

# Estimating domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers in India

## 1. Introduction: why improved methods are critical?

In a policy brief, *Global and Regional Estimates on Domestic Workers*, prepared to promote decent work for domestic workers, the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted the wide range in estimates of domestic workers in India - from 2.5 to 9 million workers<sup>1</sup>. In doing so the ILO cautioned that neither the methods nor the data sources for these estimates were given. The policy brief then described a method of calculation that was also applied for other countries featured in the document. The resulting estimate for India was 4.2 million domestic workers. This estimate was based on data from the 2004-5 Survey of Employment and Unemployment in India and used a single industry code for identifying private household workers. However, G. Raveendran, the former Additional Director General of the Central Statistical Organisation of India, argued that in the case of India a more complex method was required because the single code systematically missed certain categories of workers. Using the more complex method, he found an additional 1 million domestic workers. Given these findings, the WIEGO network under a global project called Inclusive Cities for the Urban Working Poor, asked Raveendran to broaden his work to include additional categories of informal workers: home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers.

The importance of more refined methods for identifying these categories of workers is shown by the resulting data. The four groups combined – domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers - represented a substantial portion of urban employment in India in 2009-10: 33 per cent of *total* urban employment (35 per cent of male and 24 per cent of female urban workers) and 41 per cent of urban *informal* employment (44 per cent of male and 29 per cent of female urban informal workers). Virtually all workers in each of these groups are informally employed.

This note describes the methods of estimating the numbers of domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers using three rounds of the Surveys of Employment and Unemployment in India, the 55<sup>th</sup> round in 1999-2000, the 61<sup>st</sup> round in 2004-5 and the 66<sup>th</sup> round in 2009-10. Recommendations for improving the identification of these workers in India are provided at the end. These recommendations are relevant more broadly.

## 2. The Data Elements

.

The specific data elements of Labour Force Surveys which were used for the identification of specific categories of workers in India were the following:

---

<sup>1</sup> Yamila Simonovsky and Malte Luebker, *Global and Regional Estimates on Domestic Workers*, ILO Policy Brief No. 4( [http://www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_155951/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_155951/lang--en/index.htm) )

## 2.1 Industrial Classification

The National Industrial Classification, 1970 (NIC – 70) is used for the 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Round National Sample Surveys on Employment – Unemployment during 1999 – 2000 and 2004 – 05 respectively. The NIC – 70 is an adaptation of Revision 3 of International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) for use in India. The relevant industry code of each employed person is recorded in the survey schedule. The code 950 is used to classify “private households with employed persons”. In the 66<sup>th</sup> Round, the National Industrial Classification, 2004 was used. The variation between NIC-1970 and NIC-2004 is largely at the level of detailed classification. But this had significant effects on the identification of persons in the categories of workers of concern to WIEGO and for the comparability of data with the earlier rounds.

## 2.2 Occupational Classification

The National Classification of Occupation, 1968 (NCO – 68) which is a variant of International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO) is used in both the 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Round surveys for recording of occupational classification of each employed person. However, in the 66<sup>th</sup> Round NCO-2004 was used. NCO-68 had 5 digit codes and the first 3 digits were used for recording of information in the survey instruments. NIC-2004, however, used 6 digit codes but only the first three digits were used for recording of data in the survey. Three digits of the 5 digit code is not the same as 3 digits of 6 digit code. Thus, there was loss of occupational details in the 66<sup>th</sup> Round. In addition, the codes were structurally different. Again this had significant effects on the identification of persons in the categories of workers of concern to WIEGO and for the comparability of data with the earlier round.

## 2.3 Activity Status

The activity status of each of the members of the surveyed households was ascertained and recorded in the survey schedule. The codes used for recording the activity status of employed persons are the following in all the three rounds:

Self employed own account worker	11
Self employed employer	12
Unpaid family worker	21
Worked as regular salaried/ wage employee	31
Worked as casual wage labour in public work	41
Worked as casual wage labour in other types of work	51

## 2.4 Enterprise Type

The type of enterprise in which each employed person was engaged was ascertained and recorded in the survey schedules. Codes used for recording of data under this item were more detailed in 61<sup>st</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Rounds than in 55<sup>th</sup> Round. The codes used in both the rounds are given below:

55 <sup>th</sup> Round		61 <sup>st</sup> & 66 <sup>th</sup> Round	
Proprietary Male	1	Proprietary Male	1
Proprietary Female	2	Proprietary Female	2
Partnership with members from the same household	3	Partnership with members from the same household	3
Partnership with members from different household	4	Partnership with members from different household	4
Public Sector	5	Government/ Public Sector	5
Semi – Public	6	Public/ Private/ Limited Company	6
Others	7	Cooperative societies/ trust/ other non-profit institutions	7
Not Known	9	Employer's households	8
		Others	9

## 2.5 Location of Workplace

Location of work place in rural and urban areas has been coded separately in both the 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Round surveys, although there was an additional category – street without fixed location in 61<sup>st</sup> Round. Codes of 55<sup>th</sup> Round are given below:

No fixed work Place	10
Work place in rural areas and located in	
Own dwelling	11
Own enterprise/ unit/office/ shop but outside own dwelling	12
Employer's dwelling	13
Employer's enterprise/ unit/ office/shop but outside employer's dwelling	14
Street with fixed location	15
Construction site	16
Others	19
Work place in urban areas and located in	
Own dwelling	21
Own enterprise/ unit/office/ shop but outside own dwelling	22
Employer's dwelling	23
Employer's enterprise/ unit/ office/shop but outside	24

	employer's dwelling	
	Street with fixed location	25
	Construction site	26
	Others	29

In 61<sup>st</sup> Round, street without fixed location had code 16 in rural areas and 26 in urban areas. Thus the codes for construction site became 17 and 27 respectively. In 66<sup>th</sup> Round, these codes were more detailed as follows:

	No fixed work Place	10
	Work place in rural areas and located in	
	Own dwelling	11
	Structure attached to own dwelling	12
	Open area adjacent to own dwelling unit	13
	Detached structure adjacent to own dwelling unit	14
	Own enterprise/ unit/office/ shop but away from own dwelling	15
	Employer's dwelling unit	16
	Employer's enterprise/ unit/ office/shop but outside employer's dwelling	17
	Street with fixed location	18
	Construction site	19
	Others	20
	Work place in urban areas and located in	
	Own dwelling	21
	Structure attached to own dwelling	22
	Open area adjacent to own dwelling unit	23
	Detached structure adjacent to own dwelling unit	24
	Own enterprise/ unit/office/ shop but away from own dwelling	25
	Employer's dwelling unit	26
	Employer's enterprise/ unit/ office/shop but outside employer's dwelling	27
	Street with fixed location	28
	Construction site	29
	Others	30

### 3 Domestic Worker

As per the definition provided by the ILO, “domestic work means any type of work performed in or for a private household and a domestic worker is any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship”. The persons who perform domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not as a means of earning a living, are thus excluded from the definition. The task

performed by the domestic workers are much varied and include cleaning, looking after elderly people or children, guarding the house, driving children to school, gardening, cooking , etc. In general, the characteristics of domestic workers include the following:

- (i) The services of domestic workers are directly received/ consumed by the households,
- (ii) They have employment relationships with the households served by them. Such employment relationships can be either full time or part-time,
- (iii) The domestic workers may be in-residents or out-residents of the households served by them, except that the services are provided at the households, and
- (iv) The employment status of the domestic worker is primarily that of either wage employment with oral or written service contract though some of them may have the characteristics of own account workers receiving wage payments for their services.

#### **4 Identification of Domestic Workers**

Division 95: “Private households with employed persons” of industrial classification identifies activities of private households employing all kinds of domestic personnel such as maids, cooks, gardeners, gate keepers, secretaries, governesses, baby sitters, etc. It is generally hypothesized that Division 95 is the nearest classification available for the identification of domestic workers. However in practice, those who work for multiple households for fixed time periods are often not classified as domestic workers. Further, in many cases, the industry codes of the persons employed by households are recorded as that of the specific work performed instead of domestic work. For example, a person tutoring children in the household for wages is given the industry code of primary teacher or secondary teacher instead of domestic worker. Similarly, a driver employed by a private household is given the industry code of non-scheduled passenger land transport. Thus there is a lack of consistency between industry classification and occupational classification and it leads to under estimation of domestic workers

An analysis of Employment – Unemployment survey data relating to India revealed that there were other workers who should also be included as domestic workers. These could be identified by using a combination of industry based and task or occupation-based approaches. In this exercise, ‘private households with employed persons’ are taken as a sub set of ‘domestic workers’.

#### **5 Methodology**

The private households with employed persons are identified by using the enterprise type code 8: employer’s households (ie. private households employing maid servant, watchman, cook, etc.). They also had 950 as industry code.

The domestic workers outside the enterprise type code-8 (or industry code 950 as there is total consistency between the two categories) are identified by using a combination of NCO codes with additional codes for location of work place, informal sector, industry and employment status. (Only the informal sector was used here because domestic workers outside the informal sector were already identified through industry code 950.) At the first instance, the specific occupations characteristic of domestic work were identified by analysing occupational categories of households with employed persons. These occupations and the relevant codes of NCO-68 were the following:

<b>Sl.No:</b>	<b>NCO Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	159	Teachers, not elsewhere classified
2	510	Housekeepers, matrons & stewards (include governess)
3	520	Cooks & cook bearers
4	521	Butlers, bearers & waiters
5	529	Cooks, waiters & related workers not elsewhere classified
6	530	Ayahs, nurse, maids
7	531	Domestic servants
8	539	Maids & related housekeeping service workers, not elsewhere classified (n.e.c)
9	540	Building caretakers
10	541	Sweepers, cleaners & related workers
11	542	Watermen
12	549	Building caretakers, sweepers, cleaners & related workers n.e.c
13	574	Watchmen, chowkidars & gate keepers
14	652	Gardeners & nursery workers
15	986	Tram, car and motor vehicle drivers
16	999	Labourers, other

In the 66<sup>th</sup> Round, the occupational descriptions were more general as the data were recorded by using three digit codes though a six digit classification was used in NCO-2004. The codes and descriptions are given below:

<b>Sl.No:</b>	<b>NCO Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	233	Other teaching professionals
2	512	Housekeeping and restaurant service workers
3	513	Personal care and related workers
4	611	Market gardeners and crop growers
5	832	Motor vehicle drivers
6	913	Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers
7	914	Building caretakers, window and related cleaners
8	915	Messengers, porters, door keepers and related workers
9	916	Garbage collectors and related labourers
10	931	Building and construction labourers

All the informal wage workers of informal sector in the above occupational categories with place of work as employer's dwelling unit were considered as domestic workers.

## **6. Street Vendors**

Street Vendors are usually identified by the NCO code 431 as per NCO-68 which relates to "street vendors, canvassers and news vendors" and NCO-2004 code 911 which relates to Street vendors and related workers.

The distribution of those with NCO code 431 by activity status revealed that they were mostly own account workers (code 11) and unpaid family workers (code 21). Tabulation by place of work revealed that street vendors either didn't have any fixed work place (code 10) or were working from own dwelling (codes 11 & 21) or street with fixed location (codes 15 or 25) or street without fixed location (codes 16 or 26) and other places (codes 19 or 29). A street vendor in fact refers to any person who sells goods from a fixed place, other than a store or from no fixed place. The term 'street' also needs to be interpreted rather broadly to include vendors who sell at construction sites, sports stadium and other open air locations. Thus all those **informal workers in informal** retail trade either as an own account worker or as an unpaid family worker who do not have a fixed work place or the place of work is own dwelling or street or others can be considered as street vendors. In the case of 66<sup>th</sup> Round location of work place codes 11-14 and 18-20 for rural areas and codes 21-24 and 28-30 for urban areas were considered.

## **7 Home-Based Workers**

Workers with location of work place as own dwelling (code 11 in rural areas and 21 in urban areas) were considered as Home Based Workers. In the 66<sup>th</sup> Round those with location of work place codes 11-14 and 21-24 were considered as home based workers.

## **8 Waste Pickers**

There is no specific code available for identifying "waste pickers" both in NIC-98 and NCO-68 which were used in 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Round surveys. The nearest industry codes are 90001 which relates to "garbage collection, transportation and disposal", 371 "recycling metal waste and scrap" and 372 "recycling of non-metal waste and scrap". Thus all the informal sector informal workers in these industries are considered as waste pickers.

## **9 Recommendations to Improve Identification of these Workers in Surveys**

The estimation of specific categories of workers, particularly informal workers in elementary activities, from Employment-Unemployment Surveys in India is exceptionally difficult due to inconsistencies in data sets. The two basic classifications used in the surveys are industrial classification and occupational classification. There has to be a good amount of consistency between these two

sets of classifications. For example, a person whose industrial classification is private household with employed persons (code 950) cannot have occupations like office attendants, teachers in secondary or higher secondary schools, store keepers or agricultural labour as such occupations are associated with the respective industries rather than households. Similarly, the NCO code 431 is to be assigned to street vendors. However, in some cases those in retail trade either without any fixed work place or whose work place was the street, were not included in the category of street vendors. Such inconsistencies in assigning different codes need to be avoided both at the data collection stage and at the data validation stage.

There are also specific categories of workers who cannot be identified on the basis of existing industrial or occupational classifications. For example, Waste pickers, cannot be identified except to equate them with garbage collectors. It implies the occupational codes have to be suitably expanded to identify such workers uniquely.

It is also important that survey personnel are given extensive training in classification systems so that classification mistakes can be avoided in the data sets.

As a general principle, the revision of industrial and occupational codes should lead to better identification of different categories of informal workers, particularly those involved in low paid survival activities. Care should be taken that any revision of codes should not lead to a loss of information and comparability with earlier rounds of survey

In the current state of availability of data the methods followed in this exercise can provide better estimates in the case of India