

IRENE / WIEGO Seminar
“Decent”* working conditions for informal economy workers
Kontakt der Kontinenten, Soesterberg. The Netherlands. 5 – 7 April, 2002

REPORT WRITER: JULIE SMITH
EDITOR: ANNEKE VAN LUIJKEN

INTRODUCTION

The self-organisation of homeworkers, street-vendors, domestic workers and other workers in the informal economy has led to the formation of unions, workers’ organisations and NGOs. These organisations have strengthened their positions through networks which include HomeNet and StreetNet and international coalitions for example, WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing).

The ILO convention on homework and the discussion to be held at this year’s ILO conference in June on "**Decent work and the informal economy**" has begun the process of recognition of rights for these workers although the process of their formal representation in policy bodies still has a long way to go.

The participants had received background documents which are available at the IRENE website: www.irene-network.nl

THE SEMINAR

The seminar was held as a joint initiative between IRENE and the Organising and Representation Programme of WIEGO, with co-operation from HomeNet International and StreetNet International and IFWEA (International Federation of Workers’ Education Associations).

The aims of the seminar were to:

- Share experience of networking and organising of informal economy workers world-wide
- Highlight the European and Eastern European informal economy
- Discuss and prepare for the ILC (International Labour Conference) discussion on the informal economy to be held in June 2002
- Discuss strategies for “decent” work conditions

About 33 people attended the seminar with participants from Africa, South East Asia, Latin America, the USA, Western, Central and Eastern Europe. A wide range of experience was represented including organisations organising in the informal economy, international, regional and national networks, trade unions (national and international), NGOs, academics and researchers.

* “decent” is used here as in the ILO report *Reducing the decent work deficit – a global challenge* (June 2001) as a rights based approach. www.ilo.org/public/english

The round-table setting, using short presentations and discussion, enabled participants to share experience and ideas at the national, regional and international levels, to look at the content of the 2002 ILO discussion document and the representation of informal economy workers at the ILC (=ILOs International Labour Conference) through the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and the Workers' Group. Messages for the ILC were also discussed in working groups on employment, social protection, workers' rights and recognition and voice and representation.

CONTEXT OF THE SEMINAR

Dan Gallin (WIEGO and Global Labour Institute, Geneva) welcomed participants, gave a short introduction to WIEGO and the background to this seminar.

This seminar is part of WIEGO's Organisation and Representation Programme that maps and networks organisations already organising informal economy workers. The programme currently concentrates on homeworkers and street-vendors. Other regional meetings have taken place in Africa (Zambia, October 2001), Asia (Bangkok, November 2001) and North America (May and October 2001).

Anneke van Luijken introduced IRENE and explained that the position of women workers in the informal economy and the issue 'how they organise themselves' is a large part of the content of IRENE's networking activities. The important discussion at the ILO provides further opportunities for IRENE to raise awareness and build bridges between trade unions and organisations active in the informal economy. The challenge for the future is to realise that self-organisations and NGOs get an 'organising' agenda. Workers in the informal economy, especially women, need to get power over their own life, which goes beyond union representation.

This seminar also provides an opportunity to highlight the extent of the informal economy in Europe adding to the results of the other regional meetings. As a follow-up of this seminar, there will be a larger European meeting later in the year. The Dutch trade union federation FNV will take the lead here, IRENE will support the organisation of that event.

FRAMEWORK USED FOR THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Marty Chen (Co-ordinator for WIEGO; Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (USA) gave a short introduction to the framework used for the informal economy to give a context for the discussion. This framework is the same as that used to define the informal economy in the ILO discussion paper.

The *informal economy* is a new operative term that captures employment relations as well as enterprise relations. It includes self-employment in informal enterprises and waged workers in informal jobs. It is not the criminal economy or the reproductive/ care economy.

Discussion.

There was a question raised about the inclusivity of this framework for the informal economy and it was agreed that there were some anomalies where workers did not fit. The

shift in focus from enterprises to workers was noted as significant as was the need to raise awareness of the informal economy with trade unionists in a “popular” and accessible way in education programmes.

Under this framework the informal and formal economy are seen as two poles of a continuum of economic relations that have direct links to one another.

{BOX - Informal employment - definition}
===== text box =====

Informal Employment - Definition

The new concept of "informal employment" that is being used by the ILO Task Force in its report and in a statistics booklet defines informal employment as employment without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection. It is comprised of two basic components:

- self-employment in informal enterprises
- paid employment in informal jobs

The idea is that both informal self-employed and informal paid workers do not have secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection and, on average, earn less than their formal counterparts. The informal self-employed are included because they are responsible for their own working conditions and social protection. They also are not often organized and, therefore, have little voice. Of course, there are differences between the two sub-groups. The informal self-employed primarily face problems of exclusion from capital and product markets. The informal paid workers primarily face problems of exploitation in labour markets. But both lack bargaining power in their respective markets: the self-employed have to bargain with public authorities and market competitors.

The old concept of the "informal sector" included the self-employed in informal enterprises and paid employees in informal enterprises. But it did not include casual labourers with no fixed employer, domestic workers who work for households, home-workers and other industrial outworkers who work under sub-contracts for either formal or informal firms, undeclared workers for either formal or informal firms. Paid employment in informal jobs, under the new concept, includes all of these categories.

Also the old concept of the "informal sector" was defined in terms of the characteristics of the enterprise (small, unregistered) whereas the new concept of "informal employment" is defined in terms of the characteristics of employment relations (without secure contracts, worker benefits, and social protection).

The new concept of informal employment represents a major conceptual shift in the right direction. It defines informality in terms of employment status or relations. And, in so doing, shifts the responsibility for informality from the informal workforce to the formal structures (public and private). The old thinking associated with the old concept of the informal sector assumed that the informals were avoiding formality, namely registration and taxation. The new thinking associated with the new concept of the informal economy assumes that the informals would like the benefits of formality: namely, secure work, worker benefits, social protection, and voice through organization.

Marty Chen, WIEGO, March 20, 2002

===== end box =====

EUROPEAN INFORMAL ECONOMY WORKERS

A large part of the first day was filled with presentations of organisations actively involved in campaigning and organising informal economy **workers in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe**. And although geographers and politicians still discuss the matter, we included **Turkey** here.

HOMEWORK IN THE EU

Emily Gilbert

National Group on Homeworking (NGH).UK

Jane Tate

HomeNet International and Homeworkers Worldwide (UK)

Emily Gilbert looked at the effects of recent legislation on homeworkers in the UK in particular the national minimum wage (NMW) legislation introduced in 1999.

The study on the effects of the NMW on homeworkers was completed in 2001 and of 105 homeworkers interviewed, 75% were not receiving the NMW. The report also highlighted the lack of implementation of Fair Estimate Agreements, the lengthy and complicated procedures of the Enforcement Agency and the fact that homeworkers were reluctant to complain for fear of losing their jobs.

Further work has shown that the Working Time Regulations of 1998 have had little effect on homeworkers, few get the statutory four weeks paid holiday and few receive health and safety protection.

The UK government is about to carry out a review of Employment Status. NGH has been campaigning for the 'concept of worker' to be applied to employment legislation and are awaiting the findings of the review.

Jane Tate of HomeNet International spoke of the links between organisations active on homework in Western Europe and the mapping programme of the colleague organisation Homeworkers Worldwide which has expanded into Eastern and Central Europe.

Organising is a key issue and attempts at different forms of organising include unions and NGOs. There is a mixed history of success, although the Union of Embroiderers in Madeira has brought home-based workers into the formal sector.

It is often NGOs and women's organisations who have the links with homeworkers and links need building between these organisations and the trade unions.

Sub-contracting is a big problem as chains move into many developing countries and nowadays also to Central and Eastern Europe. Which firms are the final employers. Here links with the international trade and production companies can be made visible.

Discussion.

The discussion raised the following points. The introduction of the NMW has given homeworkers clear legal protection and there is no evidence that employers are classifying more workers as self-employed as a result but homeworkers who challenge their status face losing their work. There is a priority for health and safety legislation for homeworkers who currently have very little protection.

A small number of homeworkers is organised in local groups and there are examples of some groups working for the same employer joining together. Few homeworkers are members of trade unions. One view was that trade unions do not try to recruit homeworkers because of time and cost, another was that it was a question of trade union priorities and resources, although a third view was that homeworkers need support from unions particularly because of their precarious working conditions.

There was discussion about the need for homeworkers to organise themselves and build relationships with unions. It was recognised that the massive task of organising sub-contracting chains needs to include the formal trade unions. Still the ratification of the ILO Homeworking Convention is a clear priority.

WORKING WITHOUT PERMISSION IN THE EU

Jan Muter Searchweb. The Netherlands

Marijke Bijl OKIA (Com. Support for Illegal Workers).The Netherlands

Jan Muter spoke of Searchweb's work as a project for unemployed people overcoming problems which include racism and discrimination. This focus has resulted in alliances with migrant workers. Searchweb, together with other NGOs, has good relations with stable groups of illegal workers fighting for their rights although it is difficult to sustain and organise these groups because they have no knowledge of the systems and have transitory lifestyles.

Searchweb tries to support individual workers who have a conflict in the workplace for example, hotel and restaurant workers. They try to give 'a face' to illegal workers (via the media), challenge Dutch law (by organising a 'temp agency') and make links with other groups for example, the unemployed and union activists. Also on the European level.

Marijke Bijl explained that OKIA works with undocumented workers with no legal status. In some sectors in Holland, for example in horticulture where they are 60% of the workforce, these are the majority of workers employed.

The problem of undocumented workers is increasing and there needs to be a picture of what is happening in the different sectors. Unions tend to back away from representing undocumented workers as they come up against the legal system. She is involved in an initiative to build a union for undocumented workers.

Discussion.

There was a question about which sectors had most undocumented workers. Building, cleaning (also in private homes), tourism, catering, distribution and horticulture were given as examples. Most of the discussion centred on the role of the unions. An example was given of a US union in Minnesota which successfully defended five undocumented Mexican workers who had been sacked for trying to organise a union. The experience in Holland was less successful. If undocumented workers go to the unions they fear to lose their jobs and any compensation a union may be able to negotiate on their behalf does not make this worthwhile.

Jan Muter felt that unions fail to recognise the scale of the problem and how the position of undocumented workers affects the position of legal workers.

Catelene Passchier (FNV, The Netherlands) felt that unions see the problem, but if workers are illegal it is very hard to win their case. It's about the boundaries of what unions are able to do.

HOWEVER (LATE NEWS FROM 1 MAY 2002)

At the May day celebration Lodewijk de Waal, chair of the FNV, announced that illegal workers can become member of the trade union. It is a human right, even if the FNV is against the illegal practices of employers. The FNV will co-operate with the earlier initiative Marijke Bijl spoke about.

MIGRANTS IN DOMESTIC WORK IN EUROPE

Natasha Pearce Kalayaan (UK)

Natasha Pearce explained that much of her presentation was taken from the work of Kalayaan Chair, Dr. Bridget Anderson. She is the writer of the book "Doing the dirty work"- The global politics of domestic labour (ISBN 1865497615). Kalayaan was established in 1987 to support the rights of migrant domestic workers in the UK and it works hand in hand with the United Workers' Association (UWA).

Kalayaan campaigned for a change in the UK law. UK migrant domestic workers were dependent on the employer they enter the country with for their immigration status which left them open to exploitation by employers. 1998 brought a change in the law and migrant domestic workers now get a visa if accompanying their employer to the UK. This allows them to change their employer. The law also regularised all migrant domestic workers who had been living and working clandestinely.

Kalayaan also works on behalf of 'au pairs' who often experience similar difficulties and networks with other organisations working with asylum seekers and undocumented workers.

Immigration status for domestic workers differs throughout Europe and Kalayaan helped to form RESPECT in 1996, a European network which campaigns for the rights of all non-EU citizens working in private households regardless of immigration status.

===== box =====

RESPECT is a European network of migrant domestic workers' organisations, individuals, trade unions, NGOs and supporters that campaign for the rights of all non-EU citizens working in private households, both women and men, regardless of immigration status. **RESPECT** supports the relevant campaigns of its members at a local, national, EU and international level. It facilitates the sharing of experiences and expertise in campaigning, organising, lobbying and fundraising. It carries out research and disseminates information.

RESPECT calls for justice and equity for all migrant domestic workers; whether they are documented or undocumented; whether they are live-in or live-out; whether first or second generation; whether they are born in Africa, Asia, South America or Europe. Member states of the European Union must recognise the intrinsic dignity and crucial importance of domestic work and seek to educate their citizens accordingly. Relevant organisations in the EU have a duty to ensure that migrant domestic workers have information and the means to access their rights.

+++++++===== end box =====

Kalayaan's experience of working with the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) in the UK has been very positive. The T&G accepted undocumented workers as members, gave them a special rate of membership, provided them with membership ID cards and campaigned for the change in the UK law. Further campaigning work continues on full and non-discriminatory employment rights and social protection particularly for coverage by the race and sex discrimination acts. Kalayaan feels the ILO should be addressing immigration and employment legislation for domestic workers as part of its "decent" work agenda.

Discussion.

There were questions about how Kalayaan got to work and co-operate with the T&G and Natasha acknowledged that the interests of key individuals in the union was crucial. It helped that the campaign was for a specific change in the law which was very tangible. She added that they encourage all the workers they see to join the T&G.

It was noted that the Korean trade unions decision to not make union membership dependent on whether a worker is documented or undocumented has made a difference to migrant workers. Health insurance schemes are attached to work and union membership provides proof that migrant workers are employed.

The situation in Italy was brought forward, where next to 'Southern' migrants (esp. from the Philippines) a growing number of domestic workers come from Central and Eastern European countries. Often they have a rotating system with family members.

HOMEBASED WORK IN TURKEY

B. Olcay Bingöl-Öztürk Working Group on Women Home-based Workers in Turkey

Olcay Bingöl-Öztürk talked about the Working Group on home-based workers in Turkey, established in 1999, which is an informal group of professionals, researchers and activists. The group aims to increase the visibility of women home-based workers in Turkey.

Over the past two years the group's objectives have been expanded and they now network with local groups and individual home-based workers in Turkey and with HomeNet. They support local groups to organise regionally through training programmes and they aim to set up HomeNet Turkey in 2003.

The group believes that the unions must broaden their vision on networking and solidarity. The largest textile trade union in Turkey has a priority to organise in the factories but for every one textile worker in the formal economy, there are 10 working in the informal economy.

The group is developing co-operatives because legal constraints prevent workers joining trade unions and the first co-operative initiative on home-based working opens in May in Avcılar, Istanbul.

Olcay noted that the recent earthquake in Turkey has meant that many companies have moved into Eastern Europe and other companies operate in Greece as its EU membership enables them to escape quota restrictions.

INFORMALISATION OF WORK RELATIONS AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Ivan Tishev Bulgarian Clean Clothes Campaign.

Ivan Tishev gave an interesting analysis of how official statistics do not identify the majority of workers who are "disguised" wage workers in the textile industry in Bulgaria. He based this on a comparison of the official statistics and data compiled by Labour Inspectors in 2001. Tax evasion is for the employers the main reason to mention low numbers of workers and low wages.

He spoke about the problems of unprotected sweatshop workers and of homeworkers, highlighting those working along the Greek/Bulgarian border. Greek employers exploit illegal Bulgarian workers who are prepared to work for low wages because of high unemployment rates in Bulgaria. (Minimum wage Greece 500 Euro, in Bulgaria 50).

His research has involved interviewing a sample of 140 workers – none of whom had employment contracts and the vast majority only had verbal arrangements with employers. The majority earned between 50 and 125 Euro a month working more than 8 hours a day. (A 'living wage' is calculated between 100 and 200 Euro) Worst off are the sweatshop and homeworkers in the remote areas.

Ivan highlighted the problems workers faced from the use of civil contracts and co-operatives which circumvent all protection given by employment legislation. Liberalisation policies in Central and Eastern Europe are connected with the idea that labour protection hinders job growth. Even trade unions follow these ideas, which makes organising even harder.

Irina Barbalata Pro Women Foundation, Romania.

Irina Barbalata explained that they tend to talk about illegal contracts (payment in cash only) and working without social protection rather than the informal economy in Romania.

There are many workers in the textile and garment industry (as sub-contracting by European companies grows) and other areas include street-vendors, domestic workers and homeworkers. She explained that homeworkers in Romania tended to be men working with computer software and they earned more than the legal minimum. Many Romanian migrant workers work as domestic workers in Italy, others take seasonal horticultural work in Greece or are employed as construction workers.

These workers receive little support. Trade unions do not try to organise them and social protection for workers outside the system is not a government priority. In theory there is a very organised system of worker registration in small and medium enterprises but this system is inefficient and corrupt.

The Pro Women Foundation aims to raise awareness, especially amongst young people, about the problems of working without a legal contract. They try to help women enter formal work and particularly focus on those working in the textile and garment industries.

Majda Sikosek Association of Business Women, Yugoslavia.

Majda Sikosek talked about the similarities in Yugoslavia where 56% (46% women) are unemployed. She noted that this figure does not include the high number of refugees who are not registered as citizens.

People working in the informal economy escalated in the 90s and the huge increase in inflation resulted in legislation which enabled thousands of small enterprises to register and avoid liability for social security and pension contributions. The new government has brought in measures to stop this but many people remain working informally in these businesses. Employers exploit the refugee status of workers who have no other options.

The Association of Business Women started to work with HomeNet to try to map homeworkers but this is made more difficult by the number of workers who have formal

jobs but who actually earn their living in the informal economy. This even applies to doctors and nurses.

Yugoslavia does not have companies sub-contracting for MNCs at the moment anymore, but small enterprises are working at the regional level particularly in the shoe industry (export to Italy).

Discussion.

Questions centred around organisation. Responses revealed that organising in co-operatives was only being considered in agriculture in Yugoslavia and that there are two or three associations of street-vendors in Belgrade. They have been able to negotiate successfully with government who were trying to get them off the street. Trade unions are very limited.

It is a similar situation in Romania. In theory there are no barriers to organising in a trade union but workers who start to organise are dismissed.

It was noted that these experiences highlight common problems in Europe where governments promote flexibilisation to achieve economic growth and try to get rid of social and labour legislation.

INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT:

THREAT OR CHALLENGE FOR TRADE UNIONS?

The grey zone between formal and informal employment: towards an inclusive approach of labour law and trade union policies

Catelene Passchier Legal Advisor to FNV(Netherlands Trade Union Confederation)

Catelene Passchier addressed two issues: 'Formal versus informal employment' – can it be solved by the law? and the 'role of trade unions in informal employment'. (Full text of her speech available)

She looked at the European context where 70 – 80% of workers are in the formal sector but where unions are faced with a growing percentage of informal or casual labour. She referred to the fact that labour legislation is being used to exclude workers, often women, of their rights by denying that they were workers. It is the perverse effect of modern labour law which seemed to exclude the most vulnerable and dependent workers from its scope instead of giving them protection.

Catelene charted the change in attitude amongst the unions as they came to realise at the end of the 80s and early 90s, as the growing presence of women in the unions changed perspectives, that organising part-time, temporary agency, self-employed and other workers in new economic sectors was critical to both their power bases and credibility.

The formal/informal divide can be seen as a grey zone but it has to be seen as a continuum. And all countries have different places where they define informal and formal workers. This makes one definition of informal employment impossible. Informal employment is essentially employment that is not covered (partly or totally) in law or in practice by formal

arrangements. Catelene posed that defining “a worker” (not an employee) is a central question. As is comparing different legal systems to get effective worker protection.

This growing number of atypical workers who challenge the coverage of international labour standards has resulted in debate in the ILO. This started with part-time workers and then moved on to homeworkers. The wording in the Homework Convention in 1996 marked a change by covering all workers in an 'economically dependent' situation. Their employment status did not matter. The proposed convention on contract labour did not meet with the same success as employers seized on the conceptual debate over definition which divided unions and confused the governments.

More discussion and research was needed. Especially on the 4 dimensions: Disguised employees (excluded from labour law, but employee in his/her right); Workers in ambiguous situations (who has what relation with who, esp. in the services economy and networking companies); Working as 'self-employed' but in a dependent employment relationship; and 'Non application of the law', for a growing group enforcement is not possible.

Catelene stated that in the ILO discussions the gender bias in formal employment was not questioned, and that is again reflected in the discussion on the informal economy.

The new ILO approach broadens the concept of who is a worker and has two strategies. These urge members to re-focus labour legislation and look at who is a worker, and combine this with international discussion on how to provide all workers with basic rights – "Reducing the decent work deficit" (ILC discussion 2001). Deficit of employment, workers' rights, social protection and 'voice'. This years discussion on 'decent work and the informal economy' is in line with the decision to place the employment relationship on the agenda of the ILO Conference in 2003 as a point for general discussion.

The 2002 ILO general discussion on the informal economy looks at the concept of “decent work” and its implications for labour law and social protection of economically dependent workers. The ILO views the “informal” economy as comprising marginalized economic units and workers who are characterised by serious deficits in decent work. Reducing these deficits in the informal economy will promote a move towards recognised, protected and therefore “formal” activities within the economic and social mainstream and regulatory frameworks. Catelene stressed the need for the workers – side to put emphasis on the strong links between the 2002 and 2003 discussions.

Finally, Catelene talked about the transitory nature of most workers jobs and at how current social security systems need up-dating to look at how workers are protected. She posed that being a member of a union, or another organised group, may be the only way means of offering continuity in a persons' life.

She returned to the “legal deficit”, which should be the core issue in the ILO discussion, and emphasised the two pronged approach: the extension (or re-inclusion) of the scope of labour law beyond the traditional employment relationship; and providing for basic protection for a broader group of “working citizens”.

Parallel with this discussion is the one in the European Union, in 2003 a consultation paper should be out on 'Modernising employment relations'.

Discussion.

There was discussion about what is work and whether this included unpaid work. Informal employment is defined as re-numerated work but the fact that there are so many women working informally is a reflection of how many women have to combine unpaid and paid work.

Other areas discussed included social protection for homeworkers without an employer and the possibility of international regulation when work is across boundaries and the notion of union cards/membership for life and what this would mean for unions to attract workers and to keep them 'in', especially when workers move between formal/informal/self-employment.

An important remark was on the 'multi-responsible' structure for social protection of workers. If there is a unlinking of social security and 'a labour contract/relation' than employers are off the hook. (also effect of Worldbank policy on privatisation of social protection).

REGIONAL REPORTS: US - AFRICA - ASIA- LATIN AMERICA.

It is without doubt that experiences of workers in the informal economy and/or of workers affected by processes of informalisation, are brought forward at the ILC discussion. Reason for WIEGO and their many partner organisations to bring together experiences at regional level. These meetings had their own objectives (education and organising in Africa; organising, lobby and advocacy in Asia) but the ILC was a good focal point. Full reports and background documents of the different meetings are available.

THE USA AND CANADA: REPORTS OF THE WIEGO REGIONAL SEMINARS

Marty Chen reported on the three WIEGO workshops on the informal economy held in the US during 2001. They focussed on mapping; who is organising/ what are the strategies; and workers in the NAFTA region. Each workshop had unions, emerging labour organisations and researchers present. Central to the discussion were the few worker rights or benefits of the self-employed, temporary, part-time, sweatshop workers or of the homeworkers and day labourers. People often invisible as workers in statistics, even if they work for a formal employer.

The phenomenon of the unprotected illegal workers is well known. And many people have more than one job making sometimes double shifts.

There were important discussions on organising efforts. This considered emerging labour organisations which include "pro-labour" NGOs, labour service bodies and agencies run by unions for example, the work in the AFL-CIO. Discussion also included mixed methods, where unions and NGOs work together, and the work of individual unions.

Effective is when teams of people (organisations) network and have joint action over an issue. People have to cope with new realities.

Examples given included the International Union of Painters and Allied Industries who are organising immigrants and the establishment of public sector boards like the Homecare Industry of California which has organised 74,000 health care providers.

Discussion.

There was a question on the extent to which US trade unions campaign on the issue of informal employment. The response was that there is some movement as the AFL-CIO campaigns show, but the shift that is more widely known is on the immigrant labour issue where the AFL-CIO has recognised the importance of legalisation in order to raise labour standards.

AFRICAN REGIONAL WORKSHOP, LUSAKA 17 – 19 OCTOBER 2001

This workshop was convened by the WEA (Workers' Education Association of Zambia and held in partnership with the WEA, England and Scotland and WIEGO. It was attended by participants from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana and South Africa.

Mike Chungu, WEA-Zambia, explained that the workshop aimed to explore the key educational needs of the WEA-Zambia; examine the connections with SEWU, trade unions and NGOs and Streetnet International; and to stimulate discussion on the ILC agenda item on the informal economy.

This produced a very useful exchange between the different African countries represented about how they organise in the informal economy. Those represented included the Informal Sector Desk at the Ghana TUC and the Ugandan Public Service Union who is recruiting informal sector workers. The workshop also provided the opportunity for organisations to establish important links. For example, the Zambian associations who are organising in the informal economy were able to talk to the ZCTU (Zambian TUC) and make some progress on its commitment to organising in this area. ASSOTSI in Mozambique established a link with SEWU (Self-Employed Women's Union), South Africa. As a result, SEWU will assist ASSOTSI in setting up a system for collecting subscriptions as an organisation for workers in the informal economy.

There were significant outcomes of this workshop. At regional level, this included an agreement to continue the work of this African network with a programme of education work and build relations with ITSs (International Trade Secretariats) in the region. At national level, an agreement for a national alliance of informal sector associations to work closely with the ZCTU and ultimately to affiliate. It also led to the establishment of the WEA in Uganda.

Important points raised on the ILC discussion on the informal economy reinforced the need for strengthening informal sector associations and integrating them into union structures and that informal economy workers should have a representative voice in the Workers' Group at the ILO

=====
=====box =====

INFORMAL ECONOMY PLATFORM OF ISSUES

"If you want to know what a crocodile eats, you don't ask a monkey – you have to ask the crocodile or at least something that also lives in the water"

**Recommendation of the African regional workshop to ILO:
(Lusaka October 2001)**

1. Government should recognise the informal economy in their statutes;
2. Organisational structures should be created within government frameworks to represent issues of the informal economy at local and central government levels;
3. All governments should ratify all conventions relevant to the informal economy and child labour;
4. The Workers' Group at ILO should include significant representation from workers in the informal economy;
5. Associations of workers in the informal economy should be integrated into the labour movement and thereby in the structures of the ILO;
6. The ILO should undertake education programmes for workers in the informal economy;
7. The ILO should co-operate with the WIEGO statistics programme in assisting all governments to produce proper statistics on the informal economy in their countries, and this should be a requirement of all governments, and
8. There should be social security for workers in the informal economy in all countries.

===== end of box =====

There was also a specific input from **Francis Xavier Owusu**, Informal Sector Desk, Ghana TUC, who explained the Ghana TUC position for organising workers in the informal economy. The trade unions see organising these workers as a challenge and recognise that all workers need decent work and make no distinction between the formal and informal sectors. The GTUC policy is based on the recognition that the trade unions should assist informal economy workers in organising their own structures. They should not just be integrated into the existing trade union structures although, ultimately, they may become associates of the Ghana TUC.

**ASIAN WORKSHOP. BANGKOK 6 – 8 NOVEMBER, 2001
ISSUES FACING WOMEN WORKERS IN INFORMAL WORK**

The workshop was organised by the Committee for Asian women (CAW) and HomeNet Thailand. **Rakawin Leechanavanickpan**, of HomeNet Thailand, explained that the workshop was an exploratory look for new partners in the informal economy. Participants came from 25 organisations (of which 12 trade unions) in 11 countries and focussed on gender issues, looking at what is happening to women workers and what they are doing about it.

Sujata Gothoskar and Mabel Au, both working for CAW, explained the building up of this regional meeting. CAW started a long process with a detailed questionnaire that asked

questions about the women/men gender divide in the informal/formal economies; the dominance of men in trade unions; and the strategies women are using for organising. A detailed report, a good perspective document and a workshop report are available. And the first results are reported in the Asian Women Workers Newsletter of CAW (Jan. 2002)). Well worked out is the gender aspect, see also the article in Asian Labour Update.

The workshop gave participants the opportunity to look at:

- redefining existing structures
- how to work with smaller groups
- how to relate to the ILC discussion to ensure representation of women workers in informal employment
- lobbying at national level

The key outcomes of the workshop included a decision to send delegations to the ILC; national meetings to try and organise campaigns about the ILC debate and to work with the trade unions where possible as part of the national campaigns.

Clear is that women are organising everywhere! Different strategies are used, with more or less success. Relations with the major unions are made. Very strong outcome of the seminar was that the strategizing has to go beyond the economic needs, political needs and the right for autonomy are as important.

=====box =====

Part of the 'Resolution on Women Workers in the Informal Economy':

We, the assembled representatives, resolve to:

- Organize and support each other in our organizing efforts;
- Act in solidarity on common issues;
- Build public awareness and visibility of the workers we represent;
- Lobby public authorities and other institutions in society for our common interests;
- Strengthen the capacity of our organizations through appropriate education programs;
- Collate and disseminate best practices of strategies of organizations.

We urge the following organizations and institutions to address the concerns of women workers in informal employment as follows:

LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS:

- take the initiative to organize directly and to assist in the self-organization of these workers.
- build friendly relations of mutuality and solidarity with the already existing organizations of these workers.
- work out methods of significant representation of women workers in informal employment in the ILO and other international institutions as well as within the international trade union federations themselves.

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION is invited to:

- Recognize organizations of workers especially women workers in informal employment as legitimate workers' organizations;
- Adopt and implement conventions and recommendations protecting the basic rights of workers in informal employment, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining rights;
- Undertake education programs for workers in the informal economy;
- Uphold the rights of women workers in informal work to adequate social security, including maternity benefits, health insurance and old age pensions;
- Uphold the right of women in informal work to adequate income and secure work;
- Use its influence on governments to secure the ratification of all instruments relevant to the informal economy and child labour.
- Ensure representation of organizations of workers in informal employment in ILO decision-making.

===== end box =====

ORGANISING HOME-BASED WORKERS IN LATIN AMERICA

Eleonora Moreno working for 'Ana Clara' the Chilean training centre for working women, explained that Ana Clara promotes the visibility, organisation and mobilisation of women in the world of work.

She gave the background on the effects of globalisation in Latin America and highlighted the problems faced by the poor and marginalized. The situation in Chile where 60% of workers are in the informal economy and in the period 1990 – 2002, 84% of all new employment was in the informal sector, is also mirrored in other Latin American countries. She noted the different situation for organising informal workers in Latin American countries and included the example of Brazil where peasants are organised in the Landless Movement, running democratic collective farms which respect ecological balances.

Ana Clara's work has recently focussed on women working in the informal sector, especially home-based workers. Their previous work had been with garment workers in the formal sector, but then the closure of factories and the shift in work to sub-contracted sweatshops, resulted in many of these workers working from home.

Eleonora explained that they try to organise these women and make their work visible. They do this by getting homeworkers they had previously trained visiting women at home and building up trust. This resulted in group discussions to motivate them to organise. A concrete result is that four trade unions for home-based workers now exist and are legally recognised. Plus there are others waiting to go through the process of legalisation.

Eleonora concluded with the fact that their experience has shown that when women participate they become organisers of their colleagues. They will only organise if they see a benefit but this does not have to be economic, just being in a group to share experiences has a value. She noted that it was important for each group to be supported by someone from Ana Clara in the first year and that the popular education programmes in each group were

key as this connected them to leaders at the national level. The Chilean experience of organising in trade unions was based on the existing culture, but she knows that others need to base organising on different models. The important point is that we are all starting the process.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2002 ILO DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Here the organisers of the seminar first like to give a warm 'thank you' for offering the 99% edited version of the document to the seminar. The final version would be made public a few days after the seminar. With regret the ILO office could not accept the invitation to present the document themselves. But the powerpoint presentation the seminar received was a great help.

Marty Chen, co-ordinator for WIEGO, introduced the document and “walked” the workshop participants through the powerpoint presentation prepared by the ILO.

Marty gave the background to the document, emphasising the “decent” work framework of opportunities; rights; social protection; and voice/ social inclusion which has been applied to the informal economy as it is these workers who are likely to have more decent work deficits. She explained that the ILO commissioned 27 background papers for this document which has undergone extensive review. (Papers are available on the internet (<http://www.ilo.org/infeco>).

Marty commented on the document as an individual and as the Co-ordinator of WIEGO. She commented on the importance of coming at the debate from the point of view of the worker and the usefulness of framing it as a way to reduce the deficits faced by these workers. However, she did not feel very comfortable with the document.

When looking at the pyramid of the population of the informal economy the lowest levels (and the lower you go the higher the percentage of women) are not well worked out in the discussion document. And esp. here you can find the homeworkers.

Second point of concern was the structural relation, placed as subordination, of the informal economy to the formal economy. Where the contribution of the informal economy to a countries whole economy is very substantial.

Marty noted that the questions raised at the end of the document are part of the process to reach conclusions about what should be recommended.

Discussion.

Regret was expressed that the document could not be read fully by all the participants (it is 133 pages), although an earlier version was sent to the participants before the seminar. The first remark, however, was on the character of the document. The ILO, the tri-partite structure of the ILO, was discussed and the “tailoring” of the document to reflect the different interests was noted.

The discussion opened with a comment that the earlier part of the document aims at bringing back public responsibility for social protection but the concluding questions lose this and bring the discussion back to the enterprise level.

There was some discussion about the use of the term "voice" and its significance in the document. This included the ICFTU position which is that there is no "voice" without representation ie. without representation there can be no power or democracy. The ICFTU will comment on this in the Conference.

"Voice" is too vague. In the 'Global Alliance' they talk about "voice", but that does not mean developing power in a democratic structure.

The discussion moved on to the positive shift in emphasis on workers but the omission in the debate over what should be done to address the decent work deficits for workers in the informal economy for example, the widening gap has resulted in less and less workers being able to organise or bargain collectively for their rights. Other gaps highlighted included the growth in technology not being addressed and the fact that employment and income are not included in the human development definition (noting that average income might not show anything statistically, but that it still matters). Child labour is also not included. Some felt that a weakness of the report is that it does not propose changes in the formal economy. The power issues of multinational companies and financial institutions and the responsibility of employers who exploit informal labour are not addressed.

The need to emphasise that the growth of employment and protection do go together was stressed. Also the inclusion of many other types of workers who can not access their rights was raised. An example was given of contract labourers with lots of different contracts but no protection. We were also reminded that some workers make a positive decision to work in the informal economy because it provides better income but conversely, the point was made that one of the key forces behind the informal economy is the collapse of social security systems.

The causes of the deficits, often connected in the type of arrangements workers have, need to be stressed. The control workers have over their work/situation has a direct relation with non-formalisation of the work.

On the Conference outcomes, the importance of trying to set the ILO agenda for standard setting was stressed which involves understanding the ILC proceedings and developing a good strategy with room for compromise. The need to ensure that all organisations are pushing in the same direction with a resolution/statement from this meeting and other position papers to back-up the WIEGO one will all build the case.

The last remark was a challenge to us all: 'In what other (international) fora can the discussion on 'decent working conditions for informal sector (women) workers be held?' Think of the 'universal encounterment of the Worldbank process.', what kind of jobs are demanded, with what quality. But do also think of WTO or Human Development framework of the UN.

WHAT DO CORE LABOUR STANDARDS MEAN FOR WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY?

Dan Gallin (Global Labour Institute, Geneva) explained that the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted 18 June, 1998) is not subject to ratification and automatically applies to all ILO member states. He went on to make the point that the Declaration itself applies to all workers, regardless of employment relationship or formality of status.

Core labour standards are about rights and as it is in the informal economy where the rights deficit is particularly serious, they particularly need to be applied here. Most ILO standards refer to “workers” rather than the narrower legal category of 'employees'.

He referred to the debate on protectionism where some governments have claimed that the Declaration can lead to protectionist practices and that any improvement in working conditions is a competitive disadvantage. These governments oppose the universality and indivisibility of basic human rights. They argue that the inclusion of a social clause in the WTO is also an attack on their ability to compete in world markets.

Some trade unions in these countries have supported their governments – but Dan argued that core labour standards are not about wages and conditions but about essential human rights and, he concluded, these arguments are absurd. If workers’ rights were a competitive disadvantage, countries with slave labour would be the most prosperous and it is clear that the opposite applies.

Dan finished with a word of caution. The ILO has no enforcement mechanism and relies on moral, political and psychological persuasion. He argued the need for powerful workers’ organisations to ensure enforcement. If core labour standards were included in WTO trade agreements they would be enforceable through trade sanctions but both governments and some unions have argued against this. These unions argue that increasing the strength of the WTO is against workers’ interests as multinational companies already have so much power.

His final point drew attention to other important ILO Conventions not included in the core Conventions and their relevance for informal workers, noting the Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention 1975 (No.141) and the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No.177) and its supplementary Recommendation Concerning Home Work (No.184).

He stressed the need for a new campaign for ratification of the Home Work Convention which is currently only ratified by Finland and Ireland. Employers are fighting to prevent its ratification and there is now a risk of losing it.

RESPONSE ON CORE LABOUR STANDARDS

Ineke Zeldenrust talked about the CCC's (Clean Clothes Campaign) work and its campaigning on core standards plus the additional areas of health and safety, a living wage, security of employment and a maximum 48 hour working week which are essential for workers in the garment industry.

The ILOs interpretation of informal employment means that almost all garment workers can be considered as informal: even those working in formal enterprises often have no contract or 'appointment letter' and lack protection by social security systems.

The CCC puts pressure on the lead firms of supply chains, who are by now taking some responsibility for the workers in the first tier. In the model code, which has some firms have accepted, security of employment is one of the demands. So far most firms do not take measures to improve the situation of those working farther down the chain, which is something CCC will focus on in its future work

WHO IS REPRESENTING THE INFORMAL SECTOR WORKERS AT THE ILO DISCUSSION? - THE ICFTU POSITION.

Dwight Justice

ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions)

Dwight Justice emphasised the importance of international labour standards and the fact that such standards were becoming even more important for workers in a globalizing economy. He said that it was essential to protect the standards setting function of the ILO which was often under attack by employers and some governments... He did not believe that the same political forces that identified a need for international labour standards and established the ILO for this purpose were as strong today as they were when the ILO was created. If the ILO did not already exist than its standard setting function would be difficult or impossible to create today. One of the arguments against labour standards is the idea that there is a trade off between employment and standards. One of the responses in favour of labour standards is that good standards have a positive effect on economic growth.

He then went on to describe how ILO standards are adopted by governments treaties obligations and how governments give these obligations effect mainly through law and its application. It is therefore almost impossible to separate labour standards from law. What the ILO has identified as fundamental rights at work (sometimes referred to as the "core" labour standards) are also considered human rights. This means that they are considered to exist even where they are not provided for in law or even where the law restricts them. There is a divorce between human rights and law because these rights exist regardless of the law. This is what distinguishes them. He added however, that the ability to enjoy a human right often requires its recognition in law.

Dwight went on to talk about the concept of flow between the annual sessions of the international labour Conference. No item was ever independent of what when on at previous sessions and every item on the agenda had at least some consequences for the future of the organisation. He then explained that the informal economy is a General Discussion item, and not a standard setting item at this year's conference. The Committee could make recommendations about future ILO activities including standard setting. But it could also do other things. One of the things that unions want to do in this discussion is to raise the concept of the informal economy. Although the most recent time the International Labour Conference discussed informal sector was in 1991 the concept of the 'informal' sector which was now 30 years old had never been discussed as a concept. He stressed the ICFTU position on the need for a genuine discussion which does not automatically accept terms such as 'informal sector' or 'informal economy'. For this reason the suggested Points for Discussion in the ILO's report that may be adopted as the basis for the discussion avoids

using these terms in most of the points. The idea is to allow the committee to consider the value of terms using the word 'informal' without prejudicing the discussion.

He developed this further by saying that the ICFTU considers there to be problems with the idea of the 'informal economy' or the 'informal sector'. One problem was that the definition of what was 'informal' was not widely accepted in practice and seemed to be constantly changing. One way that it was changing was that it seemed to be less about legal status or recognition and more about atypical or marginal situations regardless of legal status. This resulted in people talking about different things and would make getting good policy more difficult. Originally the terms were selected in order to avoid criticism of developing country governments. The benign term helped a positive approach to informal activity. Governments and others would use the growth of the 'informal sector' as a substitute for employment policy. Trade unions are not happy with this benign notion as it lets employers and governments off the hook. They want to start focussing on the workers and their problems and were beginning to prefer words such as 'unprotected', 'excluded' or 'unrecognised' instead of 'informal'. These words were useful because they could identify problems and suggest solutions at the same time. The idea is that some terms and ways of thinking would cause the problems of workers to be addressed better than others and that some 'unpacking' of the 'informal sector' concept would be necessary in order to achieve practical results.

The unions feel there is a need to talk about specific categories of workers who are unrecognised in law or otherwise unprotected and this enables the possibility of standards to be considered in the future. Governments use law to apply standards – the problem with the 'informal economy' is that it is difficult to make laws about something that is by definition outside the law. Once a law is capable of being applied to something considered 'informal' than it would no longer be 'informal'.

Because the informal economy groups disparate situations it sometimes suggests common causes notions that do not exist and this is dangerous. A lot of work in the informal economy, for example agricultural work, has never been regulated at all.

One trade union objective will be to highlight the situation of millions of workers in the discussion and another will be to send a signal to the ILO Secretariat that decent work must always be work that is legally recognized.

He noted that there was no real 'sector' that was informal in the sense that sector is used to describe a kind of economic activity. Both the terms 'sector' and 'economy' seemed to be emphasising horizontal relationships which seemed to be less important than vertical relationships than existed in real economic sectors.

He concluded by noting that getting people to find words other than 'informal' would be a difficult process that would take time –it would be 'like turning an oil tanker'. It would be a change that would better serve the interests of workers concerned because it would enable a better understanding of their situations and what must to done to improve them.

Discussion.

The discussion was wide-ranging. Key areas included the ICFTU emphasis on looking at the concept of the informal economy. There were feelings about the need to also address the issues and deficits and to look at how the discussion will take things forward. There was a recognition that this is a compromise document from the ILO but the strategy should be to highlight what is important for workers and to see “where the oil tanker is changing course”. It was also noted that government support is vital to make progress on the issue.

Dwight made the point that the term 'informal economy' is being questioned by many. One reason is that governments have different definitions. For example, China uses informal sector to describe the private sector.

There was a concern expressed over who is going to represent informal economy workers at the ILC and through what mechanisms and there was a question about the actions that should be taken to advance this. There was a view that unions most dedicated to representing self-employed workers in these sectors should be present and that sending women on delegations is emphasised. The fact that the ICFTU could have representatives from informal organisations in its own delegation (as can the ITs (International Trade Secretariats) as part of its observer status was also pointed out.

In response, Dwight recalled the ILO procedure that the most representative organisations of workers and employers be used as the basis for participation in the conference. He did not believe that whether workers created new organisations or joined existing ones could be decided or even preferred one way or the other internationally. He noted that various existing trade unions represented members considered to be 'informal' and that, with respect to self-employed workers, they were in all likelihood millions of trade union member in this status, although the figure was not known.

On a question about what issues will be highlighted in the ICFTU position paper, he responded that they will be using information gathered by the Task Force and from other meetings. This will include the gender dimension, legal recognition, the importance of treating all workers as workers, the extension of social security protection etc.

There was a reference to the homework discussion which included non- formal representatives and the suggestion that the ICFTU should say this is also a special issue, making the point that these workers have not been able to organise very well and there is a need for organisations from the informal sector to be on the Workers' Group. In addition, it was noted that the Workers' Group can accept presentations from informal organisations. A suggestion followed that there could be a recognition of 'friends' of the Workers' Group which would include organisations who work closely with the official organisations being asked to participate in the discussion and debate. However, previous experience has shown that the ILO has no real mechanism to recognise these organisations. A final point was made that access to the Workers' Group by these organisations represents an opportunity for the labour movement to advance its cause.

HOW THIS WORKSHOP FITS INTO THE WIEGO PROCESS

Pat Horn (StreetNet International) explained that this workshop is part of WIEGO's Organisation and Representation Programme. This includes a combination of formal sector trade unions and informal organisations and gives the opportunity for these organisations to come together and share common issues.

This seminar was organised to try to bring together some of the issues already raised in the other regional meetings held as part of the programme in Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America. and to highlight the experience in Europe.

Task of all the meetings in the different regions was to identify areas of concern for informal economy workers which need discussing **in terms of messages for the ILC.**

As in the 'deficit of rights' document of the ILO these areas are within: employment; social protection; workers' rights and recognition ; and voice and representation.

Participants were asked to choose a working group and work on these 4 issues.

Feedback from each of the working groups:

1. WORKING GROUP: EMPLOYMENT

This group made the following **recommendations for the ILC:**

- All policies should be examined for their affect on employment, especially in the informal economy
- There should be sector wise plans / policies to increase quality employment and workers should have a voice in formulation
- Micro finance increases own account and casual workers
- Workers need to organise collectively for example, in co-operatives
Governments to promote and recognise these.
- There should be skills training/ education for workers (future workers)
- Technology should be available to them
- Regulation does not hinder employment → positive discrimination for workers in the informal economy
- Promote employment exchange / agencies in the informal economy

Discussion

The discussion looked at the problem of how employers look at the informal economy and their view that it promotes economic growth. It was recognised that the employers are likely to be the stumbling block. The context of the ILO discussion will focus on whether the informal economy is an employment opportunity. Strong arguments, backed up with examples and statistics, need to be made that increasing security and protection for these workers also benefits employers.

