



International  
Labour  
Organization



# Extending childcare services to workers in the informal economy: Policy lessons from country experiences

ILO and WIEGO Policy Brief No. 3

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, women workers shoulder more childcare responsibilities than men due to persistent gender norms across all countries (ILO, 2018a). The challenge of earning an income and raising a child is made more difficult by the lack of social and labour protections that characterize work in the informal economy. For many working parents in the formal economy, access to social and labour protection and services, such as regulated working hours, parental leave benefits and employer-supported childcare, gives them more scope to choose childcare solutions that suit their needs. Childcare solutions are limited for women workers in the informal economy and in work arrangements such as temporary, part-time or dependent self-employment. Without access to quality childcare services, women workers in the informal economy risk losing out on much needed income by reducing their hours of work, or they may shift into more vulnerable and low-paid forms of self-employment – such as home-based work or street vending – with more flexible arrangements that allow them to work and care for their children at the same time. In part due to their unequal care responsibilities, women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America (ILO, 2018b). They and the children in their care are among the most vulnerable.

Early childhood development services cover a broad range of programmes, including childcare for children under three years of age, preschool for children aged 3–6 years, and child protection or community health-care and parenting programmes for parents and their young children (Shaeffer, 2015). The brief will focus on childcare services for children aged 0–3 years. Based on primary and secondary research in low- and middle-income countries, the brief will outline the childcare service typologies that are available to workers in the informal economy, and will review the working conditions of those who provide these childcare services. This sector is both labour intensive and highly feminized. There is great potential in expanding the childcare sector to provide new decent work opportunities for the early child-

hood development (ECD) workforce and hopefully support a transition from the informal to the formal economy.

This third policy brief aims to highlight for workers' organizations and policy-makers how early childhood development workforce policies not only contribute to the needs of women workers in the informal economy, but additionally can ensure quality care for young children who are among the most vulnerable, and offer decent working conditions for childcare workers. Key components of ILO's policy guidelines on the promotion of decent work for childcare personnel have been included in this brief (ILO, 2014).

Childcare services remain limited in much of the Global South where the concentration of workers in the informal economy is highest. Data on childcare provision is scant. Estimates of enrolment rates in childcare services for children aged 0–3 years shows that out of the 87 countries with available data, 53 countries had gross enrolment rates below 20 per cent (ILO, 2018a). The average global enrolment rate was 18.3 per cent. Though global enrolment rates are higher for pre-primary education for children aged 3–5 years, in low-income countries enrolment rates are only at 23 per cent. These figures suggest that workers, in most cases women, may make alternative childcare arrangements such as relying on older siblings, other women family members, or domestic workers to care for children rather than using a childcare facility. However, a review of survey data from 31 countries in the Global South, shows that the most common form of childcare among working women with the lowest incomes is to care for their children while they work (UN Women, 2015). Among high-income working women, 10 per cent say they rely on a childcare facility, while only 1 per cent of the low-income working women use such facilities. Data suggest there are two major obstacles: first, the dearth of quality childcare services for children aged 0–6 years across the Global South; and second, the prohibitive cost of these services, where they exist.

## Key constraints to accessing childcare services

In order to assess the childcare services that are best adapted to women workers in the informal economy, it is important to consider the specific risks and constraints they face due to their employment status, their place of work and their gender and care responsibilities (Lund and Srinivas, 2000). In addition, migration to urban areas and demographic shifts are changing family structures, making it more difficult for women workers to rely on their families and kin for childcare (UN Women, 2019; ILO, 2018a). Focus group discussions with women workers in the informal economy have revealed that many women state that they cannot rely on other family members because they are rural migrants, or no longer live in extended family households.

**Affordability:** When childcare services are available, the main constraint identified by women workers in the informal economy is the high cost of these services. Their low and irregular earnings make it difficult to pay daily, weekly or monthly user fees. Analysis of household surveys from 89 countries shows that women in their prime reproductive years (aged between 25–34) are 22 per cent more likely to live in extreme poverty than men (UN Women, 2018). Women workers in the informal economy are also more likely to be in the most vulnerable and low-paid forms of work as dependent contractors, own-account workers and contributing family workers (ILO, 2018b). As most women workers in the informal economy are self-employed, they cannot rely on employer-supported childcare services.

**Accessibility:** The location of childcare services near a worker's home or workplace impacts on uptake. It is easier to imagine childcare services in a workplace such as a plantation, construction site, factory or company office (IFC, 2017). It is much harder to plan for childcare services across dispersed rural areas, in a marketplace, near a waste dump or recycling plant, or in informal settlements in urban areas where many of the lowest-income informal workers live and work. As regards the different places of work, home-based workers work in their own homes and therefore could benefit from childcare services in their nearby communities. Domestic workers may prefer a childcare service near their employer's home. Street traders, market vendors, and waste pickers work in public spaces where childcare services often do not exist. A mapping of the 42 markets and transport hubs in Accra, Ghana showed that there are only seven functioning childcare services sufficiently close for street vendors and market traders to use (Boateng-Pobee, 2018). In increasingly congested and sprawling urban areas where low-income groups may be pushed to the edge of the city limits, travel distances to childcare services and the associated costs are an important consideration.

Another key factor regarding accessibility is opening hours. Childcare services are more likely to be used by working parents and guardians if their opening hours reflect working hours. Self-employed women workers in the informal economy, such as home-based workers, street vendors, market

traders and waste pickers are likely to depend on a daily income to meet their needs. Therefore, cutting down on their working hours to match shorter opening hours of a childcare service leads to a direct loss of income.

**Trust and Quality:** For all parents and guardians, trust in a childcare provider is a critical criterion for children's enrolment. Trust is closely linked to perceptions of quality. Within the ECD literature, quality of childcare services is assessed through structural and process variables. Structural variables include factors such as basic infrastructure, staff qualifications and remuneration and staff-to-child ratios. Process variables refer to the quality of interactions between staff and children, staff and parents, and between children themselves (Araujo et al., 2015). Structural and process variables are interrelated – a cramped and unhygienic space, lack of training, low wages and inadequate staff-to-child ratios all contribute to low quality interactions (Vandell and Wolfe, 2000; Araujo et al., 2015). In discussions with women workers in the informal economy, many noted that they would rather keep their child with them at work, reduce their working hours, or shift into more flexible informal work than use a childcare service where they feel their child could be harmed or neglected (Alfers, 2016). Consequently, women workers pay the price of poor quality childcare services by compromising their income security. Assessments of quality by parents are diverse, but when asked: "What makes for a good childcare centre?", women in the informal economy across five countries and from multiple economic sectors identified the following characteristics and conditions as central to the provision of quality childcare services (ibid.; Boateng-Pobee, 2018).

