

## New Study Highlights Contributions of Bangkok's Informal Workers

**BANGKOK, 4 October, 2017** - HomeNet Thailand and WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) have released a new study, entitled "Informal Workers in Bangkok, Thailand: Scan of Four Occupational Sectors." The study explores key challenges faced by home-based workers, domestic workers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and street vendors working in Bangkok. It was conducted in partnership with the recently formed Federation of Informal Workers (FIT).

The study highlights that informal workers provide important services – e.g. transportation, affordable meals, childcare, and manufacturing – for the local economy, including for workers and enterprises in the *formal* sector. In spite of this, the informal status of these workers makes them vulnerable to social, economic, and legal hardship. The results of the study show that domestic workers and home-based workers struggle with isolation, while motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors have experienced eviction and harassment, especially as a result of the recent "Return the sidewalk to pedestrians" campaign.

Poonsap Tulaphan, Director of HomeNet Thailand and co-author of the findings, highlighted the importance of these findings for policymakers. "This study helps us understand much more about the underlying vulnerabilities of informal workers in Bangkok. We can see that these issues vary across sectors – domestic workers and motorcycle taxi drivers obviously face different workplaces challenges on a day-to-day basis, for example – but ultimately city policy makers need to think about how they can support all workers who contribute so much to the city but lack social and legal protections. The experience of workers in Bangkok is not unique, and other cities across Thailand and beyond can also learn from these findings."

The study also identified a number of barriers that informal workers face in accessing city services:

- While workers stated that they are highly appreciative of the Universal Health Care system, they experience long waits, cumbersome referral processes, and unexpected fees and expenses.
- Lack of financial access – linked to informal worker status – is the primary barrier to improving informal workers' housing situation. Motorcycle taxi drivers in particular struggle to become homeowners. Without local housing registration, they are excluded from voting in elections and accessing some types of local government support.
- Overall, workers raised very few instances in which they had participated in local planning or policymaking, and none with satisfactory outcomes.

Workers from the four sectors have recently established FIT. Experience from the WIEGO network globally shows that when organized, informal workers can make important gains in negotiating for their rights and improving their working conditions.

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**About HomeNet Thailand:** HomeNet Thailand was founded in 1999 as a non-governmental organization to support home-based workers across Thailand. In 2008, it

became a membership-based organization (MBO) of informal workers and registered formally as an Association in 2013. Today, it has over 4,000 members, consisting primarily of home-based workers as well as street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, farmers, and day labourers. Technical and organizational support for the Association is provided by the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). FLEP also supports the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand, which was founded in 2008.

**About WIEGO:** Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities and rights. WIEGO creates change by building capacity among informal worker organizations, expanding the knowledge base, and influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).