



**Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing**

**WIEGO RESEARCH ON INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT:
KEY METHODS, INDICATORS & FINDINGS**

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REMARKS

- **purpose**
- **methods**
- **key variables**
- **illustrative findings** – intersection of key variables

PURPOSE

- to *inform policy debates* about the working poor in the informal economy
- to *equip organizations of informal workers*, and their representative leaders, to effectively engage in these debates
- *legal and policy reforms* that the working poor need to secure and enhance their livelihood activities.

WIEGO EXPERIENCE & APPROACH

Over the past 20 years, WIEGO has found that:

- *to attract the attention of policy makers*: we need evidence on the *size and contribution of the informal economy*
- *to inform policy making*: we need evidence on the *composition of the informal workforce and characteristics of its different segments*
- *to inspire creative thinking about policy design*: we need *documentation and dissemination of good policies and practices* which protect and enhance informal livelihoods

To address these different policy advocacy purposes and to meet the advocacy needs of the organizations of informal workers in our network, WIEGO has found that our research needs to be:

- multi-city or multi-country
- relatively quick and easy

► *our research niche*: mid-way between in-depth case studies in a single location and quantitative analyses of large cross-country datasets

Finally, import to note that WIEGO typically *partners with local organizations of informal workers* in our field research: they help us with research design and analysis and recruiting local researchers & we help them build research and advocacy capacity

METHODS: BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- To inform the conceptual framework and design of our field research
 - *consultations with organizations of informal workers*
– to determine what research topics or issues are most important to informal workers
 - *literature reviews* – to assess what is known and thought about how the research topic relates to informal workers
 - *institutional mapping* - to identify key stakeholders and their relationship to and stance on the informal economy and the research topic

METHODS: FIELD RESEARCH

- ▣ *Qualitative Research = Participatory Informal Economy Appraisal (PIEA)*
 - developed collaboratively with *Caroline Moser, Angélica Acosta, and Irene Vance*. Adaptation of earlier participatory research methodologies developed by Robert Chambers and Caroline Moser among others.
 - originally designed for *10-city study (in 2012)* to interrogate what driving forces impact three sectors of urban informal workers and their livelihoods, how they respond, and which institutions help or hinder.
 - *pair of qualitative researchers (facilitator + note-taker)* on each city research team conducted:
 - conducted *15 focus groups of around 5 participants each per sector*
 - using *9 focus group tools* – organized around themes of sector characteristics, driving forces and responses, institutional environment, and contributions of the sector
 - wrote *reports of about 10-12 pages*, on average, per focus group with relevant *direct quotes* from focus group participants
 - report findings *coded* around different topics: driving forces, costs and risks, technology, health/OHS, among others.

METHODS: FIELD RESEARCH

□ *Qualitative Research* (cont.):

- PIEA methods outlined above have been adopted for *subsequent field research on different topics* by the WIEGO research team, including:
 - 3-city study of health: Ahmedabad (India), Bangkok (Thailand), Durban (South Africa)
 - 3-city study of technology use and impacts: Ahmedabad (India). Durban (South Africa), Lima (Peru)
 - multi-country occupational health and safety studies, including currently in Brazil
 - 2-city study of water and sanitation deficits in informal workplaces, currently in Durban (South Africa) and Nakuru (Kenya)
 - baseline research in 3 WIEGO Focal Cities: Bangkok (Thailand), Dakar (Senegal), and Mexico City (Mexico)

Notes:

1. WIEGO uses PIEA tools in scoping issues we are working on – e.g. homeworkers in value chains in India and Thailand; child care needs in Accra (Ghana)
2. WIEGO also uses more standard focus group methods when the PIEA methods are not feasible or suitable for a given research question or topic.

METHODS: FIELD RESEARCH

- *Quantitative Research = Survey Questionnaire*
 - *Design:* informed by background research (consultations with informal worker organizations, literature review, and institutional analysis) and, where possible, by the findings of our qualitative research.
 - *Sample:* focus group participants + equal number from purposive sample
- Notes:
 - focus group tools & survey questionnaire *translated* into local languages and *pre-tested* with support of local research teams and partners (informal worker organizations)
 - WIEGO first used *mix of focus group tools & survey questionnaire* in two rounds (2009 and 2010) of 14-city/10-country study of *impact of Global Recession on informal workers*.

METHODS: FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS

- *Key Informant Interviews*
 - *purpose*: to help interpret the findings from the field research
 - *sample*: representatives from organizations of informal workers, government and other relevant stakeholders
- *Policy Analysis*
 - *purpose*: to draw out the policy lessons and messages from the field research findings
 - *partners*: local organization of informal workers which facilitated the research jointly
 - *policy lessons and messages*
 - published and disseminated together with the research findings
 - disseminated in user-friendly formats, ideally in local languages, for worker education and policy advocacy by organizations of informal workers

OTHER METHODS

- *Informal Economy Budget Analysis* (IEBA)
 - examines how government budgets address needs and interests of different groups of informal workers + explores opportunities for informal workers (or their representatives) to participate at different stages of the budget process
 - developed and tested in South Africa by Francie Lund, Caroline Skinner, and Imraan Valodia (all with us here) as well as Debbie Budlender
 - 4-city IEBA: Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Lahore (Pakistan), Metropolitan Lima (Peru), and Quezon City (Philippines)
 - 3-city IEBA: Accra (Ghana), Durban (South Africa) and Monrovia (Liberia) – with analysis of *government revenues as well as expenditures*
- *Homeworkers in Global Value Chain Analysis*
 - *manual on measuring homeworkers* (outworkers who work in their own homes) in garment value chains, prepared for WIEGO in 2001 (by Hubert Schmitz and Dorothy McCormick).
 - *case study of homeworkers in garment value chains* for social protection book (by HomeNet Thailand)
- worker education manual on homeworkers in global value chains (by Celia Mather)