Good quality childcare services should:

1. Be affordable and accessible – either free or subsidized;
2. Have opening hours that can accommodate informal workers' long and irregular working hours;
3. Encourage parental participation in the running of the childcare centre and establish strong communication between parents and childcare providers;
4. Offer educational components and learning materials;
5. Ensure a connection to a health service that can monitor children's nutrition and development;
6. Provide basic infrastructure, good hygiene and adequate number of skilled staff;
7. Offer nutritious food; and
8. Guarantee that childcare workers receive a living wage, training and decent working conditions.

For many women workers in the informal economy, quality childcare not only allows them to work, but also represents a route out of poverty for their children. As one street vendor in Ghana says: "I take my child to the school [childcare centre] to get a bright future – I don't want him to be like me" (Alfers, 2016). Quality childcare provision can also keep children away from unsuitable workplaces and prevent child labour.

## 2. CHILDCARE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

As discussed in the first policy brief in this series, workers in the informal economy rely on older girls and women in their households to look after children while they work. This only perpetuates intergenerational poverty and gender inequality as girls may miss out on an education, and older women may find themselves caring for young children at a time when they themselves need care and may still be working. A typology of childcare services contributes to better policy recommendations that can ultimately improve options for informal economy workers. This will consequently lead to better income security, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work done by women and girls.

Childcare services focus on providing a nurturing and safe environment for infants and toddlers with access to adequate nutrition, education materials, and opportunities to play, and are also more likely to run for a full day to align with parents' working hours. Childcare services are often targeted at children aged 0–3 years and provided separately to preschool education for children aged 4–5 years. Preschool is aimed at preparing young children for primary education. It may offer only a partial childcare solution for working parents as in many countries preschools open for only a half-day and align with normal school hours. Childcare is also needed for children after school hours or during school holidays when parents are still working; however, these childcare modalities are not discussed here.

The typology in table 1 outlines the main forms of childcare provision available to workers in the informal economy and their young children aged 0–3 years based on primary research and a review of secondary sources. The lack of data in low- and middle-income countries on childcare services limits the possibility of a more quantitative analysis regarding enrolment rates, quality criteria, and working conditions within the sector.

The childcare services are categorized in table 1 between home- and centre-based care. Home-based care refers to childcare provided for a group of children in the caregiver's home or caring for children in their own home. This can be done by a neighbour, domestic worker or childcare minder. Though it may be possible for a neighbour or family member to help with childcare for a small sum or payment in kind, hiring a domestic worker or childcare minder is not a common form of childcare as most workers' earnings in the informal economy are too low or irregular to hire a domestic worker to care for children (UNICEF, 2016; Alfery, 2016). Domestic workers are key providers of childcare services for middle- and high-income households (see box 1).

Centre-based care may also be referred to as nurseries, creches or day-care centres. In the case of the working poor, these facilities will be situated in informal settlements, rural communities, or on or near worksites and can be run by a range of diverse actors, including government, workers' organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community- and faith-based organizations, private providers and employers. Both home- and centre-based care can be registered or licenced with the government and regulated on the basis of national standards of early childhood development and care where these exist.

The type of childcare impacts not only on the parents and children using the service, but also on the childcare workers who provide the service. These various childcare services offer diverse working conditions for childcare providers – most of whom are women. With a focus on childcare services for workers in the informal economy in the Global South, table 1 highlights the different possible employment status that childcare workers might have, depending on the registration status of the childcare services and its financing model.



**Table 1. Typology of childcare services available for workers in the informal economy (children aged 0–3 years)**

Type of Childcare Provision	Registered / Unregistered	Employment status of childcare workers	Financing modality of childcare centre
Home-based childcare service <sup>1</sup>	Unregistered	informal own-account workers informal waged or salaried workers contributing family workers unpaid volunteer workers <sup>2</sup>	user fees in-kind transfers
Home-based childcare service	Registered	informal/formal own-account workers informal/formal waged or salaried workers contributing family workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees public subsidies
Private for-profit centre	Unregistered Registered	own-account workers informal/formal waged or salaried workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees in-kind transfers
Community/NGO centre	Unregistered Registered	informal/formal waged or salaried workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees in-kind transfers public subsidies donor funding
Cooperative	Registered	informal/formal waged or salaried workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees in-kind transfers membership dues cooperative profits public subsidies donor funding
Employer-supported centres	Registered	informal/formal waged or salaried workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees corporate profits public subsidies social insurance (social security contributions)
Public centres	Registered	informal/formal waged or salaried workers unpaid volunteer workers	user fees national revenues (public funding) municipal revenues (public funding) social insurance (social security contributions) donor funding

<sup>1</sup> Under this typology, home-based childcare service is defined as childcare provided for a group of children in the caregiver's home. See OECD, 2016, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> According to the ILO, "unpaid" is interpreted as the absence of remuneration in cash or in kind for work done or hours worked; nevertheless, volunteer workers may receive some small form of support or stipend in cash, when below one-third of local market wages (e.g. for out-of-pocket expenses or to cover living expenses incurred for the activity), or in kind (e.g. meals, transportation, symbolic gifts) (ILO, 2018c).



## Box 1: Recognizing childcare competencies and skills among domestic workers

Hiring a domestic worker to care for a child while also undertaking cleaning and cooking tasks may be the preferred childcare option for infants and toddlers. This option is available primarily to middle- and high-income households who can afford to pay for a domestic worker. Yet, high rates of informality among domestic workers globally means this form of childcare work is often low paid and without the necessary labour and social protections (ILO, 2018a).

ILO research shows that a high reliance on domestic workers for care services is indicative of insufficient care service provision in countries (ibid.). This includes countries as disparate as Angola, Brazil, China, Honduras, Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Many Arab states such as Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also included due to a heavy reliance on migrant domestic workers to care for children and the elderly. In these countries, domestic workers represent a high proportion of workers in the care sector. This suggests that many domestic workers acquire the skills to care for children even if they may not have the training or qualifications to become childcare providers in a home-based or centre-based service. Within the ECD sector these skills are not recognized and domestic workers are not considered childcare workers.

The ILO developed a training manual on childcare for domestic workers in the Arab region (ILO, 2018b). Though relevant for all regions, it was first piloted in Lebanon in collaboration with the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) and targeted at migrant domestic workers. The training manual is intended to be a tool for organizations and trainers working with domestic workers who are interested in upgrading their skills on childcare and recognizing the value of the work they do as childcare providers. It also includes a module on how to set up a childcare centre, which could be of interest to domestic workers wanting to readjust their careers based on skills they have developed taking care of children.

The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) promotes continuous skill development, training and qualification building of domestic workers. State regulations and services play an important role in this respect by providing training programmes in collaboration with trade unions to support domestic workers as seen in Hong Kong (HKCTU and DWGU, 2015). In China, the Government subsidizes agencies that employ domestic workers to cover their social security insurance and offer training opportunities (ILO, 2018a).

## Home-based childcare – Unregistered

A common form of childcare service provision in low-income neighbourhoods and informal settlements are unregistered home-based childcare services. In South Africa, waste pickers, street vendors and domestic workers report leaving their children with neighbours who provide a childcare service out of their own home (Alfers, 2016; Horwood et al., 2019). In an informal settlement in Durban, South Africa, a group of women waste pickers pool their resources together to pay for an older couple to care for 10–15 children in their home. The older couple charges a fee for the service but, due to irregular and low earnings, waste pickers struggle to pay. One waste picker explains:

“There are other creches in the area which have better facilities, but they are expensive. Gogo’s childcare services are very cheap, she does not charge me too much. She treats me like I am her own child and she would say I can pay her anything or I can give her anything from the materials that I collect.” (Alfers, 2016).

Home-based unregulated childcare services are common in most countries due to the lack of childcare services in low-income areas. In Thailand, for instance, there are no public childcare services currently available for children under the age

of three. A public preschool programme exists for children aged 3–5 years. Factory workers migrating to cities require childcare before their children are three years old and these unregistered home-based childcare services fill the gap in public service provision. Research conducted by the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) in Bangkok, Thailand uncovered the use of unregistered childcare services run out of women’s homes. Parents pay a user fee of Thai baht 2,000 (US\$56) per month per child. There are 14 children for two caregivers aged from two months to three years. The childcare centre is open from 0630 to 1900 hours to match parents’ working hours. The cost of this childcare service is prohibitive for self-employed women workers in the informal economy and is targeted mainly at migrant factory workers who are waged informal workers in the informal economy (Moussié, 2016). In response to the growing need for quality childcare services, the Thai Government is working with UN agencies, such as UNICEF, to establish an equitable quality childcare service for children under three years (UNICEF, 2019a).

Quality in home-based unregistered childcare services is variable for different reasons. They are unregulated, so basic training and infrastructure requirements for childcare services are not applied. As they are found in low-income neighbourhoods, they may lack basic amenities. For instance, in the informal

settlement in Durban, women workers complain that the dirt roads turn to mud when it rains, making it too slippery to take their children to childcare facilities. Furthermore, childcare providers in these settings are all informal own-account workers, contributing family workers or unpaid volunteer workers. They lack social and labour protection and they likely have no formal training and may not have the education and qualifications prescribed by national ECD policies to be registered childcare providers. However, they offer a much-needed service in under-served communities, particularly among women who cannot afford centre-based childcare services.

## Home-based childcare – Registered

Registered home-based childcare services can offer quality care and a real alternative to centre-based facilities. In high-income countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland and Sweden, public subsidies are provided to home-based childcare services (OECD, 2016). In Mexico, the Government promoted community and home-based childcare services for women who were not registered in the social security system and could not benefit from creches paid through social security contributions. The *Programa Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras y/o Padres Solos* (PEI) was established in 2007 to boost women's labour force participation. It offers childcare services to women, single fathers or guardians in low-income households who are working, looking for work or studying and covers children aged 1–3 years and 11 months, and children with disabilities aged 1–5 years and 11 months. The Government pays up to Mexican pesos (MXN) 950 (US\$45) per month per child (or MXN1,800 (US\$92) for children with disabilities) directly to the childcare worker, and parents are expected to pay the remainder of the monthly fee (Mexico, SEDESOL, 2017).<sup>3</sup> By 2017, the PEI included 9,399 home-based and community child-

care services, supporting 310,968 parents and guardians, and reaching 327,854 children. This represents 39 per cent of the target population (Mexico, CONEVAL and SEDESOL, 2018). In 2018, the number of beneficiaries fell to 290,957 parents and guardians (ibid.).

The PEI also offers a subsidy to women or community groups who want to set up their own home-based or community childcare service (OECD, 2017). Women who want to set up a home-based childcare centre apply for a government grant of MXN70,000 (US\$3,550) to convert their space at home, buy educational and learning materials, pay for insurance and cover other costs (Mexico, SEDESOL, 2017). To qualify for the grant, women must complete their secondary education, receive a national accreditation as a childcare provider, and pass a psychological test (ibid.). A 2011 evaluation shows that 81 per cent of childcare workers have prior experience in the childcare sector (Ángeles et al., 2011). Home-based childcare workers can have a maximum of ten children in their care but must hire an assistant once there are more than eight children. Earnings vary among childcare providers, though wages for childcare assistants tend to be low at an average of MXN2,050 (US\$189) per month in 2007 (Staab and Gerhard, 2010). As a comparative figure, average earnings of women and men using the childcare service in 2010 was MXN2,865 (US\$244) (Ángeles et al., 2011). This points to several challenges with the programme in terms of staff training, remuneration and quality provision. The low earnings and wages among childcare workers with prior childcare experience suggest that the programme can undermine wages and qualifications in the national childcare sector (Staab and Gerhard, 2010). Moreover, as most are self-employed childcare providers in PEI, they are not covered under the social security system nor are they connected to trade unions representing other early childhood development professionals.

<sup>3</sup> In 2010, the Government of Mexico's average contribution of the total fee was 65 per cent and parents bore the remaining 35 per cent (Staab and Gerhard, 2010).



The Mexican case highlights the inequalities in childcare entitlements between workers in the formal and informal economy. According to the 1973 Social Security Law, women workers in the formal economy have the right to access institutional childcare for children aged 43 days up to 4 years (OECD, 2017). In contrast, women workers in the informal economy cannot benefit from this law as they are excluded from the social security system. As PEI was never enacted inside a law guaranteeing quality childcare services to women workers in the informal economy, the Government can stop financing the programme at any point (Staab and Gerhard, 2010). Indeed, in 2019, the Government announced that it will reduce funding to the programme and, instead provide a cash transfer to support low-income households with young children. Without the public subsidy, these home-based childcare centres will stop operating as parents cannot cover the full cost of the user fee.

### Private for-profit centre-based childcare – Registered

Private for-profit centre-based childcare could be made available to informal workers. An example from Accra, Ghana outlines some challenges informal workers face in accessing private for-profit childcare centres due to prohibitive costs and variable quality. In Ghana's cities, more women than men are likely to find employment in the informal economy, with trade dominating urban women's informal employment (Budlender, 2011). It is estimated that 80 per cent of street vendors and market traders are women. Across Accra's 42 markets, only seven childcare centres exist catering to the many women who work as *kayayeis* (head-load porters), street vendors and market traders (Boateng-Pobee, 2018). Three of these centres are private for-profit centres. All three are registered with their respective municipal district assembly responsible for delivering annual licences and regulating childcare centres. Every

year they receive monitoring visits from numerous ministries (health, education, social work and environment) to check on children's health, nutrition, educational outcomes and safety.

The private childcare centres take children aged from as early as six months to six years. However, most private childcare centres are too expensive for *kayayeis* and street vendors, even if they are more conveniently located in and around markets. The centres are financed entirely through user fees paid by parents, and no other financial support is provided by the municipality or the Market Traders Association. The Market Traders Association grants space to operate in the market in exchange of a rental fee. User fees range from Ghanaian cedi (GH¢)200 (US\$36) per term, equivalent to GH¢2 (US\$0.4) a day. Additional costs include daily meals, a uniform and learning materials such as notebooks and pencils. On average, user fees amount to GH¢5 (US\$0.9) a day. For *kayayeis* who earn the lowest income in the markets, this amount can represent half of their daily earnings estimated at GH¢8 to 10 (US\$1.4–1.8) (Moussié, 2017). The childcare centres take in children from the community whose parents are more able to pay the user fees. Therefore, though they operate in or around the markets, they do not necessarily cater to informal traders with the lowest and most irregular income.

Due to the high user fees, most informal traders can only afford to send their children to the centres for three to four days a week, or they need to take their children out of the centres when they cannot afford to pay the daily fees. This can disrupt learning, particularly for children aged 3–5 years. It may also suggest that the children are with their working mothers on the other days of the week. The positive impact of quality childcare services on children's development and on earnings of women informal traders is dampened by the lack of regularity in attendance.



In order to cover their costs, the childcare centres hire less qualified staff than designated by Ghana's Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (ECCD) and take in more children than the mandated staff-to-child ratio (Ghana, 2004). Teachers are meant to have a degree or diploma in early childhood education and trained childcare givers must at least have in-service education and training. Salaries for all caregivers range between GH¢200 and 250 (US\$41–52), while more qualified childcare providers would demand GH¢500 (US\$104) per month. This means most childcare workers earn less than the minimum wage of GH¢9.68 (US\$2) a day (Boateng-Pobee, 2018). The private childcare centres visited by WIEGO did not meet the staff-to-child ratio of 1:8 as set out in the national ECCD policy. On average, there were 62 infants, toddlers and young children for six teachers including the centre manager and a cook (ibid.).

### NGO or community-run centre-based childcare

In many countries across the Global South, governments have encouraged NGOs or community-run centre-based childcare services as a popular model to reach low-income households (Neuman, McConnell and Kholowa, 2014; Rao and Pearson, 2007). The degree of government engagement in financing and regulating these childcare services varies considerably across countries, impacting on availability, accessibility and quality. One example from Indonesia is illustrative of how NGO or community-run childcare centres can be specifically aimed at working parents – particularly mothers. In 2001, Indonesia created the Directorate of Early Childhood Education, within the Ministry of National Education, and deals with non-formal education. It has expanded and integrated early childhood development services for young children aged 0–6 years (UNESCO, 2005). This includes the *Taman Kanak-Kanak* and *Raudhatul Atfal* (TK/RA) kindergartens for children aged 4–6 years, *Kelompok Bermain* (KB) playgroups for children aged 2–4 years, and *Taman Penitipan Anak* (TPA) childcare for children aged three months to six years.

TPA childcare is intended to reach working parents and guardians near their residence or workplace. They operate near plantations, markets, factories and offices, and are available to workers in the informal and formal economies and across all income groups (UNESCO, n.d.). They are open for 8–10 hours per day and are mainly run by local private foundations, community self-help organizations, companies who own and run plantations and private entrepreneurs. International and national NGOs and foundations can provide infrastructure and resources alongside training and continuing technical support for teachers (ibid). Teachers are expected to have completed secondary school and have a diploma in early childhood education, and caregivers must be senior secondary school graduates according to the training and qualifications set out by the Ministry of Education (BAPPENAS and ILO, 2015). An evaluation conducted by the National Development Agency (BAPPENAS, 2013) found that, in the non-formal early childhood development services, 51 per cent of caregivers receive a salary, 32 per cent receive a financial incentive, and 17 per cent are unpaid volunteers. This evaluation echoes concerns raised in other evaluations of community-based childcare services regarding high turnover rates and a lack of motivation among low-paid staff and unpaid volunteer workers – most of whom are women (Neuman, McConnell and Kholowa, 2014).

Indonesia saw a rapid increase in early childhood development service providers from 62,352 in 2002 to 231,673 in 2017 (UNESCO, 2005; Yulindrasari, 2018). However, much of this increase has been attributed to kindergartens and playgroups, for children aged 4–5 years, rather than childcare centres for infants and toddlers (Hasan, Hyson and Chang, 2013). In 2017, there were 120,886 kindergartens and 84,538 playgroups as compared to 3,124 childcare centres. Across all early childhood development services, the expansion is through private for-profit, NGO and community-run services. Ninety-nine per cent are funded by private funds, with only 1 per cent financed by the government (Yulindrasari, 2018).



The trends in the ECD sector in Indonesia reflect that although there has been a rapid expansion of pre-primary education for children aged 4–5 years, far less expansion in public investment for childcare has been noted for children aged 0–3 years (ILO, 2018a). The reliance on NGO and community-based groups, without the provision of a public subsidy, leads to uneven and inequitable distribution of childcare services. It also places considerable pressure on governments to monitor and regulate a multitude of service providers to ensure quality standards and labour protection are met. As a result, there are significant disparities in accessibility and quality of childcare services across all income groups and regions in Indonesia. Though data is not available for childcare centres specifically, research shows that children from households in the highest income quintile are 1.5 times more likely to attend pre-primary education than children in the lowest income quintile (OECD and ADB, 2015). Close to 52 per cent of children in the lowest income quintile do not attend any form of pre-primary education.

### Childcare cooperatives

As seen in the examples above, the childcare sector is characterized by low earnings and a lack of social and labour protections for women workers – most of whom remain within the informal economy. Cooperative childcare structures are an alternative to private for-profit and NGO or community-run centres by promoting ownership and participation by childcare workers and users. Cooperatives are emerging around the world as an innovative form of care provision, both for childcare and eldercare, rooted in values of social justice, equity, democracy and decent work for all (ILO, 2016; ILO, 2017a).

In response to union members' demands, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) trade union (with close to two million women workers in India's informal economy) set up the Sangini Child Care Workers' Cooperative in Ahmedabad in 1986 (Alfers and Arora, 2016). The cooperative is responsible for 13 childcare centres providing care to 350–400 children aged 0–6 years, of whom 33 per cent are under two years. The centre provides an integrated approach to childcare, en-

suring that children receive basic education and social skills, adequate nutrition and basic health services. Their centres run from 0900 to 1700 hours to meet parents' working hours. As a result, most of the working mothers (64 per cent) who use the SEWA centres said that they were able to increase their number of working hours due to the support from the childcare centre (Association for Stimulating Know-How, 2011).

