KEY MESSAGES

- **Pre-COVID**
  - inequities + injustices + indignities faced by informal workers (3 I’s)
  - dominant negative narratives towards informal economy
  - misfit between existing legal and policy frameworks and reality of informal work

- **COVID**
  - exposed fault lines in labor markets, including 3 I’s of informal work
  - shone a spotlight on role of informal workers in provision of essential goods and services

- **Post-COVID – 3 possible scenarios**
  - “Old Deal” - return to old normal which was bad for informal workers
  - “Worse Deal” - reversals of gains made for informal workers
  - “New Deal” - reforms to protect informal workers + promote informal livelihoods
REMARKS

- COVID 19 pandemic-cum-lockdowns have shown spotlight on…
  - pre-existing injustices and disadvantages faced by informal workers
  - role of informal workers in providing essential goods & services
  - promising examples of inclusive relief responses for informal workers
    - opportunity for transformation BUT risk of reversals
- Two Illustrative Cases
  - street vendors
  - waste pickers
- Relief ► Recovery & Reforms: Opportunity for Transformation + Threat of Negative Reversals

But first recent official statistics on the size and composition of the informal economy in India and elsewhere
FIRST-EVER GLOBAL ESTIMATES: Informal Employment as Share of Total & Urban Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries by Income Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing Countries</td>
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<td>Emerging Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed Countries</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Global - ILO 2018; Bonnet, Vanek & Chen 2019
India – PFLS 2017-18, analyzed by G. Raveendran
# FIRST-EVER GLOBAL ESTIMATES: Composition of Informal Employment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Countries by Income Level</th>
<th>Self-Employment</th>
<th>Wage Employment</th>
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<td>World</td>
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STREET VENDORS

- Play a critical role in food security:
  - 70% of households in low-income areas in 11 cities in sub-Saharan Africa normally source food from informal traders: 1/3 buy food from informal traders daily + nearly 2/3 of households at least once a week (African Food Security Urban Network)
  - 90% of food retail trade in India: street vendors + kirana stores (Sudha Narvayan)

- Before COVID…
  - in most cities, faced harassment, bribes, confiscation of goods on a daily basis and evictions on a regular basis
  - in some cities, recognized for contributions + natural markets protected

- During COVID…
  - in most cities, not allowed to operate
  - in some cities, allowed to operate if they sell food, especially fresh fruit and vegetables
PROMISING EXAMPLES FOR STREET VENDORS

- **South Africa** – 7 days into lockdown, in response to pressure from civil society, government declared informal food vendors essential service workers
  - in consultation with public health experts, WIEGO prepared health safety guidelines & posters for informal traders = water points + sanitizers & bleach + safe layouts + testing
  - public health experts in SA concluded that, as long as health safety guidelines are followed, informal traders can trade as safely as supermarkets.

- **India** - Vegetables on Wheels scheme – Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)
  - vegetable vendors allowed to sell vegetables & milk in neighborhoods
  - drivers of e-rickshaws deployed to transport vegetable vendors
CREATIVE USE OF PUBLIC SPACE FOR STREET VENDING

Myanmar

Indonesia
WASTE PICKERS

- Provide essential waste collection services and reclaim recyclable waste ► clean cities & reduce carbon emissions

- Before COVID…
  - in most cities, denied access to waste and to dumps/landfills; harassed by local authorities
  - in growing number of cities, granted contracts & infrastructure to collect and recycle waste

- During COVID…
  - in most cities, faced closed dumps and landfills + decreased demand/buyers and prices for recycled waste materials
  - in some cities, recognized as essential services providers and allowed to collect waste – but often without protective gear.
PROMISING EXAMPLES FOR WASTE PICKERS

- **Waste & Citizenship, Belo Horizonte, Brazil**
  - Mapped whether waste pickers are receiving relief measures such as basic cash grants & food baskets
  - Drafted operational manual for resumption of segregated waste collection
  - Designed operational safety measures – during collection, transportation, storing, sorting, processing waste ▶ 3 levels of protection (72-hour storage of segregated waste at source + safe equipment & processes + individual PPE)
  - Mapped costs, taxes & other operating expenses of cooperatives of waste pickers to resume operations following safety measures - in order to raise funds to meet these expenses

- **SWaCH Cooperative, Pune, India**
  - Negotiated right to continue to provide waste collection and recycling services
  - Provided protective gear and processes for waste pickers
Opportunity for Transformation:
- Recognition of urban informal workers and their contribution to city economies and societies
- Integration of urban informal workers into urban plans: e.g. natural markets of street vendors + waste collection/recycling services of waste pickers
- Extension of social protection to urban informal workers
- Inclusion of informal worker leaders in urban governance

Threat of Negative Reversals:
- Permanent displacement from sites of work – through evictions + privatization
- Increased police harassment and violence
- Deepened discrimination and stigmatization
THANKS TO URBAN INFORMAL WORKERS,
G. RAVEENDRAN,
AND WIEGO URBAN POLICIES,
FOCAL CITIES & SOCIAL PROTECTION COLLEAGUES
FOR
INFORMATION & INSIGHTS!

THANKS TO YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

For more and regularly updated information, blogs, podcasts and other resources on informal workers and COVID 19, kindly visit:
https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis