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# WIEGO MBO Newsletter



A Newsletter for Membership-Based Organizations of Informal Workers

## GREETINGS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES!

We hope you enjoy this April 2014 issue of the WIEGO MBO Newsletter, featuring articles on the new Street Vendors Bill in India, IDWF Newsletter, MBO Communication and Social Media, WIEGO Workshops to draft a platform on formalization of the informal economy, SWaCH, SYVEMACOT and the HNEE visits to SEWA and HNSA. Remember, we love to hear from you! If you have questions or comments, or would like to submit content for the next issue, please email us at [julia\\_martin@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:julia_martin@hks.harvard.edu) or [karen\\_mccabe@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:karen_mccabe@hks.harvard.edu).



In Ahmedabad, SEWA members celebrate the passage of the Street Vendors Bill with SEWA Founder Elaben Bhatt.

Photo by SEWA Bharat



NASVI cheers the struggle, thanks the government and the political parties, and calls upon street vendors to take out victory processions across cities.

Photo by NASVI



## Street Vendors Triumph after Years of Struggle

By Dr. Sanjay Kumar, SEWA Bharat Director

Following years of struggle that culminated in an indefinite strike in the latter half of February 2014, women street vendors of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), together with members of NASVI, have achieved the seemingly impossible – a legislation that, if effectively implemented, will spell an end to their daily struggle for survival.

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2012 will provide legal protection to vendors, cement their rights as equal citizens of urban spaces, and will go a long way toward

securing the vendors' right to earn a dignified livelihood. The Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament of India) in 2012, had been held up in the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the Parliament of India) since first being tabled in March, 2013.

SEWA represents street vendors across the country. It has been agitating since 1972 to secure their right to sell their wares without being subjected to exploitation and harassment. Over the years, SEWA has adopted a two-pronged strategy – firstly, unionizing women at the

grassroots level so as to address their day to day concerns with local authorities and secondly, conducting advocacy at the national level with policymakers to expedite the formulation of related rules and regulations.

SEWA has been a prime mover in every stage of the struggle for this historic legislation. In 1998, SEWA called a meeting of street vendors' associations from across the country leading to the formation of NASVI (National Association of Street Vendors of India). This was followed by the

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Indian Street Vendors Reach Historic Milestone: Parliament Enacts Legislation to Protect Livelihood and Social Security

By Ranjit Abhigyan, National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) Program Manager

More than 12 million urban street vendors and hawkers in India found sufficient reason to cheer when the Indian Parliament finally enacted the long awaited Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill on 19 February 2014. The Bill has several provisions to protect the livelihoods, social security and human rights of those millions of urban street vendors who have been facing multiple barriers and onslaughts of the municipal bodies and the police in cities and towns across India.

National Association of Street

Vendors of India (NASVI) has been at the forefront, leading the struggle of street vendors for comprehensive and effective central legislation. In response to its enactment, NASVI has thanked the government and political parties, and called upon street vendor organizations to celebrate across the country.

The Street Vendors Bill is the first piece of central legislation in any country that favours the rights of



street vendors. Its enactment has been a critical social-political need in urban India. The Bill has the potential to counter the long-felt marginalization of street vendors, as it mandates the integration of street vendors in city planning

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SEWA members protest outside the BJP office, seeking support to push the Street Vendors Bill in the Rajya Sabha.

Photo by SEWA Bharat

*Hailing the historic legislative development, NASVI National Coordinator Arbind Singh has said, "We really struggled a lot. We are happy that now both houses of Indian parliament have passed the bill. We trust the President of India would ascend it soon and the legislation would get notified. No doubt, years long campaign and advocacy interventions took many twists and turns, but at the end of the day 'We fought, we won'. We call upon the street vendor organizations to take out victory processions across cities."*

## Second Edition of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) Newsletter

In March, the International Domestic Workers Federation disseminated their second issue of the IDWF e-Newsletter. Highlights cover two stories, both pertaining to the abuse of domestic workers.

The first article discusses the abuses faced by migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, specifically excessive and illegal agency fees, underpayment,

confiscation of passports, and physical, as well as psychological and sexual abuse. The article concludes with a link to a [petition launched by the IDWF](#), which has about 15,000 signatures so far.

The second story focuses on the actions launched by the IDWF and others to demand the India government deny diplomatic immunity to the India diplomat in the USA, [Ms. Khobragade, who](#)

[underpaid her domestic worker and made her work overtime without pay](#). The story also links to a related article regarding the draft [National Policy for Domestic Workers](#), which would provide domestic workers minimum wages and the right to form unions and associations.

Read the March IDWF Newsletter [here](#).

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## (Street Vendors Triumph after Years of Struggle)

establishment of a Task Force committee in 2001 and a Draft Committee in 2002 comprised of government officials and senior leaders from SEWA, NASVI and TISS.

In 2004, the committee formulated a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors which served as the bedrock for the Street Vendors Bill. SEWA and NASVI's concerns regarding gaps in the draft Bill were thereafter addressed through consultative meetings in every phase of the legislative process, giving the Bill its current ground-breaking shape.

In February 2014, SEWA together with NASVI intensified efforts to get the Bill passed in the then-ongoing session of the

Parliament, with members of both organizations going on an indefinite strike at Jantar Mantar (a public site in New Delhi) to bring attention to their plight. In course of the agitation, women vendors from SEWA spoke at a press conference about the persecution they face every day and how they are excluded from making a dignified living. They elaborated on the threats of eviction, confiscation, verbal and physical abuse vendors are subjected to, clearly demonstrating the compulsions they face.

Concurrently, a delegation of representatives from both organizations met political leaders across party lines seeking their support for the legislation. Leaders of the ruling Indian National Congress (INC) as well as the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assured the representatives of their empathy for the vendors and promised to

do their utmost to ensure the passage of the Bill through the Rajya Sabha. Leaders of the INC visited the agitating vendors and sought to mollify them to no avail.

With each passing day, the protests built until the day the Bill was finally passed, when nearly a thousand street vendors congregated at Jantar Mantar demanding an immediate end to the delay in this landmark legislation that is expected to impact the lives of nearly 2.5 crore (25 million) street vendors across the country. Women vendors and their representatives, while rejoicing over the hard-won victory that finally grants recognition of their contribution to the national economy, remain focused on the need to raise awareness regarding the provisions of the Act and also to ensure its effective implementation.

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## (Indian Street Vendors Reach Historic Milestone)

and development processes. The Bill states that at least 2.5 per cent of a city's population would be eligible for vending certificates, and it would be mandatory to form a Town and Zonal Vending Committee in every city. Such committees would be comprised of 40 per cent elected representatives of vendor

organizations, 10 per cent of NGOs and the remaining 50 per cent of town planners, administrators, police and elected representatives. The Bill also gives the Town Vending Committee (TVC) power to make decisions on nearly all aspects of determining vending zones, and also includes a strong grievance redressal mechanism. The most salient feature of the Bill is that it overrides all state and municipal laws as well as police acts.

Many informal economy and retail trade experts believe that the Street Vendors Bill will spark an organizing movement among street vendors, and that a major task is to ensure the proper implementation of the law. They also opine that the struggle for real implementation of the law will essentially be a battle for municipal and police reforms in India.



“Operation Clean Assivito for Maintaining Hygiene, Health and Safety in the Workplace”

Photos by SYVEMACOT



The Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers programme aims to empower women leaders and develop their skills for effective advocacy, visibility and voice at the regional and global levels. The experience of organizing and building MBOs is now extended to South East Europe, Latin America and South Africa, where the organizing of home-based workers has been initiated by a few organizations.”

Photos by HNSA

## Report of the Sanitation Operation “Clean Assivito” in Togo

By Komi Mensanh Kessouagni, SYVEMACOT Secretary General

To mark International Street Vendors Day, celebrated every year on November 14, the Union of Vendors of Building Materials of Togo (SYVEMACOT) in Togo organized a safety and sanitation operation entitled “Operation Clean Assivito for Maintaining Hygiene, Health and Safety in the Workplace”. The operation brought together SYVEMACOT union members and supporters, and was undertaken to clean the vending locations of Assivito.

Assivito is a little shopping mall that is occupied, for the most part,

by vendors of building materials as well as those who sell various products in the shops. The unsanitary state was threatening a cholera epidemic, so action had to be taken. Thus, SYVEMACOT took the issue head on by organizing this health and safety operation.

With the support of the Director of Technical Services of the Municipality of Lomé, the AJDA association and the BOSSIADE SARL society, the vendors and supporters swept all of the avenues, streets and pathways that lead to the mall.

In addition, SYVEMACOT plans to place waste bins in five areas where vendors sell building materials. The bins will be used for the recycling of plastic and cardboard, as well as the collection of waste by a motor tricycle, which will be responsible for removal to a secondary dump. This project is fitting with the new sanitation programme launched by the government for the cleanliness of our country, Togo. After all, a healthy environment is an attractive environment for customers.

## HomeNet Eastern Europe visits SEWA Academy & HNSA

By HomeNet South Asia

In May 2013, under the Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers project led by WIEGO, SEWA Academy and HNSA completed an assessment visit to Macedonia to understand the legal frameworks and working conditions of home-based workers in Eastern Europe. This visit helped SEWA Academy and HNSA draft a training programme for a subsequent three-day exposure visit of the South East Europe group in November 2013. The training programme’s methodology was based on a participatory and interactive approach, and employed a host of non-conventional training methods including: multimedia products, training sessions, site and field visits, meetings, and one-on-one interactions with home-based workers. The participants visited several organizations promoted by SEWA, such as Union, Federation, Vimo (Insurance)-Health and Child Care, and various co-operatives formed by SEWA.

The participants were from the following organizations: Dora Dom; Intellectual Women; Evcad, Association of Home-Based Workers and Social Rights; and the Association of Home-Based Workers. Dora Dom, an NGO network in Macedonia with 10 member organizations, has been working with home-based workers for last three years. As Macedonia has ratified the ILO Homework Convention (C-177), the organiza-

tion is currently lobbying the Minister of Labour and Social Politics to have legislation passed regarding homeworkers (it is essential to enact a piece of legislation within one year of ratifying C-177). Intellectual Women is an Albanian NGO started in August 1999 that encourages men, women and youth to value each other and work together in harmony. Evcad, Association of Home-Based Workers and Social Rights, started in 2011 in Turkey, has 70 members and aims to help home-based workers organize, strengthen their capacities and obtain social security. The Association of Home-Based Workers in Bulgaria, registered in 2002, specializes in economic, sociological, marketing and legal research. They also host organizing courses, conferences and other forums for the popularization of home-based products, and strive to provide financial resources to assist unemployed people and home-based manufacturers with acquiring or upgrading the quality of their goods/services.

On asking the South East Europe group about the similarities and differences between South Asia and South East Europe, they mentioned working conditions and long working hours as similarities, but noted that in South East Europe there is more access to social security and modern equipment.

The group learned:

- the differences between homeworkers (piece rate workers) and home-based workers
- why C-177 deals with homeworkers and not home-based workers
- how door-to-door organizing is effective, as it promotes interaction on an individual basis
- various structures of SEWA:
  - flow of information is both bottom-up and top-down, as it brings the solution faster
  - SEWA structure integrated in the form of net with the objective to ensure social security, health care, child care, insurance and finance of its members

The South East Europe group would like to replicate SEWA initiatives such as:

- child care for home-based workers
- microfinance
- co-operatives which assist workers with small loans to start their business
- the strategy of door to door organizing



Above: Photos from the ILC Workshops in South Africa, Argentina and Bangkok

Photos by WIEGO



To watch their fellow SWaCH members live on TV, over 1,000 waste pickers and their families gathered at a local sports stadium where a community screening had been organized on a large outdoor screen.

Photo by SWaCH

## Drafting a Platform on Formalization

By WIEGO

In advance of the International Labour Conference (ILC) 2014, WIEGO hosted a [series of three workshops](#) to include informal workers in drafting a platform on formalizing the informal economy. In March 2014, the workshops took place in South Africa, Argentina and Thailand. The [first workshop](#) took place in Johannesburg, 13-14 March, coordinated by Chris Bonner (WIEGO Director, Organization & Representation Programme) and hosted by the largest trade union federation in Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions. The second workshop

was held in Buenos Aires, 19-21 March, and was hosted by [Confederación de Trabajadores en la Economía Popular \(CTEP\)](#),



with Lucia Fernandez (WIEGO Global Coordinator, Waste Pickers) coordinating. The [third workshop](#) took place in Bangkok on 23 March, and was

coordinated by Elizabeth Tang (IDWF General Secretary), with support by HomeNet Thailand.

The workshops were attended by representatives of domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors, waste pickers and other informal workers. A participatory approach was used to ensure the voices of informal workers—through their MBOs—were integrated into the platform. Participants discussed the need for a common platform, learned about the ILC process, and articulated the demands they want included in the platform.

## SWaCH Members on Prime Time TV

By the SWaCH Team

On 16 March 2014, members of SWaCH coop, Pune, India, had the opportunity to air their views about waste collection during an appearance on “Satyameva Jayate” (Truth Will Triumph), a popular civic issues-based TV programme. The programme, which has a huge following, focused on the problem of garbage in urban areas during the episode. It profiled initiatives in different Indian cities and towns where attempts are being made to deal with the waste situation, now approaching critical proportions.

Saru Waghmare, the waste picker who was interviewed for the programme, spoke about waste pickers’ demands to be treated with dignity, the need for prompt and fair payment from service users, segregation of waste at source, and space for material recovery centers from the municipality. Lakshmi Narayan, who was also

featured, brought up the issue of Extended Producer Responsibility with regard to soiled sanitary pads and diapers, and steps citizens can take to make the job of collecting these less unpleasant for waste pickers (for example, by using ST Dispo bags or diaper labels manufactured by SWaCH from recycled paper).

Interestingly, SWaCH is getting national recognition as a successful waste collection model, but is struggling to get the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to honour its commitments made through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) it signed with SWaCH five years ago, such as provision of equipment, payment of subsidy for waste collection in slums, and building of sorting sheds. Details of the PMC’s non-compliance with the MoU have been shared in the latest [SWaCH newsletter](#).

“Let’s hope that this widespread

and positive publicity pushes the [PMC] into recognizing the merits of the SWaCH Model and clearing our dues, if not renewing the MoU,” said a SWaCH member.

Despite no funds coming from the municipal corporation, SWaCH has continued to offer regular door to door waste collection services without interruption to Pune’s citizens by relying on the payment of user fees by citizens and the 5 per cent contribution to the cooperative by SWaCH members.

SWaCH believes it is a paradox that instead of supporting and expanding SWaCH and ensuring decentralized processing of specific wastes, the PMC has recently floated yet another global tender for waste processing plants. The corporation seems determined *not to* learn from its own experience of failed large, centralized waste processing plants that collapse within a couple of years.



Members of the Mathima Women's Group in Kenya make and market sisal baskets.

Photo by L. Vryenhoek



Women cooperative members harvest coffee for fair trade buyer Gumutindo, a partner in WIEGO's project.

Photo by L. Vryenhoek



Members of a self-help group in Uganda examine the quality of a product.

Photo by B. Leifso

## Communicating the Story: Women's Economic Empowerment in Uganda and Kenya

By WIEGO Writer and Editor Leslie Vryenhoek

Partners in the Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers project met in December 2013 to look at what they accomplished over the year and to chart the way forward. The project targets poor women fair trade producers in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda. Part of WIEGO's multifaceted *Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers*, it trains women to understand their rights as workers and improve their earnings. (Learn more about this project and how its cascading method of training will reach thousands of women [here](#).)

The meeting was also a chance to learn new skills. WIEGO Communications Officer Brenda Leifso offered her expertise on communications planning, taking the partners through the process from identifying *why* they want

to communicate to their audiences, and how to reach those audiences with the right messages and information. She also offered insight into the effective use of social media (for example, Facebook and Twitter) to promote both causes and products. Brenda shares some tips in this newsletter; see "How to Make Social Media Work for Your MBO".

WIEGO's Writer-Editor Leslie Vryenhoek also conducted a session with the partners on the power of storytelling. She encouraged participants to look for individual stories that show change. While articles about events and organizations are important, she noted, people like to learn about other people. Stories that include individuals can put a human face to an issue, making it memorable. And the

most powerful stories involve overcoming adversity or changing.

To encourage storytelling, WIEGO has set up a special email for all its partners to share stories about their work: [stories@wiego.org](mailto:stories@wiego.org).

Following the meetings, the WIEGO team did some story gathering of their own. Brenda and Leslie accompanied WIEGO's Global Trade Programme Director Elaine Jones to visit women's groups involved in fair trade in Uganda and Kenya. The women shared how the training has given them confidence as workers, encouraged them to make new and better products, and helped them connect with each other and with markets. Stories and photos from some of these visits can be found on the project web pages for [Uganda](#) and [Kenya](#).

## Making Social Media Work for Your MBO

By WIEGO Communications Officer Brenda Leifso

Social media may seem a long way away from the daily ins and outs of running an MBO. It can work for your organization, though, as a powerful networking, advocacy and awareness-raising tool. Social media can:

- start conversations with an engaged, interested audience
- advance specific campaigns, events or projects
- lead to participation in policy dialogues with key political figures
- help media learn about your cause and tell your stories
- act as a rapid information tool in emergencies or major events
- help you fundraise
- lead to social change

In order to be effective, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest (a visual social media site that is particularly good for showcasing products-[www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)) should be used as part of a broader communications plan. A good communications plan asks these questions:

- What are our objectives for communicating? (for example to raise awareness and support, get petition signatures, fundraise)
- Who is our audience? (for example media, other workers, funders, government officials)
- What do we want the audience to do? (lobby governments for more laws around fair wages?)
- What are our key messages? (what does the audience need to know?)

Once you answer these questions, then you can start integrating social media into your communications activities. Here are some top tips on using any social media tool.

- Always keep your key messages in mind when you are sharing your own, or other people's, content.
- Pay attention to what others are saying around issues.
- Remember that social media is a conversation – make sure to respond to messages and thank others who help you in spreading your campaigns.