KEY VARIABLES

□ Branch of Industry/Sector

- WIEGO focuses on 3 sectors in our urban research: *home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers*
- WIEGO has also done statistical work and research on a fourth sector: *domestic workers*

□ Status in Employment

- *statistical concept*: degree/type of risk & autonomy in work
- *statuses*:
 - *wage employment*: employees + other wage workers
 - *self-employment*: employers + own account workers + contributing family workers
 - *dependent contractors* (e.g. homeworkers)

- **Place of Work:** streets/open spaces + built markets + homes + work sheds + fields/pastures/forests/waterways + so called “standard” places
- **Gender** (other demographic indicators)

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: HOME-BASED WORKERS

City Services, Value Chains and Home-Based Workers: Place of Work & Status in Employment = Key Variables

- ▣ *Place of Work* – home-based workers produce goods and services from in or around their own homes.
 - *common features of homes-cum-workplaces*: which undermine productivity
 - *small size* (often 1 or 2 rooms): difficult to carry out productive work when other members of the household need same space for other purposes
 - *poor quality*: inferior materials, poor ventilation and subject to flooding or leaks
 - *lack of tenure*: disincentive to expanding or improving homes-cum-workplace
 - *location*: (typically) in underserved informal settlements with little or no basic infrastructure services (water, sanitation and electricity) + transport services
- ▣ *Status in Employment* – two basic types of home-based workers: those who work on their own (the *self-employed*) and those who work for others (mainly as industrial outworkers, called *homeworkers*)
 - both categories are impacted in the same way by city housing policies and city services
 - but operate in different ways and with different constraints within markets
 - *self-employed* produce goods and services for local markets or customers: *need business support, product development and marketing services and support*
 - *homeworkers producing for value chains*, either domestic or global: *need bargaining power with contractors and lead firms up the chain*

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: INFORMAL TRADERS

City Policies/Practices and Informal Traders: Place of Work = Key Variable

- *Place of Work:* two main groups of informal traders
 - those who vend *on streets or in open-air markets* (what organizations of street vendors, SEWA and WIEGO call *natural markets*)
 - those who trade from *built markets*
- *Costs & Risks:* both groups face costs & risks associated with city policies and practices but type of costs/risks vary significantly
 - *street vendors:* harassment + confiscation of goods + evictions + no basic infrastructure services at their natural markets (water, sanitation, toilets, electricity)
 - *market traders:* fire hazard + little or no basic infrastructure at their built markets
- *Type of Product:* another key variable among street vendors, with a gendered dimension
 - those who sell *perishables (more often women)* are more vulnerable to confiscation or theft of goods (by police and local officials) than those who sell *durables (more often men)*

ILLUSTRATIVE FINDINGS: WASTE PICKERS

City Policies/Practices and Waste Pickers: Place of Work, Tasks & Whether Organized = Key Variables

□ *Place of Work by Task*

- *picking & collection*: homes, streets, dumps, landfills
- *sorting, bundling, processing*: homes, open space, warehouses

Note: Those who work in dumps or landfills face the greatest occupational health risks while those who work in sorting warehouses face the least occupational health risk.

□ *Whether Member of Waste Picker Organization*

- *waste picker organizations*: can negotiate for access of waste, equipment and warehouses + bid for solid waste management contracts
- *individual waste pickers*: face difficulties in negotiating and cannot bid for contracts (but can be integrated under contracts won by organized waste pickers as in Bogota, Colombia)

Notes: Even when organized, waste pickers have to engage in long struggles to reduce harassment by local authorities and to secure access to waste, infrastructure and contracts.

KEY WIEGO FINDINGS: SYSTEMIC COSTS & RISKS

Through our field research, WIEGO has found that informal workers face *several sources of systemic costs and risks*, including:

- ▣ **Dominant Narratives** which *stigmatize & penalize* informal workers and their livelihood activities as: being *non-compliant* (i.e., evading registration & taxation); having *low productivity* (i.e., a drag on the economy); creating *pressure on public space*; and being associated with “*crime and grime*”.
- ▣ **Inappropriate Policies & Laws** which are often burdensome for or punitive towards informal workers, units and activities, including *labor & employment laws* which most often exclude all informal workers without a recognized employer, even if they are wage employed; and *sector laws* which are often biased towards formal firms (e.g. urban laws and regulations)
- ▣ **Lack of Access** to *public space* (to pursue livelihood activities); to *public services* at workplace (basic infrastructure and transport services); and *public procurement* (i.e. right to bid for public contracts)
- ▣ **Lack of Legal Recognition & Right to Representation**

Sally Roever, incoming WIEGO International Coordinator, has categorized the costs borne by informal workers as follows:

- ▣ *direct expenditures*
- ▣ *downloaded costs* or costs imposed on/transferred to informal workers through unequal bargaining power and lack of contract enforcement and/or livelihood rights
- ▣ *structural costs and constraints* or losses that result from systemic constraints on the ability of informal workers to work or to enhance their productivity; and
- ▣ *implied costs* or costs that further result from the previous categories of costs (Roever 2015).

FUTURE WIEGO RESEARCH: ADVICE WELCOME

- *Key Questions*
 - which questions and topics?
 - which sectors and geographies?
 - which methods?
- *Key Dilemma* – how best to challenge dominant narratives...
 - by publishing in mainstream journals?
 - by influencing policy dialogues?
 - by empowering organizations of informal workers?
- *Key Challenge* – small research team
 - many part-time
 - all have other primary responsibilities within WIEGO



THANK YOU!