



**Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing**

**INCLUSIVE CITIES & THE URBAN WORKING POOR:
INFORMALITY, GENDER AND EMPOWERMENT**

**MARTY CHEN
WIEGO NETWORK
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

ILO-FESDIG-SEWA LECTURE

JANUARY 25, 2016

CHILDHOOD IMAGES



REMARKS

- ❑ **Key Facts – based on national data**
 - ❑ informality, gender & poverty
 - ❑ urbanization & cities
- ❑ **Recent Evidence – based on research in 10 cities**
 - ❑ Study: what is driving change in urban informal livelihoods - notably city policies, plans & practices
 - ❑ Sample Cities: 4 in Asia (2 in India); 3 each in Africa & Latin America
 - ❑ Sample Groups: home-based workers + street vendors+ waste pickers
- ❑ **Promising Examples – of campaigns for more inclusive city policies, plans or practices**
 - ❑ Bangkok, Thailand: home-based workers
 - ❑ Durban, South Africa: street vendors
 - ❑ Bogota, Colombia: waste pickers
- ❑ **Concluding Thoughts: informality, gender and empowerment**

INFORMAL ECONOMY: TWO OFFICIAL DEFINITIONS

- **Informal Sector** = *unincorporated enterprises* that may also be unregistered and/or small (1993 ICLS)

- **Informal Employment** = *jobs or work without employment-based social protection* in informal enterprises, formal firms and/or households (2003 ICLS) - including:
 - ▣ *self-employed*: employers + own account workers + contributing family workers
 - ▣ *wage workers*: employees + casual day laborers
 - ▣ *contracted & sub-contracted workers*: including those who work from their own homes (called homeworkers)

ICLS = International Conference of Labour Statisticians

THE URBAN INFORMAL WORKFORCE

Around the world, the urban informal workforce includes those who work:



On Streets or In Open Spaces:

- street vendors
- push-cart vendors
- waste pickers
- roadside barbers
- construction workers

In Hotels, Restaurants, Offices:

- cleaners/janitors
- dishwashers
- “helpers”

In Small Workshops:

- scrap metal recyclers
- shoe makers
- weavers
- garment makers and embroiderers
- paper-bag makers

In Unregulated Factories:

- garment makers
- shoe makers
- fireworks/match makers

At Home:

- garment makers
- embroiderers
- shoemakers
- artisans or craft producers
- assemblers of electronic parts

In Homes of Others:

- domestic workers
- gardeners/landscapers
- guards/watchmen
- drivers



URBAN EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

2011-2012

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Total Urban Workforce	80% - informal 20% - formal	80% - informal 20% - formal	82% - informal 18% - formal
Informal Urban Workforce			
Manufacturing	27%	25%	38%
Construction	12%	14%	5%
Trade	27%	30%	14%
Non-Trade Services	33%	31%	42%
Total Urban Workforce			
Homebased Work	14%	10%	32%
Street Vendors	4%	4%	3%
Waste Pickers	1%	0.5%	2%

INFORMALITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THREE PAIRS OF KEY FACTS

□ **Informality & Poverty**

- Most informal workers are poor; most working poor are informally employed
- Earnings are low and costs-plus-risks are high, on average, in the informal economy

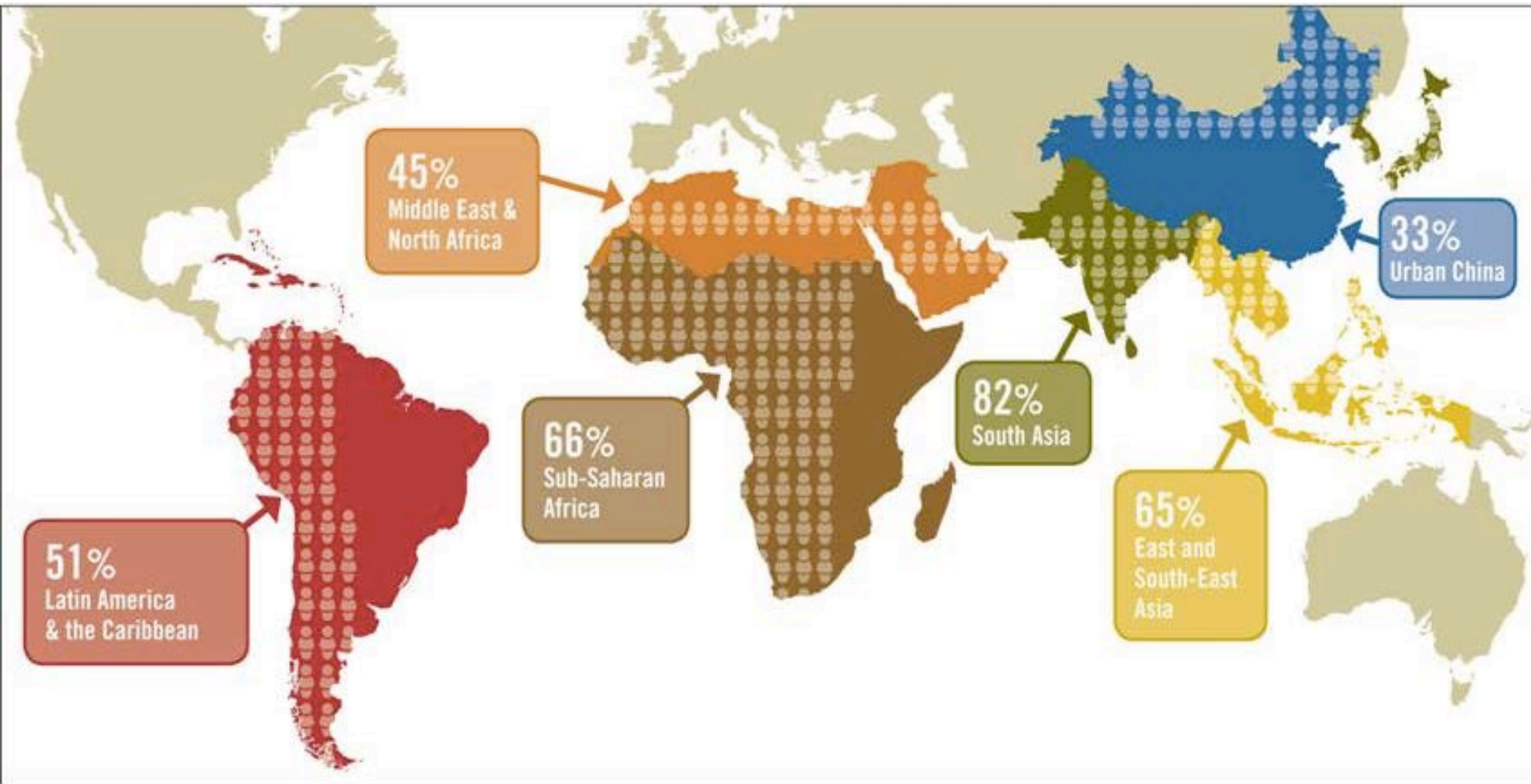
Informality & Gender

- Higher percentage of women workers than men workers are informally employed in 3 (out of 5) developing regions; but *men comprise the majority of the informal workforce in all regions* due to relatively low female labour force participation rates.
- Women are concentrated in the lowest-earning segments of informal employment in all regions

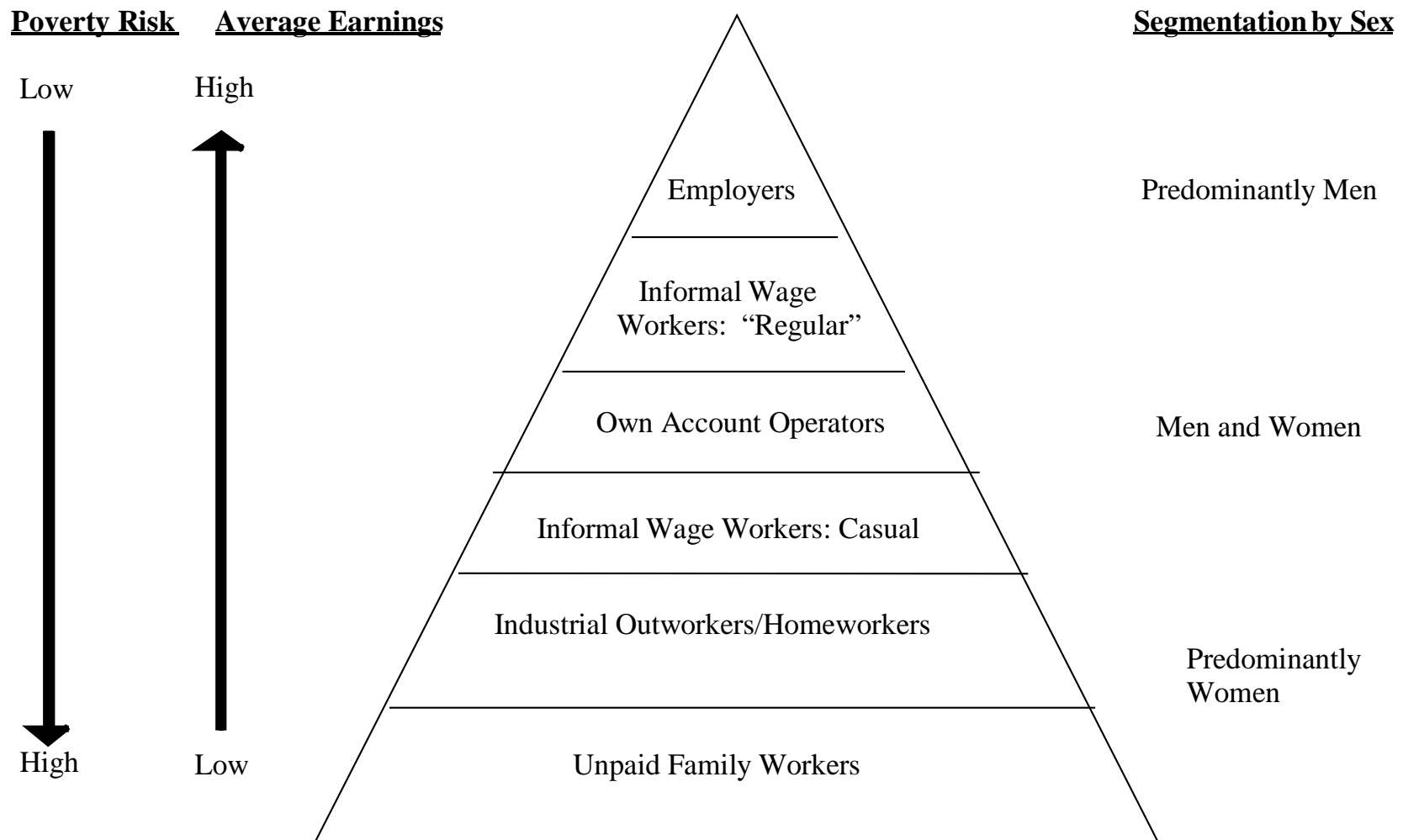
□ **Informal Economy & Cities**

- Informal economy = broad base of urban workforce, enterprises and output
- Cities, as they modernize, are becoming increasingly hostile to the informal economy, penalizing or criminalizing informal workers + undermining or destroying their livelihood activities

INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT: PERCENT OF NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT



SEGMENTATION OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: BY AVERAGE EARNINGS, POVERTY RISK AND SEX



URBANIZATION, CITIES & INFORMAL LIVELIHOODS

- The world is already *predominantly urban* and is *further urbanizing* at a rapid pace.
- The global commitment to reduce poverty and inequality - to deliver on the Agenda 2030 objectives - *will succeed or fail in the cities* of the world.
- In order for them to succeed, cities must strengthen their economies, create jobs and also *enhance existing livelihoods*.
- But as they modernize and seek World Class status, cities around the world are *destroying – not enhancing – existing livelihoods*.

CITIES & HOME-BASED WORKERS

**Lack of - or high cost of - basic infrastructure services ► decreased production
OR increased expenditure on basic infrastructure services ► low earnings**

- Survey Respondents: one-third reported lack of basic infrastructure services as a problem (more so in Ahmedabad and Lahore than in Bangkok)
- Focus Groups: all 15 in Lahore and 6 (out of 15) in Ahmedabad ranked irregular electricity supply and/or high price of electricity as major negative drivers

High cost of transport ► high business costs ► low earnings or *operating at a loss*

- Survey Respondents:
 - transport costs comprised 30% of business costs
 - *25% of those who spent on transport operated at a loss*

“Because there is no public transport, we have to walk to the contractor’s place. While coming back, we have to carry the raw materials. During the monsoon season, we face a lot of problems.” (Homeworker, Ahmedabad)

CITIES & STREET VENDORS

Insecure work space + harassment by local authorities + evictions/relocations ► fines/bribes + confiscation of stock + loss of working hours ► greater need to borrow to replenish working capital ► increased interest payments ► reduced earnings

- ❑ Insecure workspace, abuse of authority, and evictions/relocations accounted for 44% of all Focus Group mentions of the city as a driver of change; *abuse of authority by police and local officials was the only driver to be ranked in top three in every city*
- ❑ Fruit and vegetable vendors twice as likely as other vendors to experience insecurity, harassment, confiscations, and evictions – *and women are more like than men to sell fruit and vegetables*

“[The] municipality is locking the street traders if they do not have a permit. Should they come to your table or stall while you are away at the toilet, they will ask for permit; if others report that you are on your way back, they will simply confiscate your stock.” (Fruit vendor, Durban)

CITIES & WASTE PICKERS

Lack of legal & policy protections + lack of working space for sorting & storage ► loss of materials due to damage, theft, confiscation ► low and unstable earnings

- ❑ Lack of formal permission to work – to access waste - is a significant problem for over 65 per cent of waste pickers in Bogotá, Durban and Nakuru
- ❑ Half of the waste pickers across the five cities said harassment hinders their work
- ❑ Nearly two-thirds of waste pickers said lack of work space is a problem
- ❑ Yet the policy environment varies greatly across the cities:
 - Access to waste is a major problem: 15% (BH) vs. 73% (Nakuru)
 - Harassment is a problem: 27% (BH) vs. 50% (Nakuru)
 - Regulations are a problem: 22% (BH) vs. 46% (Nakuru)

“The municipality harasses us because we don not have permits to go inside (the dump). They do not want us to get in. They also chase away the cars that are helping us (by bringing us their recyclables).” (Waste picker, Durban)

NATIONAL VICTORIES FOR HOME-BASED WORKERS: THAILAND

Universal Health Coverage

- Formation of alliance, drafting a UHC legislation (people's version) (1997-2000)
- Collection of >50,000 signatures needed to submit a people's sector law (2001)
- Participation in the parliamentary committee discussion on the draft legislations (2001-2002)
- Passage of the UHC Law (2002)
- Participation in implementation of the legislation through membership on committees and subcommittees at local, district, and national levels (2002 to present)
- Representation on the National Health Security Board (2006 to present)

Occupational Health & Safety Project (2012-2015)

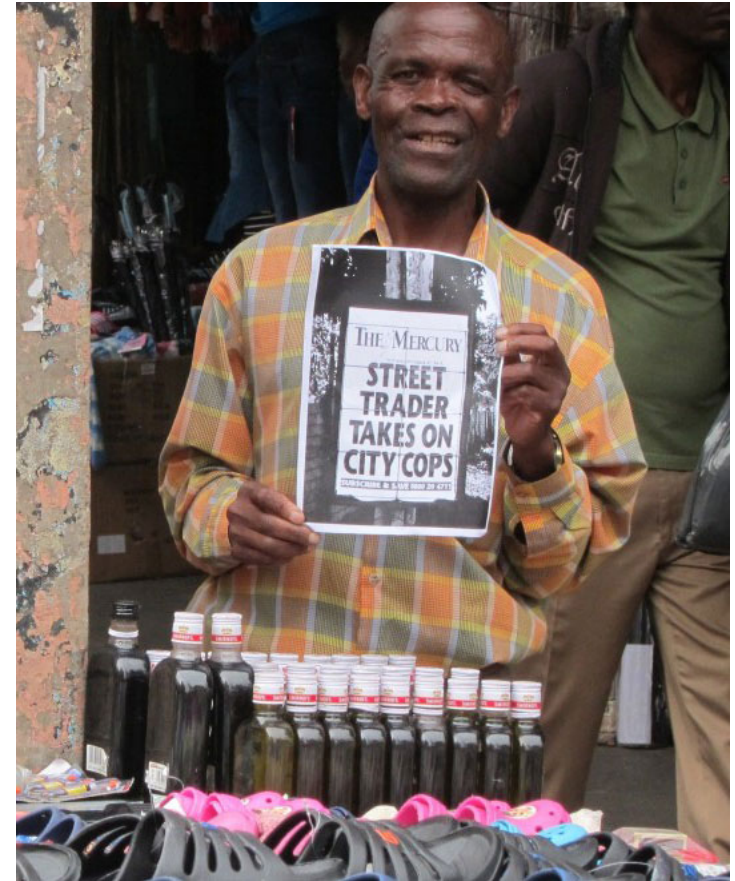
Home Workers Protection Act B.E.2553 (2011) – based on ILO Convention 177

Transport for Bangkok Home-Based Workers Campaign (current)



LEGAL VICTORIES FOR STREET VENDORS: DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

- ❑ City policy and scheme in support of informal workers, including street vendors in Warwick Junction (1999-2007)
- ❑ Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) founded by two ex-city employees to **provide design, legal and other support** to 6-7,000 street vendors in Warwick Junction (2008)
- ❑ Legal Resources Center, at request of AeT, filed 2 successful cases **against city plans to build a mall in the middle of Warwick Junction** (2009)
- ❑ Legal Resources Center, again at request of AeT, filed successful case **to challenge power of municipality to confiscate and impound street vendor goods** (2014-2015)



CITY CONTRACTS FOR WASTE PICKERS: BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

Asociacion Recicladores Bogota (ARB) (founded in 1990)
co-founded by Nohra Padilla and Silvio Ruiz



Legal Campaign (20 years)
technical support from pro bono lawyers and NGOs led by
Nohra Padilla who wrote many legal briefs



First Global Waste Picker Conference, Bogota (2008)
hosted by ARB, organized by international planning committee



Constitutional Court Victory (2011)
right of waste pickers to bid for solid waste management contracts



Successful Bid for Solid Waste Management Contract (2012)
technical analysis of appropriate costs for waste services
research on conditions and trends in the waste picking sector
policy dialogues with mayor and city officials



Waste Picker Integration Model Launched in Bogota (2013)
Goldman Environmental Award to Nohra Padilla (2013)
**National Ruling to Replicate Bogota Model throughout
Colombia** (2014)



COMMON SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- **Common strategies** included mix of **organizing + awareness building + advocacy + legal struggles** including test cases: with action on these different fronts feeding into each other in a circular, interactive, reinforcing manner.
- **Common sources of technical and political support** included **pro-bono lawyers + activist academics + specialized non-governmental organizations** - and, most importantly, **alliances of organizations of informal workers**.

Team members of WIEGO, including activist academics, played an important role in most of these struggles: conducting research and policy analysis, providing technical and political support as well as legal evidence

WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS: MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

- ▣ as *workers* within specific segments of the workforce/informal employment
- ▣ as *members of particular groups* defined by class, race, ethnicity, or caste
- ▣ as *residents of slum or squatter settlements*
- ▣ as *women* within their households, communities and workplaces

WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS: DIFFERENT IDENTITIES, DIFFERENT CONSTRAINTS

- ❑ *common* constraints - common to all informal workers
 - lack of legal identity as worker
 - lack of legal rights
 - lack of social protection
 - lack of voice
- ❑ *work-specific* constraints - for both women and men in specific...
 - sector/branch of economic activity
 - status in employment
 - place of work
- ❑ *gender-related* constraints – specific to women
 - gender segmentation – women concentrated in more disadvantaged statuses of employment (e.g. sub-contracted) + places of work (e.g. private homes)
 - gender gap in education/skills + property rights

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS

For the WIEGO network, empowerment refers to the *process of change* that gives working poor women – as individual workers and as members of worker organizations – the *ability to gain access to and exercise influence or control* over the

- ▣ **resources** they need for their work
- ▣ **markets or value chains** they operate in
- ▣ **wider policy, regulatory, and institutional environment** that shapes their livelihoods and lives

WIEGO “3 V” THEORY OF CHANGE: VOICE + VISIBILITY ► VALIDITY ► POWER



VISION OF INCLUSIVE CITIES

“The challenge is to convince the policy makers to promote and encourage **hybrid economies** in which micro-businesses can co-exist alongside small, medium, and large businesses: in which the street vendors can co-exist alongside the kiosks, retail shops, and large malls. Just as the policy makers encourage bio diversity, they should encourage **economic diversity**. Also, they should try to promote a **level playing field** in which all sizes of businesses and all categories of workers can compete on equal and fair terms.”

Ela Bhatt

Founder, SEWA

Founding Chair, WIEGO



Thank You!

**and thanks again to
ILO/Reiko Tsushima
FESDIG/Bina Agarwal
SEWA/Renana Jhabvala**