INFORMAL WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC-CUM-LOCKDOWNS: DEMANDS & RESPONSES

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REMARKS

- Demands by Specific Networks or Organizations of Informal Workers
- Common Demands & Guiding Principles
- Relief ➤ Recovery
- Recovery ➤ Reenvisioning & Resetting

But first, the international definition of informal employment and the first-ever global estimates of informal employment
- Informal Sector = narrower concept: production and employment in unincorporated enterprises that are also unregistered (with national authorities) or small (ICLS 1993)

- Informal Employment = broader concept: employment without social protection (OR paid annual and sick leave) through work - both inside & outside the informal sector (ICLS 2003)

- Informal Economy = broadest concept: all units, activities, and workers so defined + output from them

ICLS = International Conference of Labour Statisticians convened every 4 years by the International Labour Organization
FIRST-EVER GLOBAL ESTIMATES: Informal Employment as Percentage of Total, Women’s & Men’s Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries by Income Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing countries</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerging countries</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed countries</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>19</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: ILO 2018, WIEGO and ILO 2019
INTERNATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS FEDERATION (IDWF)

Platform of four demands:

- **Right to safe and hazard-free workplace**, including the provision of protective gear and training to use these appropriately
- **Right to information on the pandemic**: information on preventive and protective measures needs to be translated into languages that migrants understand.
- **Right to paid sick leave and access to healthcare**, including those who are in quarantine and infected
- **Right to wages and all compensation** according to their contracts and the law, if they are dismissed
Platform of demands for all street vendors for duration of crisis, *regardless of immigration status*

- *free healthcare access*
- *emergency cash grants or relief funds*
- *suspension of fees and regulatory costs*
- *suspension of rent, mortgage, and utility payments*
- *unemployment insurance* for vendors who are employed by food cart or truck owners
Platform of demands for all informal workers, *regardless of nationality*

- *Living Cash Grant*

- *Measures to make work safer* for those who are allowed or have to work:
  - mass provision of protective masks and gloves
  - mass provision of water, soap and sanitizers in public spaces, especially where informal workers work
  - issuing of health guidelines for different sectors of the informal economy.
Platform of four demands for the duration of the crisis:

- *income support* to the families of all informal workers so that they are able to sustain their basic needs

- *compensatory payment of 5,000 rupees per month* to all workers registered under existing Labour Welfare Boards, including the Building and other Construction Workers Welfare Board

- *free food rations* under Public Distribution System

- *six months postponement on repayment* of all loans
COMMON ELEMENTS

**Health Measures**
- protective health measures & protective gear
- free health testing & treatment

**Economic Relief**: food & income security
- food distribution
- emergency cash transfers
- waiving or postponement of fees and compliance costs; rent, mortgage and utility payments; loan repayments

**IWs as Providers of Essential Goods & Services**
- allowed to work
- provided with protective gear
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *Leave No One Behind* – ensure relief & recovery mechanisms benefit...
  - informal wage workers – not just formal wage workers
  - informal enterprises – not just formal enterprises

- *Do No Harm*
  - do not penalize informal workers
  - do not destroy their homes & workplaces
  - do not reverse legal and policy gains made by informal workers

- *Honor “Nothing for Us, Without Us”*
  - design of relief & recovery measures: listen to demands of informal workers
  - delivery of relief & recovery measures: partner with informal worker organizations
funds for recovery: loans or grants for working capital
valuation of and support to informal workers who produce essential goods and services in essential supply chains
- food care construction
- health garments transport
public procurement of essential goods and services produced by informal workers
pressure on lead firms in global supply chains to rebuild their supply chains and support informal workers in the bottom links of those chains
continuation of humanitarian assistance through recovery period OR extending coverage/targeting of existing cash grants to informal workers
WIEGO plans to...

- formulate a vision for the informal economy, and indeed the world, in the medium and longer term in the wake of COVID-19

- develop a manifesto and a dedicated campaign – calling for a new social contract for the working poor in the informal economy in the post-COVID world

- ground the visioning and messaging by focusing on the role of informal workers in the supply chains for essential goods and services during and after the crisis: health care + food & milk + clothing & footwear + child & elderly care + construction + transport supply chains
THANKS TO YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

For comprehensive package of demands and responses from organizations of informal workers and social activists in India, kindly see:

https://www.wiego.org/blog/die-hunger-or-virus-all-too-real-dilemma-poor-india-and-elsewhere

For more and regularly updated information, blogs, podcasts and other resources on informal workers and COVID 19, kindly visit:

https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis