Workshop Report
Organizing Informal Workers:
Building & Strengthening Membership-Based Organizations

Bangkok, 3-5 March 2011

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Introduction

In March 2011 WIEGO conducted the workshop, "Organizing Informal Workers: Building and Strengthening Membership-Based Organizations." The workshop was held in Bangkok, Thailand, and WIEGO's local partner HomeNet Thailand provided critical support and assistance in the organizing and running of the workshop. An important part of the work of WIEGO is facilitating and supporting networking amongst different groups of informal workers. WIEGO's Membership Based Organization (MBO) institutional members and network partners had requested the workshop. They were particularly interested in having an opportunity to share organizing strategies, challenges and successes across sectors, countries and continents and to learn from each other.

Participants came mainly, but not exclusively, from networks of informal workers from four sectors of the informal economy: domestic workers, home-based workers, street/market vendors and waste pickers. They were joined by WIEGO staff and committee members and organizations /individuals supporting informal workers. They came from 24 countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Europe and North America, requiring the use of nine languages. Sixty four percent of the participants were women (see list of participants).

This is a preliminary report. We will prepare an extended report, which will include case studies, interviews, photographs and other materials which we hope will be useful in your organizing, capacity building and worker education with informal workers.

Workshop Objectives

- To share experiences of, and information on, base organizations and national and international networks in different sectors of the informal economy (street vendors/marketers, waste-pickers/recyclers, home-based workers, domestic workers)

- To critically reflect on successes and challenges in building effective, democratic, membership-based organizations at all levels, with a particular focus on building national and international networks

- To develop ideas and strategies to help build, strengthen and sustain our organizations and networks

- To explore the potential and possibilities for 'cross-sector' cooperation and common activity.

Workshop Programme

2 March	**Fundraising Workshop**	
	Welcome Dinner hosted by HomeNet Thailand	
3 March	**Organizing Overview**	
	Introductory Activities	
	Organizing in the Informal Economy: Historical Overview	
	How Do We Organize?	
	Key Organizing Challenges and Successes	
4 March	**Developing Strategies: Base MBOs**	
	Democratic structures, membership and leadership	
	Field visits and sector meetings	
5 March	**Developing Strategies: Networks**	
	Case Study Presentations: - International Network: StreetNet International - National Network: MNCR Brazil	
	Learning from Networks: National and International	
	Evaluation and Recommendations	

Workshop Overview

The workshop began with a welcome dinner at which HomeNet Thailand introduced us to Thailand, as well as Thai dancing. The next day, after introductions in regional groups, we looked back at our history and were reminded that organizing informal workers is not new: the first worker organizations and unions were of informal workers. We then saw that the current wave of informal worker organization which began in the 1990s has gained momentum in the past decade and has grown to include organizing at the international level. Participants were able to place their own organizations on a timeline and see themselves as part of the broader movement. We then defined what is meant by MBOs and built a picture of forms and levels of organization amongst workers in different sectors, comparing issues they were organizing around and the advantages of different organizing forms. Participants then shared successes and challenges related to organizing. The next day we looked at questions of democracy, leadership and women's role in leadership, independence, and sustainability amongst base/local organisations. Participants emphasised the importance of democratic procedures, effective and accountable leadership, and the importance of women's leadership. They shared ideas about how they were able to sustain their organizations through membership fees, income generating projects, etc. There was then an opportunity to leave the "classroom" and meet with local groups of informal workers. Field visits were organized to meet local waste pickers, street vendors and home-based workers, and a meeting with local domestic workers was held. On Day Three we focused on national and international networks. Participants learned about StreetNet International which is the most developed international network of informal workers, as well as the large and vibrant Brazilian national movement of *catadores* (waste pickers). They had the opportunity to "interrogate" representatives, and then, in groups, to ask and receive advice on "burning questions" on national and international networks.

In the final session participants reflected on what they had found most useful, and what they would like to see changed and developed recommendations for future collaboration or support. Participants identified the sharing of experiences across the different sectors and countries, the workshop methodologies, especially group discussions, as the most important or useful aspects of the workshop. Participants said that, in future workshops, they would like to have better translation and time to explore issues in depth. Recommendations included a web space where we can share ideas on organizing; a manual on the issues discussed in the workshop; leadership training programme for domestic workers; and follow-up on focused topics.

Prior to the organizing workshop WIEGO ran a workshop on fundraising which proved to be very useful and elicited requests for similar workshops to be held in different countries and regions.

Thank you to all participants, to HomeNet Thailand, our local Conference Coordinator, our media consultant, note takers and facilitators for a wonderful collaborative effort.

1.   Introductory Activities

1.1   Introductions and Expectations: Activity 1

> *Objective: to introduce ourselves to one another and discuss what we would like to achieve by the end of the workshop*

Participants gathered in groups according to regions, introduced themselves and prepared a report on their expectations and concerns. They decided on which animal would best describe the group and why.

What are you hoping to learn?

- More about the informal economy
- Experience of organizing in other countries
- More about different forms of membership based worker organizations and how to build them
- How to make workers' organizations sustainable
- Different methodologies, strategies and models for organizing
- How to build a strong network
- How networks and organizations can work towards a common cause
- More about fundraising
- Challenges being faced in building MBOs and networks
- How to build solidarity
- What is happening in other countries and whether we can apply it in our own countries

What are the key Issues you would like to discuss?

- How to organize
- Specific issues related to street vendors
- Privatization
- Training needs of organizations

What are you looking forward to most in the workshop?

- Learning about different types of workers in the global network
- Having more collaboration between different networks
- How to develop stronger links between workers in the formal and informal economy
- Process of formation of networks

What are your concerns about the workshop?

- Language barriers
- How to share what we learn here with members who are not here

- How to provide solidarity for the international domestic workers' convention negotiations that will take place in June, 2011
- The food is too spicy!
- Make sure that a small number of people don't dominate discussions
- Need to make it lively so that people do not fall asleep

Which animal do you think best represents your continental group and why?

- SE Asia – FISH – an animal that can move, act collectively and wants to go deep
- Africa – GIRAFFE – has a small body but is the tallest animal. We are looking to the world and saying give us answers
- Latin America – EAGLE – it flies very high and has a panoramic view of everything. It lives over 80 years and is constantly being rejuvenated
- Europe, North America – CAT – it has nine lives and so although they will try to keep us down we will always keep going
- South Asia – HONEY BEES – we are hard- working and sincere and the results that we achieve are for others. If a stone is thrown at us we tend to strike back

1.2 Organizing informal workers: Historical Overview

Veteran Unionist Dan Gallin gave a presentation taking us back to the origins of organizing informal workers.

Extracts from the presentation

(Full presentation is available on request)

'… there is nothing special in history about organizing informal workers, for the simple reason that in the beginning all workers were informal.'

Informal workers are workers whose rights are not recognized and who are therefore unable to exercise their rights. At the dawn of the industrial capitalist age all workers were informal workers. To resist this situation, workers who are still informal get organized into unions to fight for rights. This is the first step towards formalizing an informal situation.

As unions get stronger, an economy begins to emerge in which the labour movement has negotiated wages and conditions through collective agreements and legislation. This is what we refer to as a "formal economy." The formal economy has developed unevenly in different parts of the world and for different workers in the same country. This accounts for the divisions that appear throughout labour history.

One important division is the gender division that runs through the history of the labour movement. Trade unions were male dominated from the outset. In many countries they opposed women entering the economy as workers, let alone as trade union members. Even when women were accepted into unions they only dealt with issues common to men and women. Many more women

workers were left in the informal economy. This is where the division between "formal" and "informal" economies begins. But informal women workers organized nonetheless.

To illustrate this point Dan presented cases of informal women workers organizing from India (Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Bolivia (Cooks' Union and Flower Vendors' Union) and Italy (the *Mondine*, seasonal rice field workers).

1.3   Organizing Informal Workers: A Timeline of Key Events

The full timeline, prepared by WIEGO International Coordinator Marty Chen (with additions by participants) is available on request.

Participants viewed a timeline showing key events in the recent history of international organizing, and were asked to collectively help build this by adding events in the history of their own organizations.

Summary of key events in international organizing:

1970s: India's SEWA was the pioneer organization, gaining recognition as early as 1972 as a trade union.

1980s: SEWA began to make headway in the international trade union movement when it gained affiliation to the IUF in 1983. In 1988 the regional Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers (CONLACTRHO) held its first congress.

1990s: Home-based workers came to the fore, setting up HomeNet International and successfully campaigning for an ILO Convention on Homework (C177) in 1996. Things quickened when Wiego was set up to support informal workers in 1997. Street vendors held their first international conference in 1995, and StreetNet International was launched in 2002. Waste pickers in Latin America stepped up their organizing into cooperatives throughout the 1990s.

2000s: Organizing nationally, regionally and internationally took off. A key event was the adoption of a *Resolution and Conclusions on Decent Work and the Informal Economy* at the ILO in 2002. The various mobilizing activities that occurred in preparation for the Resolution helped to build collective organization. The number of informal worker organizations increased rapidly and national and international networking activities also increased. In Latin America national movements of *Catadores* (Brazil) *or Recicladores (*Spanish speaking countries*)* were formed, and in 2004 the Latin American Waste pickers Network was founded. Although HomeNet International collapsed, HomeNet South Asia was founded in 2000 following a successful regional dialogue. In 2006 domestic workers came together internationally leading to an agreement to form their own international network - International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN). The first World Conference of Waste Pickers took place in 2008 resulting in ongoing global networking.

2.   How do we organize? Activity 2

> *Objective: to describe the different ways workers organize in our sectors, compare advantages of different forms of organization, and consider the key organizing issues facing workers*

2.1   What is an MBO?

To introduce the topic, Dave Spooner, consultant to WIEGO ORP Programme, gave a presentation on Membership-Based Organizations**.**

Types of Membership-Based Organizations

- **Trade unions** - Some informal workers are organized into trade unions. Some of these are registered unions and include only informal workers. Some are unregistered. There are also general or sector unions that include informal workers within a wider membership.
- **Cooperatives** – There are many different sorts of cooperatives. There are producer cooperatives. Waste pickers who form a cooperative to bid for contracts are one such example. Workers can also form consumer cooperatives. For example, street vendors may form a cooperative to buy collectively in the market. Savings cooperatives, childcare cooperatives, housing cooperatives and insurance cooperatives are other types of cooperatives that informal workers can form.
- **Voluntary organizations** – These include women's organizations, self- help organizations, and sometimes NGOs that are democratically accountable to workers. Sometimes it could be more appropriate to form a voluntary organization in cases in which informal workers are legally banned from forming unions. There may also be political reasons why informal workers would want to form a voluntary organization, such as situations where unions are controlled by political parties.
- **Unregistered organizations** have no legal basis. However, if they are not registered, but act like unions, are membership-based and work democratically, they are still membership-based organizations, even if the law does not recognize them as such.
- **Federations and networks** – The members are organizations of workers in the informal economy, rather than the workers themselves. Federations and networks include: trade union federations (these can be local, national or international); networks of informal worker networks such as the Latin American Waste Pickers Network (LAWPN); emergent networks like the possibility of HomeNet International or an international waste picker's network.

Principles of MBOs

- Democratic ownership – of the members, by the members, for the members
- Transparency – every member has the right to see and understand the organization's workings including its constitution and rules, decision-making processes, budgets and accounts, and recruitment processes for staff

- Solidarity – promote unity between the members, equality between the members and collective rights for members
- Collective benefit – not individual benefit
- Independence – from governments, corporations, politicians, religious organizations. However, if a union democratically decides that it wants to support a political party based on its political programme, it can do so. In some countries this might be illegal, but workers can resist this if they want. A real MBO is not controlled by any other organization including NGOs, donors, etc. Often MBOs have been the result of activity by an NGO. There can be a period of transition, but MBOs should be independent of NGOs.

It is important to note that some organizations that claim to be membership-based do not meet these criteria. Others meet these criteria but do not call themselves membership-based organizations.

Discussion point

What do we mean by independence?
- In some cases governments say MBOs cannot support political parties. In other countries organizations formally support political parties but retain their formal independence.
- Independence means we have to be independent from NGOs and funders.
- How do we deal with a situation where we have a democratic MBO but there is a sister organization which is not democratic and which actually makes the decisions?

2.2 Sector overviews of how we organize

Participants divided into groups based on their sectors or interest in a sector. Their task was to compile a chart describing forms of organization at base, national and international levels, the advantage of each organizational form and the issues around which workers organized in the different organizations and at different levels.

A. Domestic workers

Forms of Organizing in the Sector	Examples	Advantages of this form of organization	Issues we organize around
Base/Local Organizations			
Cooperatives	Service Workers Cooperative Trinidad	Stable membership Job opportunities Ownership	Job opportunities Income
Associations	Domestic Workers' Association –Mexico Tanzania Domestic Workers Association	Organise DWs when they can't form unions Awareness of rights Empowerment Problem solving collectively	Negotiations with employers Human rights Violence Legal protection and recognition Recognition of DWs Social security Wage increase

City Based Network	Network of Thai Domestic Workers, Bangkok	Sharing of problems and experiences Work with social movements and NGOs to strengthen campaign	
DW union branch of National Union	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) Hong Kong Domestic and General Workers Union (HKDGWU)	See unions below	
City based chapter of national union of informal workers	SEWA, Kerala, Delhi, Gujarat		
Religious organization supported groups	Christian, Islamic, Buddhist in Hong Kong	Job matching - employment cell Service sharing Emergency service, refuge centre Meeting space Educating employers	Skills training Social security Minimum wage
National Organizations			
Trade Union – together with other workers (mixed sector unions)	Conservation, Hotel, Domestic & Allied Workers Union (CHODAWU), Tanzania, (formal and informal workers) SEWA India (informal workers) Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotel, Education Institutes, Hospital and Allied Workers Union (KUDHEIHA) (formal and informal workers)	Building strength and unity Sharing of services with other sectors Facilitating organizing of DWs	Legal protection Working conditions Minimum wages Dignity Social protection Occupational Health and Safety
Domestic Workers Unions	SADSAWU HKDGWU National Union of Domestic Employees-Trinidad/Tobago (NUDE)	Build Collective Bargaining strength Gain Trade Union rights	Recognition of DWs as workers
Federations of Domestic Workers unions	Federation of Asia Domestic Workers Unions (FADWU), Hong Kong	Solidarity and one voice among local and migrants, different ethnic groups and policy issues	Policy issues ILO convention
Regional networks	Asia Domestic Workers Network Asia Domestic Workers Alliance (migrant workers)	Promotion of unionization Sharing of information Legal practices	ILO convention
Confederations of Trade Unions, associations, groups	CONLACTRAHO–Latin American and Caribbean Network of Household Workers	As above	Solidarity Building organization ILO Convention

International	International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)	Building global strength Visibility Networking Expert help Validity as worker Building one voice	ILO convention ILO convention ratification

Summary: Domestic Workers

Base organizations: there are many different kinds of organization: informal groups, e.g., DWs that get together as religious groups because otherwise their employers will not allow them to attend a meeting; associations; and chapters/branches of national unions. Cooperatives are less common but do exist in some places and act as job placement services. The advantage of cooperatives is that they are oriented towards income generation activity and this helps to sustain the membership. It gives ownership to members of their business venture.

National organizations: most common are unions. These are either unions of solely domestic workers or formal unions which have domestic workers as one sector or in the case of SEWA a union of informal workers with domestic workers as one sector. The advantage of unions is that they increase the strength and bargaining power of members, and that they are legal and structured entities which provide recognition and identity for the worker. They provide a platform for workers to share information, discuss issues and find solutions. The advantages of unions of informal workers is that they make organizing easier as workers in different sectors encourage each other and they provide inter-trade linkages. For example, domestic workers can run a day-care centre for children of street vendors

International networks (regional and global). They build global strength, visibility and validity for domestic workers and allow them to speak with one voice. They provide a platform for organizations to network with others working for the same cause; and for networks to further network with other unions and other international organizations like ILO and ITUC.

Issues taken up by all the different organizations are more or less similar. The differences lie in the priority of the organization. The top priority of a cooperative is to generate income and make it sustainable, while for the global network it is to ensure that the ILO Convention for Domestic Workers is ratified and enforced.

Discussion point

Home-makers also do house work. Has there ever been a request from them to join the Domestic Workers Union/ Association? *There have been requests. However, often they are employers too. Organizations have decided that they cannot club together employer and employees together in their organizations.*

An Example: Organizing Strategy and National Structure

"The South Africa Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union organizes domestic worker into street committees. These are streets where they work. These streets could be posh localities or localities of

middle income groups. Therefore, domestic workers are not organized in places where they live, but where they work. These Street Committees then form Branch Committees, which are ward-level committees. Branch Committees then form Regional Committees or state-level committees. Then these Regional Committees form the National Union." Myrtle Witbooi, General Secretary of SADSAWU

B.   Home-based workers

Forms of Organizing in the Sector	Examples	Advantages of this form of organization	Issues we organize around
Base organizations			
Self-Help Groups	Kaloian, Bulgaria Laos Producers Group Thai Fishing Net Group Bihar Rajya Gharkheta	Regular work and recognition Access to schemes Backward and forward linkages/loans/ sourcing Training	Social Insurance Marketing Exploitation by middlemen Wages Political and financial constraints Access to OHS, policy and law Invisibility Excluded from schemes No steady income Migration
Unions of HB Workers	Mazdoor union Nepal HB Workers Union	Collective bargaining. Sharing, policy advocacy Recognition and access to government schemes Leadership building and representation	
Cooperatives	Savings and Credit Coops Informal Sector enterprises	Access to loans at lower rates of interest, old age pensions Access to funds	
NGO-democratic	Village Workers	Voice, marketing opportunities, regular income	
National organizations			
NGOs-democratic	Association of Homeworkers, Bulgaria (AHW)	Representation at national level Expansion of network nationwide Representation in tri-partite committees Access to productive resources and skills Building pressure on government for legal protection Social integration of disadvantaged group Wider dissemination of information	Visibility and recognition Technical expertise Lack of support
	Artisans Association of Cambodia (AAC)		
Unions	SEWA		
Union Federations	GEFONT		

International			
Regional Networks	HomeNet South Asia HomeNet South East Asia	Fund raising Global recognition Global representation Global networking Wider collaboration Access to global resources	Retaining of network Funds Sustainability Solidarity

Summary: Home-based workers

Base Organizations: take a variety of organizational forms, including self-help groups, coops, unions, informal enterprises and NGOs. Most of the groups are organized around livelihood issues and social security. An advantage of unions is that they engage in collective bargaining and are more focused on rights than other forms of organization. The advantages of self-help groups, coops etc, is that they provide a vehicle for improving livelihoods: jobs, loans, access to markets, and regular work. Some are able to negotiate with contractors such as the Thai Fishing Net Group.

National Organizations: There are national unions with home-based worker member (SEWA) or affiliate members (GEFONT) and country HomeNets which are a mixture of MBOs and NGOs. The advantage of national organizations is that they can represent workers nationally and engage with national governments, share information more widely and collectively improve skills and gain access to markets.

International Organizations: At an international (regional level) it appears that issues are more internal such as how to sustain the networks, access funds and promote solidarity. But international networking gives advantages such as the possibility of global representation and recognition, global funds and wider information sharing.

Discussion point

Registration: Does this determine whether or not an organization is an MBO? In some countries you are not able to register as a union. Many organizations are not registered at all but operate as informal MBOs. The form of registration does not determine whether an organization is an MBO.

An Example: Benefits of organizing

Kaloian is a registered organization of homeworkers working on a piece rate system, affiliated to the Association of Bulgarian Homeworkers. The organization is registered- the only one in the Association. Members work in an export zone on the border of Bulgaria. Companies from nearby countries like Greece, Italy and Albania give work to contractors who then pass on work to home-based workers. Around 3500 women are engaged in stitching work. Through organizing Kaloian has been able to provide them with social security. It also assists in getting orders, buying raw materials and training.

C.   Street/Market Vendors

Forms of Organizations	Examples	Advantages	Issues
Local/Base			
Associations Cooperatives Unions Federations This can be organized by area or by productive activity	Allkukam Pazhaya Porul Sirvkadai Vyabarigal Sangam (in Chenai, India association of Street Vendors)	To get stronger To get support To be heard To be protected	Get solidarity Avoid bribes Avoid displacements and harassment To improve economic conditions of the poor
National			
Associations Alliances Unions Federations	National Alliance of Street Vendors of India *Ligue pour le Droit de la Femme Congolaise* (LDFC), Congo Confederation de *Trabajadores Cuenta Propria* (CPT-FNT), Nicaragua *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, (CUT) Peru	To influence government To strategize long term To get recognition	To get National Policy to be implemented at state and country level Law enactment
International			
Network Federation	StreetNet International SEICAP (Central America Regional Network)	To know better the issues of Street Vendors around the world To work at regional and international level strategies and work plans benefitting Street Vendors Collective Bargaining	To get the international community know the issues of Street Vendors To influence and get support from national governments Improve the work and life conditions

Summary: Vendors

Base organizations: a variety. Unions are quite prominent as are associations organized by area or productive activity. Unions tend to work in the political arena and cooperatives to help with economic issues. There is a focus on organizing against harassment, displacement and bribery and for recognition as important contributors to society. The form of organization is not important. What is important is that vendors united and strongly organized as the only way to change conditions.

National Organizations: unions, union federations and federations/alliances of organizations. They focus on obtaining national policy and laws and ensuring implementation. The advantage of national organizations is they can influence government and they are able to strategize for the long term and not just focus on immediate problems. National centres are working to organize at the local level.

International Organizations. There is only one regional network – SEICAP in Central America and the global network, StreetNet International. The advantage of international organizing is information sharing and solidarity, making visible street vendor issues, and influencing governments. Linking all the levels of organizing is important.

Discussion point: what do we call ourselves?

In Latin-Americans the term 'informal worker' is derogatory. They prefer to use the term "Own Account Worker" or "Self-Employed Worker." The word "informal" refers to something illegal. In the Congo they have discussed the problem of using "informal worker" or whether they should use "informal trader."

An example: Being part of a Union

"In Nicaragua our organization is part of the National Union of Workers. There is an advantage to being part of the National Union of Workers. It can influence the government to take positive decisions such as bettering health and education for persons working in the informal economy. However, to be part of a National Trade Union helps in capacity building and awareness of unionism." (Sandra Jimenez, CPT-FNT)

D.   Waste pickers/recyclers

Forms of Organizing in the Sector	Examples	Advantages of this form of organization	Issues we organize around
Base/Local Organizations			
Cooperatives	Asmare in Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Bokk Diom in Dakar, Senegal	Collective bargaining Recognition Access to waste Access to funding Collective bargaining with government Improves lives of workers Get rid of middlemen Move up the value chain	To defend against harassment by police Improve capacity Secure access to material Secure right to work
Associations	ARB in Bogota, Colombia		
Non registered informal organizations	Virtually all groups in South Africa		
Unions	KKPKP in Pune, India		
National Organizations			
Associations	National Alliance of Waste Handlers, Kenya		To change national level laws Recognition Building a common perspective
Movements	MNCR in Brazil		
Networks	ARN in Colombia		
Unions	SEWA in India		
Alliances	Indian Alliance of Waste Pickers		
International Organizations			
Alliances – which includes workers' organisations and NGOs	Global Alliance of Waste pickers and Allies		Influence policy at international level Influence policies in other countries Influence issues related to the market that function at global levels
Networks-only workers' organizations	Latin American and Caribbean Network		

Summary: Waste pickers/recyclers

Base Organizations: Cooperatives and association are the most common forms. In India there are examples of unions which have also formed cooperatives. The key focus is access to materials, the right to work and defence against harassment.

National Organizations: these are most common in Latin America, e.g. Brazil, Colombia. Important organizing issues relate to changing laws, recognition and building a common identity.

International Organizations: a distinction is made between those alliances that include workers' organizations and NGOs such as the Global Alliance of Waste pickers and Allies and those alliances or networks composed of only workers' organizations such as the Latin American and Caribbean Network. International networks focus on influencing international policy but also issues relating to the market functioning at a global level.

Discussion Point: What are the differences between alliances and networks? According to the group, a network is comprised solely of worker based organizations (like the Latin American Waste Picker Network), while an alliance includes NGOs and other allies (like the Indian Alliance).

3.   Key Organizing Successes and Challenges: Activity 3

> *Objective: to share and discuss successes and challenges experienced over the last few years in helping to organize informal workers*

3.1   Successes

Base Organizations

Organization	Main Successes
KKPKP, Pune, India	- When confronted with privatization, KKPKP did research that showed that waste pickers make environmental contributions and save the municipality money. As a result, the city now provides waste pickers with health care - Around 20 % of the municipality's waste is collected by waste pickers - The city government gave them a contract and now 6,500 women collect waste from 300,000 homes - The neighbouring city has now asked them to collect waste and 600 women are involved there
Independent Garbage Cleaners Union of Nepal (IGCUN)	The union has demanded the cancellation of privatization and bringing the workers into the municipality

National and International Networks

Organization	Main Successes
MNCR, Brazil	- Have five laws supporting *catadores* - One federal law gives them access to resources from federal buildings - Receives training to provide services - Brazilian government and private companies provide money and support
National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI)	Held public hearings and puts pressure on government. Achieved a national policy for street vendors.
National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) Trinidad & Tobago	- Formed a service workers' cooperative which has negotiated higher pay - This has helped increase the membership of the union
Latin American and Caribbean Waste Pickers Network.	- At an international level they have formed the Latin America and Caribbean Network of *Catadore*s. In the past few years it has been strengthened in a number of countries. This year they will start focusing on Argentina.

PATAMABA (Philippines network of home-based workers)	• Negotiated access to health insurance, indigenous health scheme and local micro insurance. • Negotiates with government at different levels.
Home Net Nepal – completed a mapping exercise.	• Starting in 2009, started to treat HomeNet Nepal as an MBO, even though it is still registered as an NGO. We started to talk to organizations working with home-based workers and educated them regarding the benefits of being an MBO vs. NGO. We are providing them with training.
International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)	• Domestic workers were able to speak in the plenary session of the ILO. We built alliance of NGOs, activists, trade unions, researchers, and academics from all over the world to support the adoption of an ILO convention. Increased awareness of the situation of domestic workers amongst governments, unions and employers. This has helped to increase membership at local, national and international level.
Alliance of Indian Waste Pickers (AIW)	• We are working with four ministries. The environment minister came to our conference. But when we went to UNFCCC in Copenhagen he didn't want to talk to waste pickers and was dismissive. We did not give up. We worked with him and two pieces of legislation on waste come from his office. In March 2010, 1,500 waste pickers from across the country came together to say we are green workers and to show our existence. This year we had very in depth discussion with waste picker leaders regarding the challenges that we are facing and the change in the roles.
Federation of Asian Domestic Worker Unions (FADWU)	• The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Union (HKCTU) brought together trade unions of migrant domestic workers from different countries - Thai, Chinese, Indonesian, Nepalese, and Filipino and from Hong Kong – into a new federation. This was achieved through the struggle for a minimum wage and the campaign for an ILO Convention.
HomeNet Thailand	• We now have a law to protect home-based workers. Home-based workers now make co-payments with government for social security. Building alliances with NGOs and other civil society groups was important in this process.
Latin American and Caribbean Network of Domestic Workers (CONLACTRAHO)	• Held their first Congress in 1988. We came together to start looking at laws. March 30 was established as the day of the domestic worker. The successes have been to increase the visibility of domestic workers in Latin America, and to position domestic workers on the agenda of the state. Now we are working with the International Domestic Workers' Network to pass the Convention for Domestic Workers. (Marcelina)

Summary

- At the local level the focus is on things that directly impact the lives of individuals – social security, cooperatives to help increase income etc. directly going in and negotiating with municipalities.
- At the national, regional and international levels the focus has been more about opening up processes that have historically been closed to informal workers so that informal workers can have voice there.

3.2 Challenges

- Potential members do not identify themselves as workers (HomeNet S Asia)
- Concept of home as a workplace, i.e. new forms of workplace (HomeNet S Asia)
- How to grow membership and how to increase women's leadership as the organization grows (SEWA)
- How to meet all the needs of members (SEWA)
- Organizing meetings and reporting back when from different parts of the country (Kenya Alliance of Waste Handlers and South African Waste Pickers Association)
- Low levels of organization at the base and therefore low levels of representation in higher structures (StreetNet)
- Achieving internal democracy within affiliates and networks (StreetNet)
- Sustaining the organization - low membership fees due to low incomes (StreetNet)
- Retaining membership (SEWA)
- Organizing in the face of divisions of class, caste and gender (KKPKP/AIW)
- Interference and manipulation by politicians, governments, officials e.g. giving false information (StreetNet)
- Tension between advocacy role of networks and concrete programmes on day–to-day issues (HomeNet S Asia)
- Hostility from government officials and municipalities (KKPKP/AIW)
- Getting governments (or employers) to meet us (Kenya Alliance of Handlers)
- Convincing /winning arguments during negotiations (SADSAWU and IDWN)
- Achieving favourable laws and policies
- Ensuring laws, policies and agreements reached are implemented (NASVI)

Reflections on Day 1: What was most interesting and/or useful?

- Relationship between MBOs and upper levels of networks
- Success of home-based workers organizing to improve their income
- The amount of work that WIEGO is doing and the challenges that they face
- The structure of the MBOs
- Historical overview of the informal economy
- Dynamics of the participants
- The different countries' experiences in organizing and getting fresh ideas
- The possibility of a stronger network
- Exchange of experiences between organizations in different sectors and at different stages of development
- Impressed at how organized the domestic workers are and that they can have such productive discussion
- How organizing is helping to strengthen unity
- There is no single way of organizing – there are many ways of organizing to achieve one goal
- How to work in a team
- Details of how networks transformed from being NGOs to MBO
- How to organize the unorganized

4.   Democratic Structures, Membership and Leadership: Activity 4

Objective: to consider some of the challenges of democratic governance, participation and leadership facing membership-based organizations of informal workers

4.1   Case Studies- giving advice

In three groups participants examined fictional case studies and were required to identify problems/challenges and then to give practical advice on strategies to overcome their challenges. Each group received a hand-out that provided background on the case study and discussion questions. All of the questions related to three issues

1. How to build democratic structures
2. How to ensure the participation of members
3. How can leaders be representative (especially of women) and accountable to members

A. The Waste Pickers/Recyclers Cooperative

> *Case Summary: Gender equality and democratic decision making*
>
> *The cooperative was launched with support from local NGOs. It has 100 men and women members. It is run by an elected committee of five men and three women. Elections for a new committee are overdue. It also employs two ex-waste pickers and a male manager.*
>
> *The financial crisis has caused a drop in income for workers and the coop. There is an argument around how to deal with this. Do they ask some workers to leave? And if so, how do they select? Some suggest that women should be the first to go as they don't work as hard as men.*

Problems identified:

Structure
- Discrimination against women in the structure
- No proper functioning structure
- No subcommittees to deal with issues
- No clear policies, rules, guidelines or operational manual
- Elections are overdue

Membership
- No clear criteria or policy to decide on how to deal with loss of income
- Facing unemployment
- Losing income

Leadership
- Gender inequality in leadership – a central problem
- Paid administrative staff and manager with possible conflict of interest

Recommended Actions

a. Improving the democratic structure
- Urgently hold elections to elect new leadership according to the constitution
- Ensure gender equality (quotas)
- Make sure that there is full consultation and full participation in decision- making at all times
- Have a clear decision-making procedure and structure
- Have a clear policy manual

b. Process to deal with the crisis
- Current officers to suggest options to solve economic crisis problems
- Set up a crisis committee
- Full consultation and full participation in decision-making
- Make sure members understand problem they are facing and the risks
- Call an Extraordinary General Assembly to take the decision on how to deal with the crisis

Examples:

"We meet on the 16th of every month. Representatives are chosen from the different communities. We needed to reduce numbers. We decided on a democratic way to take the decision. We consulted members using a questionnaire to see what alternatives they suggest. Once we had the information then we could make a decision." (Surekha Gade, KKPKP)

"In Brazil the decision to take out members if their income is not high enough is difficult as they have been working together for 20 years. So if their income is not high enough, we assist them." (Severino Lima Junior-MNCR)

B.   The Street Vendors' Association

Case Summary: Crisis of democracy, leadership and sustainability

The Association is losing members and not functioning well. It was set up with the support of an NGO which funded operations until the money ran out. The Association has no operating funds. Members are only 10 % of vendors in the area, most of them women. The Steering Committee (originally 10 men and two women) has collapsed and is run by three men. Few members attend meetings or pay membership dues. Members complain that they do not solve their problems (e.g., harassment) and that the three leaders are more interested in self-advancement in party politics than defending vendors' interests.

Problems identified:

- This organization is led by a group of men but most vendors are women.
- It also depends on an NGO for funds. The Association should not be relying on an NGO for funds.
- The members are not paying membership fees.
- The leaders do not support the interests of their members but are looking after themselves.
- This means that there are no resources to run the association.
- The structures of the organization are not working e.g., no functioning, democratically elected structures and leadership.

Recommended action:

- Revive the structure i.e., motivate the members, hold leadership elections so that the current leaders can be voted out.
- Enlist the support of the NGO in this (but as support and not as decision makers).
- Make sure that the organization takes up the issues that concern the members and fully support members in their struggles. Vendors will not be part of the organization if it does not address their needs.
- Find ways to create sustainability as a group, for example address how to encourage members to pay their membership dues. An organization cannot be completely dependent on other organizations.

Examples:

MNCR Brazil looked for solutions based on their experiences:
- Establish clear structures for the organization
- Solicit support from different organizations so you can move forward together
- Define the objectives so you can establish a strategic plan
- Ensure that those who are leaders are those who are living the problem
- Provide services to members such as skills training

KKPKP, India
"Members used to say we are very poor. We agreed that for the sustainability of the organization it is only the membership fee that we can fall back on. To motivate members we tell them how the organization has helped them in their work, and how important organizational sustainability is. Communities and members contribute towards travel, for example. We provide only simple food and tea." (Surekha Gade)

Street Barbers' Association, South Africa.
"Most of our members were not from South Africa, and so could not get permits. We organized around that. To make income for the organization we offer translation services and run a kiosk where members can recharge the batteries used in their hair cutting equipment."(Gaby Bikombo)

C.   The Home-Based Workers' Group

Case Summary: What kind of organization? *A group of 50 home-based women garment workers meet informally. They get work from the same middleman. Some of the women act as team leaders and help distribute the work. They recognize that they need to become better organized. Some feel that they should join a union and others that they should form their own organization.* *They met the local (male), union leader who agreed that they could become members but did not seem to know much about their problems. He said the union could negotiate with the middle-men. They would have to pay a monthly union membership fee and find ways to collect this.*

Problems identified:
- They want to form an organization but don't know what kind of an organization
- They do not have enough information about the union and whether it is in their interest to join
- They do not know whether it is legal for them to join the union in their country
- Paying union dues when not sure what the union will do for them is a problem. Is the union just looking for money?

- The union leader does not have the right approach and does not understand their problems. He started at the wrong point by discussing dues rather than what problems and issues they want to deal with
- The women do not have clear demands to guide the discussion on what kind of organization they want to join
- There is already friction amongst the group members

Recommended Actions:

- The women should be given the opportunity to participate in any process that the union initiates
- There is already a leadership in that group that could act as facilitator
- They should form their own democratically run group first, even if it is temporary
- They should look at the different kinds of organizations they can form and choose the best and legally authorized one
- They should start by dealing with an issue and showing some successes, and not deal with fees right away
- Once they have had a successful action then they can think of joining the union or forming some other type of organization
- They need to develop their demands and the solutions to the demands through an agreed democratic process

Examples:

IDWN

"This is a problem we face as domestic workers as the unions don't know much about our concerns. In the Netherlands, migrant domestic workers joined one of the FNV affiliates. However, they felt that they were not part of the union, even though they got some benefits. Later on the domestic workers decided to join the cleaning union affiliate. They felt more comfortable as these members spoke similar languages, came from similar castes and national groups." (Fish, IDWN)

Association of Homeworkers, Bulgaria

"When we started organizing 10 years ago, the unions tended to ignore the issues of informal workers. We set up two independent organizational structures. The first is registered in terms of the NGO law and another registered in terms of commercial law. But then we found ourselves under threat. Our negotiations with government failed because we were not unions and not allowed to negotiate alongside unions. We shifted our tactics and decided to be members of trade unions. This has brought success as we have been able to promote changes in the law that provides protection for home-based workers." (Violeta Zlateva, AHW)

During the plenary discussion people gave more examples of strategies around building organisation, democracy and leadership. These will be included in the extended report to follow.

Lessons from the discussions:

- There is a need to be flexible when forming organizations of informal workers. We have to be open to different forms of organization according to the needs and circumstances. Workers must select the type of organization that best suits their needs.
- We have to adapt strategies and organizational forms as we learn from our experiences.
- There is no one type of organization that fits all circumstances and no one best type of organization. We are all part of the same struggle.
- There is often a need to combine more than one type of organization - a cooperative to take care of our economic needs and a union to fight for our rights and to contribute to the wider society.
- In many countries there is confusion about who is a worker. It is important to make people know that we are all workers and we all have rights.
- Democratic structures and membership participation are crucial to well-functioning and successful organizations.
- Gender discrimination in organizations is common. We need to promote and support women leaders.

5.   Field Visits and Sector Meetings

The workshop delegates broke into four groups. Three groups went on field visits to visit local street traders, home-based workers and waste pickers. The fourth group stayed at the hotel to meet with domestic workers.

5.1   Street Traders group

The group visited the Moo Ban Nakkeela Community Service Co-operative. The cooperative consists of 222 individual members who are hawkers/vendors, 80 % of whom are women. The aim for the formation of a cooperative was to increase their voice and collective bargaining power and to create access to credit facility. The cooperative supplies members with materials, bypassing middlemen. It also provides credit in the form of loans but its main activity right now is fighting a lawsuit against eviction. It has an elected executive committee with a two-year term of office. All committee members are women.

5.2   Waste pickers group

The group visited the Onnut Eighty-six Community or so called Onnut Waste Pickers Community. It is one of the communities surrounding Bangkok's waste disposal plant. The waste pickers are not organized.

5.3   Home-based workers group

The group visited the Two-Sergeant Community consisting of 158 households of 600 people. Most earn their living by making and selling Thai snacks. Originally registered as an occupational group, in 2009 the group was turned into a community business and also functions as a savings group.

5.4   Domestic workers group

As it is not possible to visit domestic workers in their homes, members of the Network of Thai Domestic Workers based in Bangkok came to meet with representatives of IDWN, WIEGO and other workshop participants. The Network was formed with the assistance of HomeNet Thailand. It has 150 members who pay a small membership fee. It has a constitution and elected worker leaders. The Thai domestic workers told of their hardships as workers and about how they were trying to push the Government to pass a Ministerial Declaration on Domestic Work to provide protection for domestic workers. Members of the IDWN expressed their solidarity with the group, shared ideas and gave them advice on how to move forward.

6.   Learning from Networks

Objectives: to learn lessons from different sectors, and develop our ideas on building and maintaining national and international networks

6.1   StreetNet International- presentation by Gaby Bikombo and Monica Garzaro

StreetNet International was launched in 2002 with 11 affiliates. Two years prior to that, it was operating as StreetNet Association with an informal board. It now has 35 affiliated member organizations, which are individual associations or unions, national alliances, trade union federations with street vendor members from Africa, Asia and the Americas. At the 2007 Congress, StreetNet decided to set up regional structures based on focal point organizations in Nicaragua, India, Niger and Zimbabwe.

StreetNet Objectives
- Promote and protect the rights of street vendors
- Promote local, national and international solidarity between organizations of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers, and stimulate the development of national
- Document and disseminate information on effective organizing strategies
- Put out a newsletter every 4 months and maintain an up-to-date website
- Encourage cities to adopt and implement street vendor friendly urban policies
- Encourage statutory bargaining forums between street vendors and the appropriate authorities at national and local levels, with representation of street vendors through their representative organizations
- Promote the representation of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers through their representative organizations as part of, or in alliance with, national labour movements in national and regional tripartite bargaining forums
- Secure substantial representation of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers in international forums

Structures
- **International Congress**: meets at last once every three years, with delegates from the International Council and all member organizations, based on size

- **International Council**: meets annually, and consists of representation by 11 elected members in addition to the council's President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, of whom at least 50 per cent must be women
- **Executive Committee**: a sub-committee of the International Council consisting of seven executive committee members who meet quarterly (in person or by teleconference)
- **International Coordinator**: is engaged by and accountable to the International Council

Programmes and Activities
- Strengthening affiliates through meetings and workshops, leadership training, exchange visits
- Expansion to new regions
- International theme meetings
- Research
- Campaigns: World Class Cities for All Campaign, Street Vendors Manifesto Campaign
- Media and information exchange: newsletter, web site

Challenges : Learning from Our Experience
- Ensure a more visible impact on urban policy and development planning.
- Strengthen work on the practical implementation of labour standards.
- Address the issue of class imbalances in leadership.
- Keeping leaders accountable. We have a system of recalling and replacing those leaders who are not accountable to members. The Constitution is very important in this.
- Transparency is important for accountability and ensuring participation. We have a practice of transparent reporting to everyone. We do monthly staff reports that go to all international staff members. The international coordinator must also report. Groups who receive funding for national activities must present narrative and financial reports.
- Evaluation of the organization and membership participation. Every year the affiliates evaluate the work that has been done in StreetNet and identify what should be changed or added. This is done through an annual questionnaire as well as through our normal structures.
- Implementation of resolutions. These are adopted but not all affiliates implement them.
- Ensuring internal democracy amongst affiliates.

Discussion points
a. Role of StreetNet in relation to democracy in affiliates
   With regard to the decline in the membership of the Zambian StreetNet affiliate, AZIEA has expelled many of its affiliates due to internal divisions. Elections for leadership have not been held for some time. Usually a constitution says how long the leadership will be there, how often they will be changed, etc. StreetNet always asks affiliates to respect their own structures but cannot force them to do so.

b. Solidarity across sectors

Organizing waste pickers in Africa. StreetNet is not organizing waste pickers but organized an event in Dakar. The idea was that street vendors make contact with, and reach out to, existing waste picker organizations. For example, our Senegalese affiliate identified Bokk Diom as a group to work with. "But now our part is done, WIEGO must continue."

c. Women's representation

It is difficult to uphold but it is in our constitution that 50 % of the leadership must be women. We enforce this in our elections. We encourage our affiliates to adopt similar policies and practices.

d. Class balance amongst leadership.

StreetNet identified that most of the leaders are from the upper segments of the sector, i.e. they are often those who employ others. It can be an issue in families when someone employs family members. There is also an issue of where the workplace ends and the home starts. StreetNet held a workshop and Congress discussion on class and employment relationships in the sector.

e. Collective Bargaining

Street and market vendors are self-employed. They don't have an employer/employee relationship. We consider the government as the negotiating partner. We want to establish negotiating forums at local level. We also want to establish provincial policies on street trading. We believe this is the only way we can develop a friendly environment for informal workers.

6.2 National Movement of *Catadores* (MNCR), Brazil: by Severino Lima Junior – *Wastepickers in the world: a vision from a waste picker himself: past, present and future*

Roots

The profession of *catadores* has a long history. It has been around for centuries from England in 16th Century, to the United States and France in the 18th Century to the present. This presents challenges about how best and most appropriately to name ourselves. Many of us come from families who have been doing this work for many years.

Movement Achievements
- Creation of the National *Comité of Catadores*
- Recognition of the occupational category of *catadore* by the Labour Minister
- Involvement in many legislative and policy processes and changes such as the recently launched National Solid Waste Policy
- Preparation of a "job creation study," and presentation to then President Lula of Brazil.

Current Challenges

MNCR leaders face many challenges in their daily work including the issue of helping to develop a worker-controlled recycling chain. MNCR leaders have been trained in Sao Paulo on how to achieve cooperation and how to keep all parties informed of all activities.

International Networking

- MNCR has been involved from the beginning in developing the Latin American and Caribbean Network
- There are new challenges with the global networking process

Some lessons from the experience of MNCR:

- Things don't change by themselves but through collective efforts of the *catadores* .
- You can't rely on the efforts of others, everyone has to assume leadership.
- You can never trust ONLY the opinion of the NGO technical support. You have to trust yourselves.
- It is important to secure favourable laws by working with government. However, once the laws are there you must not rely on government to implement these. It is up to the workers to make sure they are implemented through their strong organizations.
- Ensure that gender issues are always present in the discussions of the Movement.
- MBOs should be the ones who determine who leads the Movement. In order to become a leader, you have to be part of an MBO and be chosen by them.

Discussion points

a. Ensuring the voice of smaller organizations

MNCR does not make a distinction between the size of its member organizations. All are considered and part of the movement. Each organization - big or small has to comply with the constitution.

b. Freedom of Association

Recyclers in Brazil are free to choose not to be part of the Movement. However, they will benefit from the victories of the Movement whether or not they are members.

c. Government support

Government support has been important in achieving many victories. The important thing is that government support became a law, and when that happens, you no longer depend on government support. So we are independent of government.

6.3   Answering questions collectively: Activity 6

Participants divided into two groups - International Networks and National Networks- to ask and collectively answer burning questions concerning networks.

A.   International Networks

1. Questions about membership and structure
- How do you determine and collect membership fees?

- How do you determine who should be a member of an international network and what should the rules of membership be? Should NGOs be network members or only MBOs?
- Should members be registered organizations?
- Should the structure have direct organizations as affiliates or should they be affiliated through national or regional structures?
- How do you reconcile the different interests when you have a multi-sector organization?

Answers/discussion

We should identify organizations that have the same strategy, plan and direction. Should NGOs be members? There were two opinions: they can be members as long as they observe the rules, principles and terms of reference and do not dominate, or, as in StreetNet, members should only be MBOs with NGOs as support groups. At times unions dominate. We have to find a way to all work together to build the organization. It was felt that you can't move to an international level until you have a regional structure (StreetNet affiliates individual organizations and does not yet have regional structures), but if we wait until we have strong local structures we will never have an international structure.

2. **Questions about objectives, principles, issues and activities**
- How do you validate national network programmes, projects and activities especially if funded by an international network?
- How do we balance our advocacy campaigns with concrete programmes needed on the ground?
- How can we have a more structured agenda that is broader than pressing and fashionable issues such as climate change?

Answers/discussion
- *The objectives must be clearly based on the interests of the members*
- *The key principle is to ensure democratic control by members and not by outside actors*

3. **Questions about working with allies and bargaining counterparts**
- How do we prevent NGOs asking for money on our behalf and then financing 100% of their costs?
- How to avoid the trend of NGOs speaking on our behalf and ignoring the autonomy of the MBO?
- How do we relate to the international labour movement? Should we cooperate, affiliate? With whom and how?

