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Informal Workers at WUF6 Call for More Inclusive Urban Planning Practices

Naples - September 4, 2012 – A delegation representing street/market vendors, home-based workers and waste pickers are at the World Urban Forum to draw attention to the benefits of inclusive cities – those cities that tap into the immense power of workers in informal employment.

In many of the world's cities, the *majority* of workers are informal workers. New data reveals that informal work, far from being the exception, comprises one half to three quarters of employment in urban areas in developing countries. These people earn their livelihoods on the streets, in their homes and the homes of others, on waste dumps and construction sites, and in a myriad of businesses where they don't enjoy the status of regular employees.

"Including this massive workforce in municipal plans is not just possible, it is a better way to create sustainable, prosperous, and vibrant cities," says Caroline Skinner, urban policies specialist with the global-action-research network WIEGO.

She notes that efforts to remove or outlaw these workers, costly for both officials and workers, usually fail. "They are too great in numbers, they have too few livelihood alternatives, and they are too essential to the fabric of our cities."

At special events and through its exhibition booth, the Inclusive Cities project is sharing information on more promising, inclusive solutions.

Inclusive policies are those that recognize the needs of informal workers. These can include licensing and regulated spaces that make it possible for vendors to sell their goods and services on the streets or in markets, and zoning laws, housing specs and services that take into account the home as workplace.

Including informal workers in municipal plans offers social, economic and environmental benefits. Several cities have embraced aspects of inclusive urban planning. For example, in some cities, waste pickers have become part of a cost-effective, greener municipal waste management system.

Monica Da Silva, a waste picker from Cooperlimpa, a collective based in Diadema city, Brazil who is in Naples, explains, "Our co-operative provides valuable waste management services to the city of Diadema at a very low cost. This inclusive solid waste management practice also alleviates poverty in our city, promotes citizenship, significantly increases recycling rates and provides a valuable service to residents."

Inclusive Cities is calling on urban officials to integrate informal workers from inception. Increased representation of urban informal workers at the table during policymaking and rule-setting is the most important way to build successful, inclusive cities.

"Inclusive urban planning and participatory design can be beneficial for all parties involved," says Richard Dobson of Asiye eTafuleni, an organization that supports informal workers in Durban, South Africa." But he adds a crucial point for decision-makers: "It's a matter of planning *with* informal workers, rather than planning *for* them."

Good practice documentation on inclusive urban planning with waste pickers, street vendors and home-based workers, can be found at www.InclusiveCities.org.

About Us: Inclusive Cities is a collaboration of membership-based organizations (MBOs) of the working poor, international alliances of MBOs and support organizations working together to improve the situation of the working poor. Inclusive Cities aims to strengthen MBOs in the areas of organizing, policy analysis and advocacy in order to ensure that urban informal workers have the tools necessary to make themselves heard within urban planning processes. www.InclusiveCities.org

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