A further point was made that there is a need to show some governments that their concerns about work going to the cheapest labour are valid but argue for the need to “raise the bottom line” as this does not serve their people. Governments have a priority to increase

work opportunities and this is also important for workers who in turn benefit from increased collective bargaining opportunities.

2. WORKING GROUP: SOCIAL PROTECTION

Recommendations to the ILC:

- Social Security systems should be modified to cover informal workers/ self-employed workers with low and irregular income.
- Schemes should have contributions from government/ employers / (stake holders)
- Informal workers should be able to decide / choose their priority needs, benefit packages, contribution rate and other related services
- **Promote** participation of informal workers in management of Schemes
- examine links between micro-credit schemes and formal schemes.
- Schemes should enhance re-circulation of employment eg. child care.

Occupational Health and Safety needs emphasising as part of the social protection of workers

- Legal protection on OHS for informal workers
- Survey of types of hazardous work/ unhealthy and unsafe conditions of work

Discussion.

The discussion emphasised the fact that social protection has strong links with legal deficits and it was noted that employers tend to avoid formal relationships with workers because of the burden of social security costs. It was suggested there was a need to make employers responsible in a different way, perhaps through a social tax on productivity.

Further examples were given of ideas being explored in India where social security is linked with work but not linked to the employer/employee relationship. For example a proposed tax on agricultural products would provide a social security fund for agricultural workers. In Chile, the experience of privatising all social security services has resulted in problems for workers in both the formal and informal sectors. The companies continue to charge administration costs even when workers are not currently in employment. There is a crisis estimated in the next fifteen years as company charges will have depleted funds to such a degree that they are unable to make payments.

There was a question raised about health and safety monitoring in homeworking and this was recognised as a problem. There was a suggestion that there should be a mechanism for immediate dangerous situations and, in the long term, training for homeworkers to help them solve problems themselves where there is no employer. A further suggestion was that pressure should be put on at industry level to solve problems for homeworkers in the same industry. It was also noted that where legislation does exist, home workers need training in how to use it.

3. WORKING GROUP: WORKERS' RIGHTS AND RECOGNITION

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ILC:

- the need for core labour standards to be re-evaluated, to become inclusive of all workers
- **collective bargaining** for all workers eg. homeworkers should have collective bargaining rights with agents
- All workers have the right to basic **social security**. Need to “De-link” – broaden – social security from employment status
- **freedom of association**. The need to remove barriers (legal, bureaucratic, political) and obstacles for workers to form recognised organisations.
- to address the legal dimension which includes:
 - scope of application: informal workers are not included in the law
 - application : workers are covered but the law is not applied
 - access : need to shift burden of proof from worker to employer
 - will : no will of authorities to do anything
- to address the legal deficit for workers with no employer

Discussion.

An example was given of how India is starting a process of legislation for informal workers. Ways that are being considered for defining a worker are: by using a list of categories; using a list of sectors; considering anyone who contributes to the national economy is a worker.

4. WORKING GROUP : VOICE AND REPRESENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ILC

OBSTACLES	MESSAGES
Workers don't see themselves as workers – don't see point of joining unions	Awareness-raising programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - worker identity - what is a union? - how can it help you? School curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workers' rights - how unions work Documentation about existing unions <u>or other organisations</u> which organise and represent workers in informal economy.
<u>The way unions themselves are working:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gender discrimination - weak unions - politically controlled unions - lack of political will (with excuses like very bureaucratic procedures, lack of resources/ capacity) 	Unions and other organisations of informal workers can affiliate to ITSs. Forming women's unions Strengthening women's committees or departments in unions. New vision and strategies need to be adopted by many unions. Unions/ confederations can bring in informal sector associations and unite them under one umbrella. N.B. These messages <u>are not for</u>

	<p><u>presentation to ILC</u>, but ITs, ICFTU and international confeds, IFWEA and worker education orgs.</p>
<p><u>Legal barriers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - legal framework structure of unions (eg. factory-based instead of industrial or community-based) - unemployed lose membership of union between formal and informal work - exclusion of immigrants 	<p>1. For ILC Abolition of <u>all</u> legal barriers → legal reforms</p> <p>2. Not for ILC – but ITs, ICFTU, IFWEA etc: Unions to amend their constitutions where necessary. Unions to adopt life membership systems Unions to be open to membership by <u>all</u> workers (incl. immigrants).</p>
<p><u>Other:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fear of losing employment (incl. through repression) - no time to participate in union activities - no support at home - can't afford union fees - <i>non recognition of union in formal sense (added during report back?)</i> 	<p>1. For ILC Support for educational and organising campaigns for workers in informal economy.</p> <p>TNCs: adopt and implement policies promoting organisation and representation and freedom of association for <u>all</u></p> <p>Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investment policies must uphold core labour standards for workers in informal economy - basic labour standards (where they exist) to be enforced for workers in informal economy - strengthen labour inspection services <p>ILO office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spell out meaning of core conventions and what they mean for workers in informal economy - compile list of companies in breach of these standards <p>2. For Unions to consider: Union membership based on participation in union activities (voluntary time) as possible alternative to paying fees (where unaffordable).</p>

Discussion

Discussion centred on the ILC and the need to put six or eight key messages across, through photographic exhibitions, leaflets etc. The need to identify these messages and agree them with the ICFTU and ITs was suggested as a way of building maximum unity in the Workers' Group.

It was also noted that the ICFTU task force has talked to all affiliates and is keen to talk to other groups (like this one) to ensure that all the common concerns are reflected in the ICFTU position paper which will advise worker delegates.

===== box =====

Background documents are available

1. via AvLuijken@irene-network.nl
2. via new website of IRENE (after July 2002)

WEB addresses:

IRENE: www.irene-network.nl

WIEGO: www.wiego.org

SEWA: www.sewa.org

HOMENET INTERNATIONAL: www.newethic.org/homenet/

STREETNET INTERNATIONAL: www.streetnet.org.za

IFWEA: <http://www.tsl.fi/ifwea/>

GLOBAL LABOUR INSTITUTE: www.global-labour.org

COMMITTEE OF ASIAN WOMEN: caw.jinbo.net

ILO: www.ilo.org

ILC document: www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc90/pdf/rep-vi.pdf

ILO background documents 'informal economy: www.ilo.org/infeco

CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN: www.cleanclothes.org

RESPECT: ourwold.compuserve.com/homepages/kalayaan

and : www.solidar.org

PRO WOMEN FOUNDATION: www.home.dntis.ro~prowomen

=====

Tilburg, 22 May 2002.