



# Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

## WIEGO MBO Newsletter

A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations of  
Informal Workers

July 2018

### Greetings friends and colleagues!

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of the WIEGO MBO Newsletter. We love to hear from you! Megan MacLeod is coordinator of this newsletter. If you have questions or comments about this newsletter, or if you would like to submit content for the next issue, please email Megan at [megan.macleod@wiego.org](mailto:megan.macleod@wiego.org).

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### What's going on at WIEGO?

Take a look at our [recent](#)  
and [upcoming](#) events and  
activities!

### WIEGO and the IDWF Discuss Violence and Harassment in the World of Work at the ILC

*An interview with Fish Ip and Karin Pape*

At this year's [International Labour Conference](#) (ILC), which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 28 May 2018 to 7 June 2018, informal worker leaders participated in the Standard-Setting discussion on "Violence and harassment in the world of work".

Participants included representatives from [StreetNet](#), [HomeNet South East Asia](#), [ZCIEA Zimbabwe](#), [SINACTRAHO](#), [WIEGO](#), [International Domestic Workers Federation](#) (IDWF), [Asociación Nacional de Recicladores de Colombia](#) (ANR), among others.

Fish Ip, IDWF's regional coordinator for Asia, and Karin Pape, WIEGO's Deputy Director of the Organization and Representation Programme, both attended the event and gave us an on-the-ground account of how the discussion unfolded:

#### Q: What were the goals of the IDWF for the discussion? What were the goals of WIEGO?

**Fish:** Our goals were to lobby support for a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation on Violence and Harassment in the world of work, especially to have clauses on protection of domestic workers and workers in the informal economy.

The instrument should include protection in various forms of "workplace": private households, public spaces, while workers are resting, accommodation provided by middle persons (e.g. employment agencies). As well, the instrument should highlight the aspect of gender-based violence (e.g. protection from domestic violence suffered by workers), as well as recognize other forms of discrimination based on caste, status of residence (migrants), and LGBTQI.

**Karin:** For WIEGO, our focus was to ensure that informal workers, typically excluded from legislation meant to protect against harassment and violence at work, were heard and given a voice and that they were included into the scope and definition of an ILO instrument, ideally a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation.

#### Q: What were some of the main concerns that the speakers shared?

**Karin:** WIEGO's main concern was to ensure that informal places of work — including the private home for home-based workers and domestic workers or public spaces for waste-pickers and street vendors — were reflected in the standard. Often, informal workers are seen as the source of violence, rarely as victims. The employers in the ILO had to learn through the discussions that an ILO standard against violence in the work place goes far beyond traditional work places — often beyond the control of traditional employers. The governments are responsible for putting into place laws and regulations that include informal workers in occupational health and safety protection for non-traditional work places. Governments,

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A few of the delegates who spoke pose for a photo at the 107th ILC. Photo: K. Hughes

## The First Law School for Informal Workers

WIEGO's Law Programme and its Organization and Representation Programme (ORP) are bringing Administrative Law down to the street level with a "law school" for informal workers called "WIEGO Law School on Administrative Law". The goal is to educate informal workers of various sectors together on how city by-laws affect them and how they can harness them to gain a voice in their cities.

The very first Law School took place from 13-16 February 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included 19 representatives from the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) and 23 representatives from the South African Informal Traders Association (SAITA).

The sessions covered by-laws regulating street vending and waste reclaiming, Administrative Law, negotiating with authorities, and a panel with two legal organizations: the Legal Resources Centre and the Socio Economic Rights Initiative.

When asked at the end of the programme how they felt about it, the informal workers were overwhelmingly positive. Said one worker, "Administrative law is going to help us in our struggle...it helps us to question whether they [law enforcement] were reasonable and procedurally fair...we won't allow them to take action without giving us the reasons."

Further Law School projects are planned for street vendors in Mexico City, Mexico, and Accra, Ghana.

To learn more, see [here](#).

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however, can also be perpetrators, not only in their role as employers but also through their enforcement bodies, such as the police. There is still room for improving the draft instrument in next year's discussions.

**Fish:** It took days to negotiate the definition and scope of the Convention and Recommendation. Government delegates had, from time-to-time, reflected concerns over terminology/coverage (e.g. domestic violence, coverage of protection during workers' commuting to and from work). We were happy that these were kept in the proposed instrument.

However, we were disappointed that the list of groups disproportionately affected by violence and harassment was removed in the negotiation under paragraph 10. There was strong opposition against the mention of LGBTQI.

**Q: How did the speakers feel about their participation? Did they feel that they had made an impact? Did they feel they had accomplished their goals?**

**Fish:** Yes, we did. In general we felt we accomplished our goals, especially on the forms of the instrument. We had reached out and talked to as many government delegates as possible. We had submitted our amendment proposals to the spokesperson of the workers' group and these were taken up. However, we need to speak more as workers, not only as domestic workers, and we need to follow up the process after we are back to our countries. For instance, we need to continue to lobby governments to ensure the negotiation next year in 2019 will go as well as we wish.

**Karin:** The most significant outcome, of course, is that almost all governments which spoke, were in favour of having a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation — and not just a Recommendation. This means that next year, we can hope to see the adoption of an ILO Convention on Violence & Harassment at Work!

