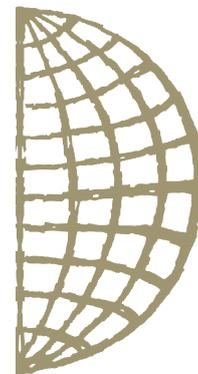
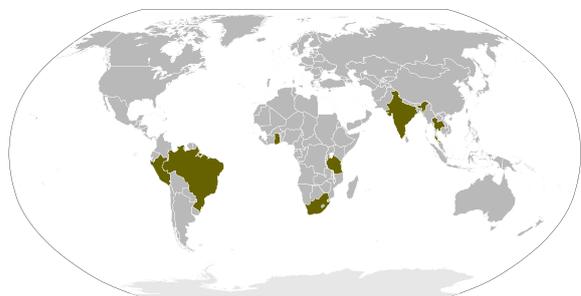


# Occupational Health and Safety *for Informal Workers*

Published by WIEGO Issue 8 November 2013



Welcome to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of WIEGO's OHS Newsletter. The OHS Project is now extending into its 5th year, and is in a process of transition as it undergoes changes and strikes out in some exciting new directions. (See page 8 of this newsletter for information on the future of the OHS Newsletter) In this edition we'll be:



- giving a summary of how the OHS work will continue in the five countries in which the project started;
- talking about the exciting prospects for work in Durban's Warwick Junction where, thanks to an award from the Rockefeller Foundation, WIEGO and its partner organization Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) may have the opportunity to start experimenting with the idea of bringing occupational health and urban planning closer together;
- reporting on a successful First Aid initiative started by AeT in Warwick Junction – this gives a further taste of future plans for work in Warwick Junction;
- providing our usual round-up of events, publications and news briefs on health and informal workers.

## The OHS Project Moves into the Future

The OHS Project is changing, but this does not mean that the work done in each of the five countries will stop. From its outset, the project was developed in a way that would aim to ensure the work could either be integrated into the work of existing organizations and institutions, or integrated into the work of other WIEGO programmes. Here is a summary of where and how the OHS work will carry on.

### Brazil

In Brazil the work of the OHS project was designed to fit with the ongoing work of the Programme of Worker's Health (PISAT) at the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador city. Since 2009, PISAT has been working closely with the Brazilian Ministry of Health to train primary health care workers in the



Access resources on OHS for Informal Workers at <http://wiego.org/ohs/publications-resources>

---

surveillance and treatment of occupational disease in the health district of Libertad in Salvador. Two PhD students at PISAT, Eduardo Marinho Barbosa and Margareth Santos, have been mapping informal workplaces within the health district, and have developed a Job Exposure Matrix to identify hazards and exposed workers in these workplaces. With seed funds from WIEGO, PISAT has now launched an ongoing programme to organize the most vulnerable informal workers in the area, many of whom work in their own homes, to ensure that they receive health services in the most effective manner possible.

### **Ghana**

In Ghana the OHS project focused on the relationship between informal workers and local government health institutions, setting up a series of dialogues between trader organizations and the local authority, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). Although actual improvements in the working conditions of traders were not dramatic, there has been a marked improvement in the relationship between the traders and the AMA. The traders feel that they have a better understanding of how local government works, and what they are able to demand in terms of services. Local government officials have also shown themselves willing to listen to informal workers, particularly in controlled environments where the potential for heated exchanges is minimized. The project in Accra has shifted from a specific focus on workplace health and safety to a more general focus on the relationship between traders and local government (with OHS as one aspect of this), and continues to work towards the establishment of a permanent platform for negotiation.

### **India**

The work in India was designed to support the health and safety work of two of WIEGO's MBO members, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the union of waste pickers, Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP). SEWA used the funding to further develop its programme developing tools for informal workers that both increase productivity and protect the health of workers. (For an evaluation of the tools developed, see the report on the OHS microsite [www.wiego/ohs](http://www.wiego/ohs)). SEWA will continue with the work of promoting the tools and advocating for their adoption by the Worker's Welfare Boards in Gujarat State. KKPKP has used the OHS project resources to build up and improve their health data collection systems. This has included experimenting with different ways in which to collect data on worker's health, which will serve as a useful guide for other MBOs wishing to do the same.

---

## **Peru**

In Peru, work started by the OHS project on health conditions in the booming agro-processing sector will continue under WIEGO's Global Trade Programme, which is part of a multi-stakeholder Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) aimed at improving working conditions in this industry. The ETI is a tripartite body made up of buyers from northern countries, worker organizations and NGOs. It works to implement fair labour standards within global value chains. The first multi-stakeholder workshop has already been held in Lima. Involving government, employers, worker organizations, and NGOs, as well as representatives from the International Labour Organization, the meeting was considered a success. Follow up actions are now taking place.

## **Tanzania**

In Tanzania the research had a positive impact on organizations of domestic workers. It was used during the campaign for the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (C189). The research was then published as an advocacy booklet called Occupational Health and Safety & Domestic Work. The booklet is aimed at informing employers, worker leaders and health professionals about the work related health risks that domestic workers face. OHS is now a clearly articulated aspect of the continuing campaign for the ratification of C189 in Tanzania led by the African Domestic Workers Network.

## **New Directions: The OHS Project Wins the Rockefeller Centennial Innovation Challenge Award.**

One great excitement this year was the announcement that an entry submitted by WIEGO's Laura Alfors in collaboration with the Durban based NGO Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) had been selected as one of 10 winners of the Rockefeller Centennial Innovation Challenge (see <http://wiego.org/ohs/empowering-street-vendors-through-disaster-risk-management>). The entry was selected from a pool of over 2,200 entries from 124 countries. The award came with the chance to submit a proposal for funding to allow the concept to be developed.

The entry submitted by WIEGO and AeT was aimed at improving health and safety conditions in urban informal workplaces, the focus being on Durban's Warwick Junction where 6-8,000 traders earn their living in nine different markets. The project is based on a participatory approach to risk management, which both increases the capacity of marginalized social groups to manage risk, as well as encouraging such groups to work together as a unified force. The core of the idea is that each market will form risk management committees. The committee members will be traders elected by their peers, and will undergo training in risk assessment, management and emergency response. (OHS professionals will also be invited to join the central risk

---

management committee, and will provide training in risk assessment.) The risk management committee members will then participate in a process to identify major risks and hazards in each of the markets and determine ways in which these could be dealt with. Practical measures that may come from this process include demarcated emergency exits and evacuation strategies, fire safety equipment and procedures, improved signage, distribution of first aid kits, and so on. Representatives from each of the market committees will also sit on a central Warwick Junction risk management committee, which will be a joint forum for decision making across the nine markets. Representatives from the Metro Fire Department and City Health will be invited to sit on this committee, which could then act as an important point of interaction and negotiation between the traders and the local authorities.

The proposal is particularly exciting for two reasons. Firstly, it is an innovative attempt to “formalize” the informal – not by imposing taxes (which is how formalization often works), but by providing services which traders see as worthwhile. It recognizes Warwick Junction as a workplace, just like formal workplaces, and recognizes those people who trade in it as workers. Secondly, it is a chance to bring together OHS professionals, local government health systems and urban specialists into conversation with one another. The need to do this has been a central objective of the WIEGO OHS project, and we are delighted that there may be an opportunity to put this idea to the test.

### **A Taste of AeT’s OHS Work to Date: “Warwick Junction’s First Aiders challenge myths about informal workers”**

*This article is an amended version of one written by Laura Alfors (WIEGO) and Phumzile Xulu (AeT) and originally published on the AeT blog on July 26 [<http://www.aet.org.za/2013/07/warwick-junctions-first-aiders-challenge-myths-about-informal-workers/>].*



Worldwide there is a tendency to assume that informal workers do not and will not properly maintain their workplaces and the infrastructure with which they are provided. The language that attends discussions of informal workplaces is peppered with the words “dirty,” “run down,” “broken,” and informal workers themselves often bear the burden of blame for this. Now a group of traders in Warwick Junction are beginning to challenge this assumption with their First Aid kits.

One of AeT’s main projects is the Markets of Warwick Tourism Project, which aims to bring both tourists and middle-class South Africans

---

*Traders from Warwick Junction who completed their First Aid training with the help of AeT.  
Photo: Phumzile Xulu*



into Warwick Junction. The point of the project is to change mindsets about an area that has long been thought of as dangerous and undesirable, and to ensure Warwick is appreciated for the cultural and economic resource that it is. By training traders in basic first aid, the Markets of Warwick Tours Project ensured that tourists could be cared for should an accident occur. More importantly, traders were skilled and thus empowered within their individual markets and personal lives. Twenty five traders were selected by the Markets of Warwick Committee to participate in the programme.

The “Stay Alive” Basic First Aid course was organized through the Action Training Academy, who presented a one day training session in isiZulu. At the graduation ceremony, a representative from each market in Warwick Junction was presented with a First Aid kit, sponsored by the SPAR Training Academy. Each first aider entrusted with a First Aid kit was asked to keep a log book to record the incidents that happened and what was used from the kit. Three years later, a follow up survey conducted by AeT and WIEGO shows that the traders have, on the whole, taken great pride in caring for their First Aid kits – often under difficult conditions.

When Zakhele Khomo presents the First Aid kit which he keeps for the Berea Station Market, his sense of pride is clear. Khomo says that the First Aid training he received has “given [him] the confidence to see what he can do to help people who are injured”. He has used the kit on a number of occasions. His logbook shows the type of assistance he has given, as well as the equipment he has used. He has also added to the kit, buying an additional box of painkillers and antiseptic treatment for the benefit of the Market. Zakhele Khomo has done an exceptional job in maintaining the Berea Station First Aid kit.



Traders in the other markets have also done well in maintaining their boxes. Though some of them could not produce log sheets during interviews, they could describe clearly the accidents that happened when they had to use their skill and the First Aid kit. The survey showed that out of the seven kits originally distributed in Warwick Markets, five had been very well maintained by the traders. In the Brook Street Market, the kit had disappeared in a theft from a trader’s storage space. In the Bovine Head Cooks Market, the box had been destroyed by rain because it was being stored in the open.

*Top: Zakhele Khomo of Berea Station Market with the First Aid kit he has maintained.  
Bottom: A First Aid kit destroyed by water at the Bovine Head Cooks Market. The cooks have nowhere suitable to store their kit and this is the result. Photo: Phumzile Xulu*

---

The above stories points to a critical issue: the provision of appropriate storage for the kits. This would make a great difference to the traders who keep the First Aid kits. Other markets have also experienced storage problems, and have dealt with this by either keeping the kits in a locked room, as happens with the Herb Market, or by keeping the kit in an office some distance from the market as with the Bead Sellers, who keep their kit in a locked office some blocks away. Neither of these solutions is ideal – the person who keeps the key for the room in the Herb Market is not always present, and the Beaders would much rather have their kit closer to them in an emergency. The provision of adequate storage for the kits will be the next design challenge for AeT!

What is also clear from the stories above is that traders do care about the equipment and infrastructure around them. In the two cases where the First Aid kits were lost and destroyed, it was a consequence of a lack of appropriate storage space, rather than active neglect by the traders.

### **New and Forthcoming Publications**

We are working hard on sharing the lessons from the project through publications of different types. We have one new publication out, and three will follow shortly.

Msuya, F. 2012. A Study of Working Conditions in the Zanzibar Seaweed Farming Industry. OHS Research Report. Available at: [http:// wiego.org/ohs/research-papers](http://wiego.org/ohs/research-papers).

Alfers, L. forthcoming. The Ghana National Health Insurance Scheme: Barriers to Access for Informal Workers. WIEGO Working Paper (Social Protection).

Jain, K. forthcoming. Health Financing and Delivery in India: A Review of Selected Schemes. WIEGO Working Paper (Social Protection).

Alfers, L and Lund, F. forthcoming. Participatory Policy Making: Lessons from Thailand's Universal Health Care Scheme. WIEGO Policy Brief (Social Protection).

Forthcoming publications will be available through the WIEGO Publications Series web page ([http:// wiego.org/wiego/wiego-publication-series](http://wiego.org/wiego/wiego-publication-series)) as soon as they are ready.

---

### **Important events:**

On 1 October 2013 the *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* closed its call for papers for an upcoming special edition on the informal economy. Keep a look out for the special edition on the IJOEH website. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/maney/oeh>

*The African Journal of Science Technology Innovation and Development* has put out a call for papers on technological innovations in the informal economy in Africa. This will certainly have relevance for anyone working in the field of ergonomics and equipment design with informal workers. The deadline for submission is 15 November 2013.

The World Congress on Safety and Health at Work will be held in Frankfurt, Germany from 24 to 27 August 2014. Several of the main conference themes have relevance to workers in the informal economy. The conference is jointly hosted by the International Labour Organization, the International Social Security Association and the German Social Accident Insurance. It will be an important forum for policy advocacy and influence. Abstracts need to be submitted by 30 November 2013.

### **News briefs**

Rob Yates of the World Health Organization has written an excellent piece for *The Guardian's* Poverty Matters blog on the drive towards Universal Health Coverage. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/oct/09/public-funding-universal-health-coverage>. Yates reports on a new Oxfam report which provides evidence that both private insurance and social insurance models in developing countries are deeply unfair to poor people. Particularly interesting is the critique of social insurance models which are enforced through payroll deductions amongst formal workers, but which operate as voluntary schemes for informal workers, who are expected to pay in to receive benefits. "Strategies which assume that informal sector workers can join insurance schemes voluntarily, by paying sizeable contributions, have always failed," argues Yates. He believes that informal workers will only be given fair coverage through health systems that are funded by general taxation. You can read more about this in the forthcoming WIEGO Working Paper by Laura Alfes on the Ghanaian National Health Insurance Scheme.

---

The *Hindustan Times* reports on shocking working conditions in Bengal's stone crushing industry. Workers do not work according to minimum wages, but are paid by the basket load, earning between 80 and 100 rupees (\$1.30-\$1.50) on a good day. Alerted by a number of deaths in what are known as "stone crushing units," the government sent in an investigative team. They found that most people living in the villages surrounding the units had developed silicosis, either because they had worked as stone crushers, or because of the silica dust released into the environment. The local administration has said that it will take action by asking the owners of the units to take "pollution control measures."

And finally ...

The next OHS Newsletter will be the last. It will be produced in the first half of 2014 and will contain a directory of valuable OHS-related resources.

In the future, news about OHS-related work will be inserted into the WIEGO newsletter and the Inclusive Cities newsletter. These can be subscribed to here: <http://wiego.org/contact>.

*Subscriber list:* We compiled our list of subscribers through our existing contacts in the Social Protection Programme, and WIEGO's other programmes. Please send us the names and email addresses of others who would be interested in receiving this eNewsletter, or forward it on and tell them to click on the subscription link at the top of the first page.

*OHS microsite as a resource:* We will be developing the OHS microsite, which you can find on WIEGO's website at [www.wiego.org/ohs](http://www.wiego.org/ohs). We hope it will become a valued resource of information for people interested in and studying OHS for informal workers. Let us know what you would like to see there! Send us references and toolkits you know about!



**About WIEGO:** Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO helps to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertakes policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; provides policy advice and convenes policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documents and disseminates good practices in support of the informal workforce. For more information see [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).