that we associate with home-based workers in our country.

With a word I express what I want to achieve  
Homeworkers in equal chains  
We are so many, so we started to put together  
A vast puzzle for social change.

The first one said Visibility  
A second said Recognition,  
and so,  
Many of us managed to connect  
in the struggle for solidarity.

Organization said another, and the other replied  
But we are so many scattered around  
Someone else thought, we are tireless.  
Unity can only be achieved through our work.

Our rights cried another, we are like all others  
Rights with justice and equality  
Not just because I work from home  
In a global world.

To globalize all hopes, with a HomeNet International  
We are many in a world that, Without looking on creeds or races  
We all struggle to be recognized.

With International Convention 177  
We can't forget that after so much work  
What we will be able to attain  
So that we can break the chains  
That have prevented us from moving ahead.

As participants noted, the overall messages were positive and strong. This set the tone for a meeting characterized by a spirit of openness, unity, optimism and determination.

Continued from page 2

such as health care, education, shelter, food, social security, recreation, etc;

- Further to the point above, to demand inclusion of waste pickers in waste management — from beginning to end — from the production of said materials, to their disposal and reintegration into the system. This includes rejecting all forms of waste management that do not explicitly involve the inclusion of waste pickers (specifically mentioned here is incineration as it is environmentally damaging and removes any possibility of recycling); and
- To “reject all forms of criminalization, discrimination and segregation of our work. The rights we have achieved, and the ones we have yet to win, will be for all our fellow workers.”

The Declaration ends with the intention to work in solidarity with all workers in the informal economy: “No worker without wage, no worker without rights.”

## HNEE CA workshops in 2018

By Karin Pape

In a particularly busy autumn this past year, [HomeNet Eastern Europe](#) and Central Asia (HNEE CA) conducted two sub-regional meetings — 6-9 October in Serbia (17 participants from 4 countries) and 15-18 November in Kyrgyzstan (15 participants from 4 countries) — and their annual international meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 14-16 December (20 participants from 8 countries). The meetings included several workshops, the goal of which was to identify common issues and resources to combat these barriers to the workers' livelihoods.

Despite the differences of the countries and conditions, workers identified several problems that are typical across the region:

- A lack of legal frameworks ensuring home-based workers' rights as workers;
- Connected to the above, a lack of social protection coverage; and
- The non-availability of formal jobs, which forces many women into home-based self-employment and to sell their products in markets.

However, there are examples showing that organized home-based workers are able to successfully negotiate for better conditions, such as government support for access to working spaces and markets free of charge or being exempted from sales taxes for their products. In the HNEE CA workshops, participants discussed how they might use mechanisms connected to international labour standards to gain similar rights.

Specifically, the mechanisms the workshops focused on were the [ILO Convention for Homeworkers \(C177\)](#) and the [ILO Recommendation “Transition from the informal to the formal economy No. 204 \(R204\)”](#). C177 stipulates equal treatment of homeworkers in relation to other wage earners. Homeworkers are sub-contracted workers who work in their homes and who are at the



This shop displays some of HomeNet Eastern Europe's members' wares. Photo: Karin Pape

bottom of national or international supply chains. R204 covers (among other things) the rights of the self-employed in the informal economy.

Another topic in the workshops was how to prepare for the second regional General Assembly of the Network in 2019.

The highlight of the meeting in Bulgaria was the opening of the shop “Eurasia” at a very prominent place in Sofia, where network members of all eight countries had the opportunity to sell their products.

## Resources for Organizing

### [Advancing cooperation among women workers in the informal economy: The SEWA way](#)

**Description:** This report discusses the success, challenges, and opportunities that the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), based in India, has had in gaining support through the formation of the cooperative.

### [Your Toolkit on ILO Convention 189 — The Domestic Workers' Convention \(Africa Region\)](#)

**Description:** A tool for domestic worker organizers so they can understand the ILO Convention 177 on domestic work and how the Convention can be used to promote the rights of domestic workers.

To access further resources for organizing, visit [WIEGO's Worker Education/Organizing Materials](#) page on the WIEGO website and sign up to receive WIEGO's [MBO Newsletter](#) for more content.