The shareholders of the cooperative are the childcare workers (*balsevikas*) and the mothers whose children attend the centres (ILO and WIEGO, 2018). The cooperative has 624 members including childcare teachers, helpers and children's parents. There are 26 childcare workers who are cooperative members, and three administrative staff members who support the management of the cooperative. A board made up of facilitators and parents is elected by the shareholders every three to five years. The democratic control of cooperatives by members is a key component in ensuring quality and trust in service providers (ILO GED/COOP, 2016). The board meets once a month to plan and manage activities, to deal with any problems that have arisen during the parent-teacher meetings or the monthly general meeting of all *balsevikas*, and to ensure adherence to financial regulations. The board is also responsible for setting the fees according to an estimate of how much it costs to look after and feed a child at home.

Every centre can take up to 30 children and there are at least two childcare providers per centre. On average, running one of these centres costs Indian rupees (INR)20,000 to 25,000 (US\$300–400) per month, which includes the salary of two facilitators, rent, the cost of supplies such as food and medicine, and supervision and administrative costs. In addition, the set-up costs are approximately INR25,000 (US\$400), which includes initial community consultations and the purchase of necessary equipment such as cradles, toys, and educational materials (ILO and WIEGO, 2018). Parents pay a monthly fee of INR175 (US\$2) per child, which covers approximately 17 per cent of the monthly running costs. The average daily income of workers using the childcare centre is estimated to be between INR50 (US\$0.69) and INR200 (US\$2.7) a day



(Alfers and Arora, 2016). As workers cannot afford to pay more, the childcare cooperative also depends on revenue earned in other SEWA cooperative structures, donor funds and public subsidies such as those provided under the Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme.

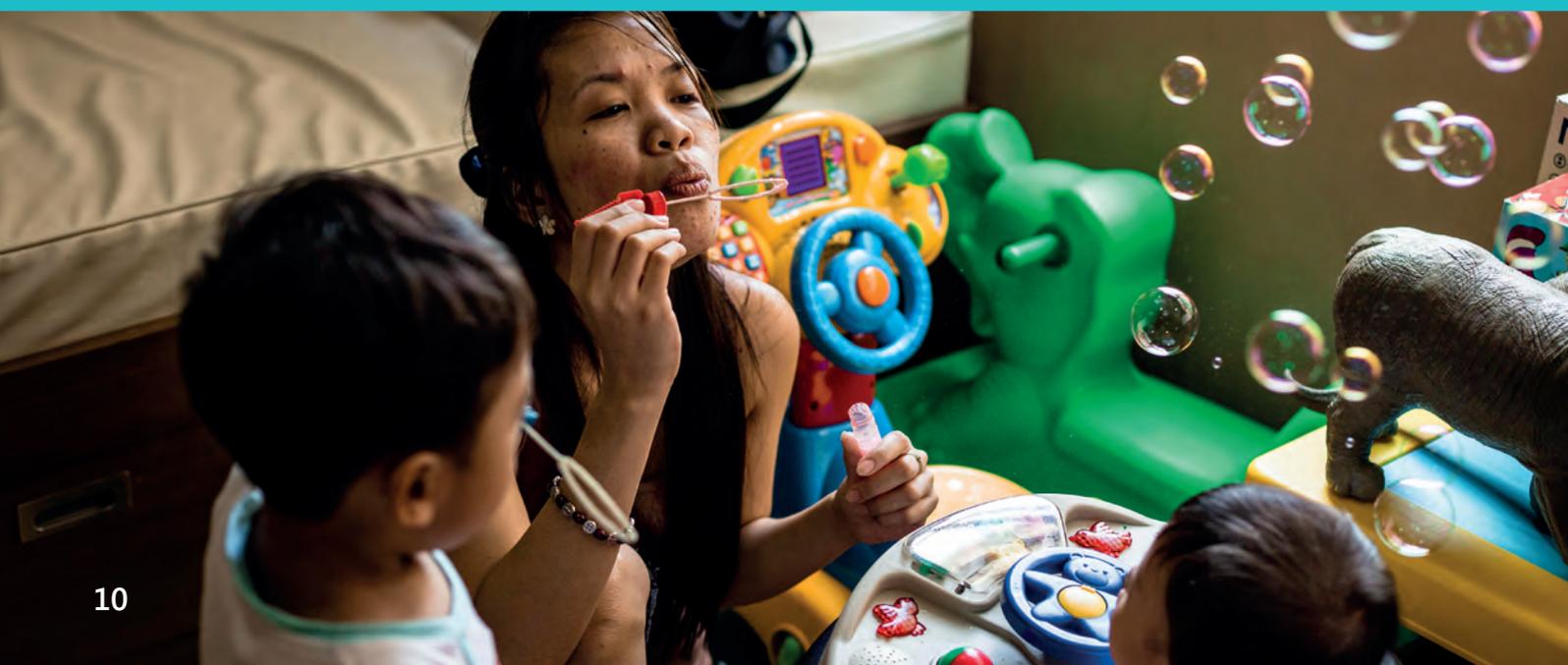
The *balsevikas* are both SEWA members and live in the communities where the centres operate so parents have considerable trust in the service. Though the cooperative cannot afford to pay childcare workers above minimum wage, they express a high level of job satisfaction as they are respected leaders in the community. On average, most of the childcare workers have been working in the cooperative for over 15 years and benefit from other SEWA-run cooperatives such as the bank, health insurance scheme and community health-care worker service. The cooperative also plays a larger role in the community: the centres serve as a public service access point for vaccinations, primary health care, and nutritional advice for parents. *Balsevikas*, who receive continuous on-the-job training, also train public childcare providers working in the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and advocate for better quality and greater accessibility of the public service for women workers in the informal economy.

### Employer-supported childcare

There is growing awareness that investing in childcare services for employees is good for business, resulting in reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, and higher productivity (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). Employer-supported childcare complements parental leave and benefits that support workers with young children. It offers practical childcare solutions to workers, allowing mothers to continue breastfeeding, and ensures a safe and nurturing environment for their children while they work. Employer-supported childcare centres can reach regular waged informal workers hired by formal sector firms in plantations or factories (Hein and Cassirer, 2010; UNICEF, 2019b). However, this form of childcare is difficult to extend to most other workers in the informal economy who are self-employed as dependent contractors, own-account workers and contributing family workers (ILO, 2018b).

The Mobile Creches model of childcare services on construction sites is an important example of construction companies contributing to the costs of childcare provision for self-employed workers in the informal economy. These construction workers, most of whom are migrants, are dependent contractors. Mobile Creches is an NGO that works in partnership with estate developers and contractors, other NGO service providers and the Government to set up and run childcare services for children of construction workers. As a result of the advocacy led by Mobile Creches, the Government of India passed the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act in 1996. This Act provides for the collection of a "cess", which is a levy of one to two per cent of project turnover – to fund specific initiatives for workers and their children (Bajaj and Sharma, 2016). This means construction companies are legally obligated to provide childcare facilities for workers even though they are outside of a standard employment relationship. Mobile Creches collaborates with construction companies to train childcare providers if a company wants to set up its own creche or supports them to outsource some components of the provision to Mobile Creches and other NGOs, while still providing funds, infrastructure and management supervision. Mobile Creches can provide the childcare service itself or supports and trains staff from other NGOs to provide childcare services for construction workers. This example demonstrates that where an employer is identifiable within the informal economy, legal obligations can be made for the provision of childcare services for self-employed workers and their children. The State has a role in regulation and ensuring that the employers' contribution (as part of business turnover) plays a funding role in childcare provision for low-income households. Far from being separate from the formal economy, workers in the informal economy are deeply intertwined and contribute to profits made by formal sector companies (Chen, 2012).

According to the World Bank, 26 out of 189 economies legally require employers to provide or support childcare services for employees (World Bank, 2019). Employer-supported childcare can be the result of voluntary workplace policies or state regulation. It can also be the result of collective bargaining. In this respect, SOCFINAF, a coffee export company in Kenya is a good example. The collective bargaining agreement



between the trade union Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (KPAWU) and SOCFINAF stipulates that the company will provide a childcare centre and teacher for permanent plantation workers and community members (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). Childcare workers can join the union and benefit from the collective bargaining agreement. Their monthly wages are equal to plantation employees and are within the low range of wages in the ECD sector at US\$71 (ibid.). They receive social security benefits and labour protections such as health insurance, a pension fund, severance pay, maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks, a housing allowance, transport and subsistence allowances for annual leave.

Women coffee pickers have higher productivity as they no longer carry a child on their backs while they work. As a result, women reach the same picking rates as men. The childcare service is also available to women in the community allowing them to look for other work opportunities or work as seasonal plantation workers. Since priority access is given to permanent workers and childcare places are limited, most of the migrant seasonal workers, who come in the thousands during coffee harvesting periods, do not benefit from childcare services. This raises questions about how migrant workers can be represented and covered on an equal footing with permanent workers in collective bargaining agreements to ensure their childcare needs are also met. Like migrant construction workers in India, they are dependent contractors whose more vulnerable employment status puts them and their children at greater risk.

## Public childcare services

Public childcare services can support women workers in the informal economy as it is an alternative to childcare services where user fees (even if low) can be a barrier. Governments in the Global South are adapting and expanding different forms of public childcare provision. In India, for instance, the ICDS was established in 1974 and is considered the largest public ECD programme in the world. There are also efforts in Latin America, such as in Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay, to establish public childcare services.

Ecuador is making great strides in expanding public childcare services following the commitment in 2006 to universalize early childhood education for children aged 0–5 years, including childcare and preschool. The Government increased spending on early childhood education from 0.28 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 0.64 per cent of GDP in 2014 (Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, 2019). This translated to a six-fold increase in uptake of services over a decade (Araujo, López-Boo and Puyana, et al., 2013). The rapid expansion of childcare services for children aged 1–3 years from low-income households relies both on public and NGO or community-based service provision. The programme *Centros de Desarrollo Infantil*, formerly *Centros Infantiles del Buen Vivir*, is coordinated by the Ministry of Economic and Social

Inclusion (MIES) in collaboration with local governments. Most of the childcare centres are run through third-party agreements with local governments, NGOs, community groups and churches who receive public resources to cover operating costs (Araujo et al., 2015). Some centres may charge an additional user fee to parents if they want to provide extra activities or infrastructure. The centres offer part-time, full-time services, as well as extended opening hours to cater for working parents and guardians.

Evaluations of the national programme show gaps in quality due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and learning materials, low staff-to-child ratios and lack of knowledge among childcare workers about early childhood development and education (ibid.). The Government set out to address these challenges even before the evaluation was completed by instituting several reforms. In 2013, an additional 3,000 childcare workers were hired to address the low staff-to-child ratio. In efforts to professionalize the workforce, childcare centre coordinators must hold a post-secondary degree in early childhood education and have at least one year of working experience in directing ECD activities (Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, 2019). Coordinators are responsible for education and care activities as well as administration and management of the centres. The coordinator oversees several care assistants, each of whom is responsible for up to ten children. By 2017, the Government aimed to hire 10,000 new care assistants (ibid.). Though care assistants are expected to also hold post-secondary degrees, many only have a secondary school degree. Therefore, the Government implemented an in-service training that allows care assistants to earn a technical university degree while working. Both coordinators and care assistants also benefit from continuous training through study circles to encourage self-reflection and peer learning.

These new qualifications and training initiatives are elevating the status previously given to childcare workers who were considered volunteers and received a small stipend (Staab, 2018). In 2015, wages for coordinators were set at an average of US\$534 per month, and US\$434 per month for care assistants. Childcare workers now earn at least the minimum wage and are also covered under the social security system. Additional reforms that are expected to improve quality are: a dedicated focus on children aged 0–3 years in the childcare centres; and undertaking regular inspections by MIES of existing childcare centres. If childcare centres do not meet the quality standards, then they no longer receive government funding to cover operating costs. Many of them are forced to close as a result of these inspections unless standards are improved (Araujo et al., 2015). In addition, the MIES shifted the responsibility for children aged 4–5 years who were initially included in the childcare centres to the Ministry of Education so as to relieve pressure on resources and invest more in children between 0–3 years old.

### 3. POLICY LESSONS FOR EXTENDING CHILDCARE SERVICES TO WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

The typology and corresponding short case studies presented in this section highlight both the gaps and possible strategies that governments, workers' and employers' organizations and other civil society actors can take to expand quality childcare services for women and men working in the informal economy or in work arrangements such as temporary, part-time or dependent self-employment. Though many governments now have national ECD strategies, considerable efforts are still needed to finance and implement these so that they translate into meaningful interventions and quality care jobs (Neuman and Deverececeli, 2012; ILO, 2018a).

#### Voices of workers

The focus on child rights and health, nutrition and education outcomes in early childhood development tends to obscure the rights of women to decent work and equal opportunity and treatment that can be promoted through quality childcare provision (Staab, 2018; ILO, 2018a). The voice of women workers, both as users of childcare services and as childcare providers, is marginalized in discussions and policy-making on early childhood development. Nevertheless, workers in both the formal and informal economies across different economic sectors express clear demands and expectations for quality childcare services (Alfers, 2016; UNICEF, 2016). Research shows that low-income women workers take up childcare services – if they are available, affordable, accessible and if they trust the childcare workers and the quality of care provided. Key to building trust and improving quality is the extent to which parents and guardians are involved in the running of childcare centres, as in the SEWA childcare cooperative example. Head-load porters, street vendors and market traders in Accra also express a desire to have a say in how the private and public childcare centres are managed (Boateng-Pobee, 2018). Depending on the childcare delivery model, this can be through a parent-teacher association, formal representation in local or national government structures as well as social

security institutions, or membership as an equal partner in a childcare cooperative. The greater voice of women workers in the informal economy will ensure that services respond to their complex needs, both as workers and primary caregivers of young children, rather than being subsumed under the one-dimensional lens of “the poor” (Alfers and Moussié, 2019).