4. **Questions about Sustainability**
- How can the international network seek funds to support groups on the ground?
- How can we best finance international networks?
- How can we become financially independent?
- How can networks be maintained and retained?

Answers/discussion
Question of finance is critical. Funds coming from donors are important. We should raise our own money. Should we have paid up membership? As members are poor, where will they find the money to pay? We said we need to empower ourselves and stop thinking of ourselves as poor and look at how we can raise money, how we can bring the local structure up to the international one.

B.   National Networks

1.   Questions about the Role and benefits of a National Network
- What is the role of a network?
- What are the benefits for the participants in a national network?
- How do you keep it away from political structures?

Answers/discussion

What is most important is for the Network to listen to the issues of workers and make sure that they are responsive to worker issues. Workers must see the benefits of being in a network even if the network is not always directly dealing with those issues that affect them most directly. This means that leaders must always report to the members. Otherwise the network can become removed from workers reality. The role of the network is to use collective strength to raise the profile and visibility of workers, provide solidarity and support and to bargain, advocate, and negotiate on issues, especially with governments.

2.   Questions about Membership of a National Network
- Who should make up the membership of a national network?
- How do we decide on multi-sector network members?

Answers/discussion

Membership will be defined according to the objectives and the situation in different countries. It will consist of organizations that have a common interest and perspective and define a common objective: common occupation, common class position, and common issues to take up with government. In a network members are not usually individuals but consist of organizations. The ideal network will be made up of membership-based organizations.

3.   Questions about Organizing Women and Women Leadership
How do we make sure we organize informal women workers and nurture women leaders?

Answers/discussion

Always start where the women are. We have to identify the issues of concern, problems they are facing, their culture, traditions, and their livelihoods. Take up the issues and try and show successes. They need to be interested and motivated to join by seeing real benefits of membership. We have to enhance their capacity. Use methods, language and actions that are familiar to them and with which they feel comfortable. Men should not patronize women. A man should not think he is handing down rights to a woman. Make men aware of gender inequality. In Pune, India, there was a campaign to get men to do the washing in their families.

4.   Questions about Forming a Network
- How does one go about creating a national network?
- How do we initially motivate the workers to join the organization or movement?
- How do we select who to work with, e.g. a good union?

Answers/discussion

Identify common issues and concerns amongst potential network members - through a meeting if possible. Encourage them to see that they cannot solve all their problems alone that they have a better chance of success if the work together on issues such as a social security scheme.

5. Questions about Democracy and democratic structures
- What structure should a national network adopt?
- How do you make the network democratic?
- How do you manage power relations between organizations of different size?
- How do you address power dynamics in a network?

Answers/discussion

We have to define the different occupations, size of organizations, criteria for membership and then the structure. There should be constitutional provisions that make the network democratic in practice and rules appropriate to that network. There should be a constitutional provision to balance the powers of the independent member organization - big and small - and clarity around independence of affiliates and what is common. Membership participation is essential. Democratic practices are not possible without this. In democratic organizations there will be differences, arguments and fights. There will be negotiation. There has to be acceptance of differences.

6. Expanding a Network
How can we expand a network to include other informal workers who are still outside of the network?
How do you deal with those from other locations who don't want to join the national network?

Answers/discussion

Generate awareness around issues of common concern and common problems. Build the trust of workers/organizations by showing results. Spend time convincing them of the importance of the network. If people don't want to join us we have to talk to them, find out the reasons and then convince them.

7. Network Sustainability
- How do you retain your network?
- How do you maintain waste picker groups?
- How do you become self -sustaining?

Answers/discussion

Members must pay fees to show their commitment and to ensure we are not dependent on others. They must govern the organization themselves. The organization must be transparent about financial issues.

8. Relationships and challenges
- How do you defend the interests of the poor from those who are financially supporting the network?

- How do we deal with a situation where leaders take advantage of their positions to jump the ship and get themselves jobs?
- How do we find out about NGOs that work with waste pickers?
- How do we select the good unions/NGOs to work with?

Answers/discussion

The primary members must decide on how money is spent and which support groups to work with. We should have alliances with other groups. The groups we work with must have similar interests and approaches, understand our concerns and genuinely want to support the workers. There should be clear criteria about who we work with and who represents the network. We have to do our own research to identify NGOs we can work with. We need to know their objectives.

9. **Dealing with authorities**
- How do we fulfil and apply national regulations of manual transportation?
- How do we gain local authority support?

7. Evaluation and Recommendations

> Before starting we played an interactive game of two elephants used by KKPKP to help women understand that many of the shackles that bind us are only in our heads, and that if we choose to break free, we can.

Participants were grouped according to language and answered the following questions:

1. What was most valuable thing you learned in the last two days?
2. If you had to do the workshop again what would you do differently?
3. When you leave here what will you do differently in your own organization?

Most valuable and most useful parts of the workshop?

- Successes were inspiring
- Hearing about challenges encourages us to do more
- Human relationships in organizing are very important - "This is the only school we have to come together and learn from one another" (Marcelina Bautista, IDWN),
- The experience sharing was the most important thing that I got from this
- In Nepal we work with people who are involved in street cleaning. But there is no women's leadership in that community. When I return I will explore how to build women's leadership in the community
- Importance of democratic organizations and participation of members
- Importance of small discussions
- This is the first opportunity WIEGO had to discuss about organizations and networks
- The Brazilian MNCR focus on a *movement* was new and very important
- Training methods were useful

What would you do differently?

- Too much rushing in group work. This meant the discussions remained in initial stages but were cut short. We need more time for group work
- Would have been good to have more time to think about movements
- Presenters should be given guidelines to ensure most effective presentations
- Need more detail on the networks
- During group discussions facilitators were under pressure so could not get details. They should be given training before the workshop
- Waste pickers are not part of organized networks in Bangkok. If we have the same situation in the future we should not push to have a visit
- We should have more pictorial activities
- Time – we started early and finished late
- Should have a day for each sector so that we have more time to discuss our issues

- Should have exchanges between groups that are more experienced and less experienced as the less experienced groups can learn a lot from more established groups.

What can we continue to do in the future?
- A question and answer group on the web – a discussion group on organizing and networking where people can post questions and challenges that they face in organizing and networking, and other groups can respond based on their experiences
- Internal programme in our organizations so that we can recreate what we learned here
- Write a manual on the issues that we discussed here in this multi-sector workshop – something more practically oriented than a report
- The Thailand fishnet workers have said that after the workshop they will go back and develop a more formal committee, constitution, etc.
- Organize leadership training for women domestic workers
- Need to report back to organizations that sent us here and give back to them. We should do mini meetings to ensure that everything that we learn here is conveyed back to the organizations

Participants also completed individual evaluation forms which made similar points.

The workshop was closed with thanks to all participants, to all who have helped such as facilitators, note takers and to the Conference Coordinator with a special thanks to HomeNet Thailand.