Generally speaking there are gains and losses in the text of the first round of negotiations. What we still miss is the recognition of the State as a perpetrator, for example, in the form of police forces which are confiscating the goods of street vendors without any legal grounds. We will be working on it in the course of next year and will be well prepared when travelling to Geneva in 2019.

**Further resources:**

- Read the full IDWF [Platform of Demands](#) for the ILC.



Waste pickers in Popayan are formalizing to gain recognition and better wages.

Photo: F. Parra

- Watch Myrtle Witbooi, IDWF president, speak [here](#) and [here](#).
- Listen to [Zainab of KUDHEIHA Kenya and Marcelina of CACEH Mexico](#) speak in an interview.
- Listen to the [some of the workers who spoke during the ILC](#) on WIEGO's YouTube channel.

## Recognition for Waste Pickers in Colombia

By Federico Parra

In Colombia, organized waste pickers, headed by the Association of Recyclers of Bogotá (ARB), have been the drivers of a small revolution: after more than 20 years of struggle, they won the right to be recognized and remunerated as providers of the public recycling service. This accomplishment was achieved through a legal strategy that resulted in more than seven pronouncements from the Constitutional Court of Colombia in defense of the rights of waste pickers.

This means that, in addition to having an income for the commercialization of recyclable materials recovered in the streets, waste picker organizations that meet certain requirements can receive a second payment for waste management services, paid for by the citizens. This process began in Bogotá in 2013. The challenge since then has been to articulate those requirements with the Constitutional Orders in order to have a gradual and equilibrated waste picker formalization process.

Before 2017, this only happened in Bogotá. Today in Colombia, 11 municipalities have at least one waste picker organization that they remunerate as a provider of the public recycling service. WIEGO has contributed directly and indirectly to this achievement in

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## WIEGO supports HBW organizing in Kenya

By Edwin Bett

In January 2018, 25 individuals from eight [Kenyan Federation for Alternative Trade](#) (KEFAT) member organizations converged for a two-day meeting in Nairobi. The group met under the support of WIEGO's Organization and Representation Programme (ORP) with the objectives of reviewing their progress since the end of the [Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women](#) (FLOW) programme in 2015 and of building solidarity in the development of the home-based worker network.

The ensuing discussions presented an opportunity for the KEFAT membership to re-energize the development of a home-based worker network in Kenya. This hinged on the support of WIEGO and the solidarity of other global networks engaged in support of the home-based worker movement.

The participants resolved to work on expanding a database of organizations working with home-based workers beyond the fair trade network, identifying like-minded organizations and public and private institutions carrying out research that could potentially support data collection and analysis, and, if funding is available, organizing a national forum aimed at bringing on board representatives from home-based worker organizations.

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nine of the cases, and plans to support the ANR to reach the greatest number of municipalities in Colombia, under the premise that: wherever there are waste pickers, they are part of the public service of waste management, and its recognition, promotion, and remuneration by the recycling service are a way to overcome conditions of poverty and vulnerability and are an appropriate path to formalization.

## Exciting Prospects for a Global Home-based Worker Organization by 2019

By Jane Barrett

A global home-based worker organization is on the horizon! Representatives of the regional home-based worker organizations in South Asia, South East Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, plus a representative of home-based workers in Kenya, Africa, met together with WIEGO in Stockholm in May and decided on a target launch date of May 2020.

After sharing detailed reports of the work of the regional home-based worker organizations, the participants of the Stockholm meeting agreed that a global organization could help strengthen local organizations by providing a common platform and strategy to be drawn upon, promoting learning and sharing at all levels, conducting case studies of good practices, providing technical assistance to affiliates, and developing training resources to be used locally.

The regional representatives also agreed that a global organization would provide the basis for unity and collective strength for home-based workers to be able to engage with and influence international institutions such as the ILO and the regional economic institutions, as well as global employer associations. A global organization could also be a platform for fundraising from global donors, would make home-based work visible, and would create the conditions under which solidarity actions between workers in different parts of the world is encouraged.

The participants also recognized that many challenges lie ahead. A global home-based worker organization will require substantial financial resources to fund global meetings and other activities, requiring strong fundraising efforts as well as an equitable distribution of resources and activities across the world. The biggest challenge that was identified was the need to ensure that the



Kenyan home-based worker members of KEFAT weave together during a workshop. Photo: WIEGO

structures of the organization are properly representative and accountable, and that activities are driven by the membership at the base.

After taking a decisive vote in favour of setting up a global organization, the meeting agreed to set up a working group to drive the process. The working group, comprised of one representative per region and three WIEGO team members, was mandated to start the process by developing a vision statement by the end of June 2018. The next step will be consult with membership-based organizations from August to November on what kind of structure would be preferred. The working group will meet regularly both virtually and at least once in person before the end of April 2019, by which time it will have produced a draft constitution. Regional organizations will consider the draft constitution in workshops. By November 2019 home-based worker organizations all over the world should be ready to give a mandate to the working committee to go ahead and plan a launching Congress. It is hoped that such a launch Congress could be convened in May 2020.

For further information on the plans for a global home-based worker organization, contact Chris Bonner, the coordinator of the working group, at [chris.bonner@wiego.org](mailto:chris.bonner@wiego.org) or go to the [WIEGO website](#).

The regional representatives on the Working Group are:

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