The ILO's Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) encourages the provision of and access to childcare and other care services to enable women workers to seek out more secure employment in the formal economy (Para. 21). Key to reaching this outcome is ensuring that there are pathways towards formalization for women workers in the informal economy who are childcare providers. The lack of childcare services can be a barrier to women's access to decent work opportunities, just as the childcare sector, without sufficient public investment, can be a source of low paid and vulnerable informal work for women.

#### State responsibility and public financing

Core to expanding childcare services to workers in the informal economy is the notion of universal coverage. Quality childcare services should be available to all of those who need this service, while recognizing that some women and men will choose alternative childcare arrangements, such as caring for their children at home or leaving them with a trusted family member. The state has the overall and primary responsibility of ensuring childcare policies and services are universal and provide adequate and equitable benefits to children, women and men. The state can play multiple and complementary roles in defining the quality of the service, effectively regulating private and non-profit childcare services, financing and provision of childcare services, as well as an employer of public childcare workers (ILO, 2018a). The state can also prevent poorly designed and implemented childcare policies that serve to exacerbate inequalities.



The typology and case studies show that setting up and running a quality childcare service is costly and low-income workers cannot shoulder this expense. Public support can manifest in different modalities: direct provision, as in the Ecuador example; subsidies, as in the case of the SEWA childcare cooperative; or as in the Mexican home-based childcare services. The World Bank estimates that out of 189 countries, 35 per cent offer government benefits to private childcare centres. However, regulations of private childcare services remain weak. A review of 100 countries shows that only 25 regulated a price cap on the cost of childcare, 46 had a mandatory staff-to-child ratio, and a little over half had reporting mechanisms to government and regulated operating hours (World Bank, 2019).<sup>4</sup>

When public financing is limited then quality suffers through low staff-to-child ratios, lower wages and earnings for childcare workers, and a lack of training opportunities. As so much of the quality of the childcare service is dependent on the level and nature of the interactions with the childcare worker, then investing in childcare workers is of critical importance (Araujo et al., 2015). Insufficient investment in staff as evidenced in community childcare centres run by mainly women unpaid volunteer workers leads to low retention rates and poor outcomes for children (Neuman, McConnell and Kholowa, 2014). Alternatively, in the case of Indonesia, it can lead to limited and uneven expansion, thereby not offering a realistic childcare alternative.

Public investments can also come in the form of infrastructure and planning regulations. One of the highest costs of running a childcare centre in urban areas, after staff salaries, is rent. Crowded urban areas and informal settlements make it difficult to set aside space for childcare centres in urban plans. Municipalities can play an important role in providing space for childcare facilities near informal workplaces, including public spaces like markets, or in poor neighbourhoods and informal settlements.

Financing for universal gender-responsive childcare is ambitious and the rewards are considerable. Though targeted

programmes may be cheaper for governments, evidence from high- and middle-income countries shows that free, universal services are more likely to reach disadvantaged groups such as women workers in the informal economy and their children (Stewart, Gambaro and Rutter, 2015). The ILO outlines a high road to care provision in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets by 2030 on education, gender equality and decent work. The ILO estimates that 36 million jobs are needed in the early childhood development sector, including childcare for children aged 0–2 years and preschool for children aged 3–5 years (ILO, 2018a). This assumes a 50 per cent enrolment rate in childcare and 100 per cent enrolment rate in preschool. In the high-road scenario, staff-to-child ratios are set at 1:10 in childcare and 1:15 in preschool. Salaries for childcare workers and preschool teachers in low- and middle-income countries are set at 4.5 times GDP per capita. In high-income countries, salaries are set at the average salary of tertiary educated workers in each country. At current levels of investment in the sector, 15.6 million jobs will be created by 2030. A high road scenario would therefore lead to 20.4 million new decent work opportunities in the sector. The ILO estimates that this would cost US\$1.07 trillion, representing about 1.1 per cent of global GDP (ibid.). At the national level, financing estimates conducted in South Africa, Turkey and Uruguay show that part of the costs of expanding quality public childcare provision can be offset by an increase in social security contributions and tax revenue that accompany the new decent work opportunities (de Henau et al., 2019).

### Childcare as a component of social protection systems

The gains for working parents and young children from quality childcare services are enhanced if these are part of a complementary set of social and labour protection policies including maternity protection, health coverage and child benefits (ILO, 2018a; UN Women, 2019; UNICEF, 2019a). The decision to cut

<sup>4</sup> The International Finance Corporation (IFC) research on “tackling childcare” is a collaboration between the World Bank Group’s Women, Business and the Law team (WBL) and the Gender Secretariat of the IFC. A recent pilot study covers 189 economies on the data for employer-supported childcare and 100 economies for data on quality and safety standards. For the full list of economies and data, visit the Women, Business and the Law website at <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/resources>.



funding for the PEI in Mexico and replace the service with a cash grant is likely to jeopardize the positive benefits of the programme for women workers in the informal economy as they need both the service and the cash grant. Globally, the provision of maternity protection – through contributory and non-contributory benefits – covered only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns in 2015 (ILO, 2017). This masks significant regional variations with coverage rates as high as 80 per cent in Europe and Central Asia and as low as 33 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 16 per cent in Africa (ibid.). Strategies to expand coverage tested by low- and middle-income countries include creating more inclusive social insurance schemes that consider the contributive capacity of workers in the informal economy. In Mongolia, for instance, the Government is aiming for universal maternity protection coverage through a social insurance scheme for waged and salaried workers in the formal economy, which the self-employed, herders, and workers in the informal economy can join voluntarily. In addition, maternity cash benefits under the Social Welfare Scheme are provided to pregnant women and mothers of infants regardless of their contribution to the social insurance scheme, status in employment or nationality (ILO, Social Protection Department, 2016). Extension of non-contributory maternity protection schemes are more likely to reach a larger share of women workers in the informal economy (ibid.). Regarding child benefits, though there is much policy focus on the extension of conditional, targeted or universal child benefits, coverage rates remain low in regions with the highest rates of informal employment. Almost two-thirds of children globally – 1.3 billion children, most living in Africa and Asia – are not covered by any form of social protection (ILO, 2017).

### Pathways towards formalization

The ILO's *Policy guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel* (2014) set out minimum standards and principles for recruitment, training, remuneration and extension of social protection to the various workers within a childcare centre. The guidelines stress the positive impacts of offering decent working conditions to all workers in the ECD sector including childcare workers. Given the fragmentation that exists in childcare service provision in many

low- and middle-income countries with significant disparities between the rich and the poor, pathways towards formalization will vary. The typology of childcare services (provided in table 1) masks the fact that in any given country there is likely to be a mix of all these types of childcare models. A revision of the ILO guidelines could outline the steps governments should take towards improving the working conditions of the many women workers in the informal economy who provide childcare services.

What is evidenced in the typology of childcare services is that the vulnerability of childcare workers – assessed by their status of employment and their place of work – is directly related to the level of public financing for childcare services. Informal own-account workers, unpaid volunteer workers, or contributing family workers operating childcare services out of their own home in low-income neighbourhoods or informal settlements without public financing support, take on more risks regarding their income security, occupational safety and health, and liability for children's well-being. Though domestic workers are not included in the typology because most workers in the informal economy cannot afford to hire domestic workers, many are women workers in the informal economy providing childcare services and must be considered in any discussion on formalization for childcare workers (see box 1). Many childcare workers, including domestic workers, may not be recognized as workers under national labour laws; and social and labour protections must be extended to these workers. Furthermore, activities of home-based childcare providers may be criminalized if they are unregistered and may be immediately shut down without efforts by the government to improve the quality of the childcare service provided. Unregulated childcare centres may find it difficult to meet quality standards and regulations to register as a childcare service and benefit from public subsidies. In South Africa, for instance, ECD organizations are calling on the Government to simplify the registration process, define different ECD modalities and corresponding registration requirements, and focus on basic minimum standards for registration (SmartStart, 2019). The current registration demands will exclude many unregistered childcare services in informal settlements and poor neighbourhoods from qualifying for government subsidies that



would allow them to improve their services. This will be most detrimental for children, parents and guardians in low-income households.

Childcare services benefiting from government subsidies vary in their ability to provide decent work opportunities for childcare workers as seen from the examples of home-based childcare providers in Mexico and the childcare cooperative at SEWA. Childcare workers in the SEWA Sangini Childcare Cooperative receive continuous training financed in part by other SEWA cooperatives and benefit from SEWA's training institute. However, few workers' organizations representing informal workers have the associational power to bear the financial and administrative responsibility of managing childcare centres for its members to enable them to offer such training and wages for childcare workers (Alfers and Moussié, 2019). Even for a large trade union such as SEWA, it is difficult to maintain these training services for childcare workers without public subsidies. NGOs, such as OneSky for all children, provide training to childcare workers in unregistered and public childcare services aimed at migrant factory workers in industrial zones in Viet Nam (OneSky for all children, 2019). Training organizations, if regulated and in compliance with established government training and qualification standards, can offer new skills and qualifications to childcare workers in the informal economy. For more systemic and widespread national coverage though, governments could consider increasing public subsidies to childcare services and extending social protection to create formalization pathways for childcare workers – both in home- and centre-based childcare services. As in the case of Ecuador, professionalization and formalization are possible through an intentional public investment in recruitment, pretraining and in-service training.

### **Collective bargaining and civil society alliances**

Workers' organizations, cooperatives, NGOs, private for-profit companies and community groups providing childcare services can all play an important role in advocating for more public investments to establish pathways towards formalization. In India, for instance, *anganwadis*, childcare workers who run the ICDS, are considered volunteers, paid honorariums below the minimum wage and receive no social benefits in many Indian states. As a distinct and identifiable group of childcare providers, they can and do unionize to demand better social and labour protection from the Indian Government.

Home-based childcare workers and domestic workers face similar, though not identical, challenges to organizing and collective bargaining due to their isolated working environments in private homes – either their own or that of their employers. It is much more difficult for self-employed women childcare providers to spread across various childcare service delivery models to organize and unionize – even if they benefit from a public subsidy to run childcare services. They are also rarely represented within formal trade unions.

A positive example comes from California in the United States, where home-based childcare providers won the right through the Building a Better Early Care and Education System Act to negotiate for living wages, benefits and ongoing training (California, 2019). According to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), part of the AFL-CIO, there are 40,000 home-based childcare workers in California; many are women of colour and immigrants, with some earning as little as US\$5 an hour (AFSCME, 2019). Home-based childcare provision can offer more flexibility in terms of opening hours than centre-based childcare and is favoured by low-wage workers who have irregular or long working hours. The bill gives childcare workers a seat at the table with the State to address their labour rights alongside quality improvements to the service. The bill itself challenges a federal US discriminatory law that prevents home-based childcare providers from organizing and unionizing. The case of home-based childcare workers in California demonstrates that the State, rather than individual employers, is the main negotiating partner. This can allow for systemic improvements to overall home-based childcare services.

Another complementary approach to improving the quality of childcare services and labour rights is through broad civil society alliances that include workers' organizations alongside women's and child rights organizations. In India, the Forum for Creches and Child Care Services is running a national campaign calling for increased investment in public childcare services that can reach women informal workers and their children, as well as demanding decent working conditions for childcare workers in public and private childcare provision (Moussié, 2017). Broader civil society alliances have proven to be effective in advocating for the extension of social services, such as universal health care, to workers in the informal economy (Alfers and Moussié, 2019). Key to these alliances is not to lose the perspective of women workers in the informal economy – both as users of the social services and as childcare workers.

In addition, alliances between women workers in the formal and informal economies are necessary as many face similar challenges in accessing childcare and gaining support for their demands within their workers' organizations. Childcare continues to be considered a woman's issue and is unlikely to be prioritized in workers' organizations with mixed membership (Carré, Horn and Bonner, 2018; Sankaran and Madhav, 2011). Shared platforms between informal and formal workers can raise awareness that participation in the formal economy for many men and women is made possible by the low-paid work of childcare workers (mainly women) in the informal economy. Therefore, broad civil society alliances and solidarity among women workers can encourage the workers' movements to address access to quality public childcare services as central to labour rights, social justice and gender equality.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In proposing a typology of childcare services available to informal workers, this brief set out the status quo and aimed to add to the growing literature on early child development services for the working poor and their children. What is depicted is a scattered, and at times ad hoc, approach to the provision of childcare for the children of informal economy workers. The policy lessons presented here were drawn from good practices and aimed at highlighting policies that can provide guidance to workers' organizations in formulating demands for childcare, and to policy-makers designing, financing and implementing quality childcare services. The scale of investment required,

though not negligible, is necessary if states are to reap the potential triple dividend of i) decent work opportunities for childcare workers; ii) improved nutrition, health and education outcomes for young children; and iii) greater income security for women workers in the informal economy. An integrated approach is needed that considers the benefits to children, women workers and childcare workers. Formal representation of the informal workers who both require and provide childcare services is essential to establishing sustainable quality childcare systems.



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#### ABOUT WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities and rights. WIEGO creates change by building capacity among informal worker organizations, expanding the knowledge base about the informal economy and influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).

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