



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

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A photograph of a traditional fish market stall. In the foreground, a large metal bowl is filled with various types of dried fish, including some that are whole and others that are cut into pieces. A small, cylindrical metal container sits on top of the fish in the bowl. To the left, there are several large, flat, rectangular pieces of dried fish or fish skin, showing a distinct ribbed texture. In the background, more dried fish are visible, along with a person's hand reaching into a container. The overall lighting is warm and orange-toned, creating a rustic and traditional atmosphere.

Why We Exist

Why We Exist

WIEGO is a global network supporting the movement of workers in informal employment, especially women and people living in poverty. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights and protections.

Our mission is to improve their working conditions and to challenge the systems that cause poverty, inequality and injustice, to build a fairer world of work.

We believe data in the hands of workers is power. WIEGO develops statistics, research and policy analysis that workers can use for advocacy.

Our values, which centre respect, solidarity, care and inclusivity, inform the way we support workers in informal employment and serve the wider labour movement.

WIEGO works to:



Expand research and statistics on the informal economy



Promote change through policy advocacy



Support workers to use our research and engage directly in policy advocacy



Build collective voice by supporting, strengthening and connecting organizations of workers in informal employment

OUR STRUCTURE

> THE WIEGO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The **WIEGO Board of Directors** draws from our three constituencies – membership-based organizations of workers in informal employment, researchers and development practitioners – and includes individuals from different regions and diverse backgrounds. The Board is composed of four representatives of membership-based organizations (one of whom serves as the Chair), plus two representatives each from our other two constituencies. Other persons are co-opted as needed to carry out the functions of the Board.

> THE WIEGO NETWORK

Organizations of workers in informal employment that are active in WIEGO are invited to become institutional members. Researchers, statisticians and professionals from development agencies who have collaborated with WIEGO are invited to join as individual members. As of 2024, the WIEGO Network has 153 members: 33 institutional members and 120 individual members.

> OUR TEAM

The WIEGO Team includes over 70 people in more than 24 countries around the world, which allows us to create and maintain strong partnerships and alliances in all regions. The WIEGO Ltd. Office is in Manchester, UK, where the Operations and Finance Teams are based.



OUR PROGRAMMES

Our five programmes – law, organization and representation, social protection, statistics, and urban policies – combine technical expertise on major issues affecting workers with grounded knowledge of workers’ realities.

WIEGO’s Programmes collaborate to increase their impact, drawing on expertise from researchers and grassroots activists. Our work is done with workers in informal employment and their organizations and is driven by their needs.





The Year in Review

Letter from the Board Chair



Supporting organization-building among women workers in informal employment has been the thread running through WIEGO’s work for three decades, and it is at the heart of WIEGO’s purpose. This past year reminded me once again of the extraordinary strength that comes when workers come together, across countries, sectors and generations, to unite, build their membership-based organizations, claim their rights and collectively shape their futures. WIEGO also continues to demonstrate how researchers, policy makers and development partners can join hands to further the workers’ movement.

This year our global networks showed the power of organizing in remarkable ways. Waste pickers held their first elective congress through the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, a historic milestone many years in the making. HomeNet International continued its determined push for the long-overdue ratification of ILO Convention 177, a struggle that resonates deeply with the home-based workers I meet here in India and everywhere. StreetNet International expanded its membership and launched its vibrant youth leadership programme, giving us the clearest sign that the movement’s future is already in capable hands. And the United Nations recognized the International Domestic Workers Federation as “Care Champions”, finally acknowledging the essential work that domestic workers contribute to every society.

We also felt the intensity of challenges this year. Early 2025 brought a tightening of civic space in many countries and a deepening development funding crisis that left many grassroots organizations uncertain about their future. These pressures threaten the very spaces where workers organize, speak out and build their collective strength and solidarity.

In this context, what has given me great hope is the leadership shown by women workers in informal employment everywhere. From Delhi to Dakar, from Accra to Bangkok, women workers stood at the forefront of building climate solutions, fighting for tax justice, actively participating in legal empowerment, and contributing to the building of social protection systems that work better for the people they are meant to reach. They did this by shaping research, informing policy, and strengthening the collective voice of 2-billion workers in informal employment worldwide. They explored ways to continue organizing and with pathways that lead to the sustainability of their organizations.

It has been a year where solidarity has been so important. As we reflect on our progress in this report, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to all workers, leaders, organizers, researchers and partners who continue to build our movement with such courage and love. Their collective strength is what keeps our households, our communities and our economies running, and it is what will carry us forward.

In solidarity,

Mirai Chatterjee
Chair, WIEGO Board of Directors

Letter from the International Coordinator



This year has underscored how vital WIEGO’s role is as a bridge between workers in informal employment and the policy systems that shape their lives. Around the world, workers continued to organize and lead, even as they faced the tightening of civic space and a funding crisis that put real strain on many organizations. In this environment, WIEGO’s responsibility to connect, support and amplify worker-led action has only grown.

Across our programmes, we worked to place tools for change directly in workers’ hands, whether through fairer-taxation debates in Ghana, legal empowerment with domestic workers in Zimbabwe and Togo, climate and urban advocacy that brings informal livelihoods into policy spaces, or social protection training that strengthens worker leaders’ capacity to navigate the financing of social protection. Our contribution to global statistical standards on digital platform employment ensures that the world better sees and counts the workers who make economies function.

These efforts reflect WIEGO’s core purpose: to challenge the structures that perpetuate poverty and inequality, and to help ensure that workers in informal employment can participate in shaping the rules that govern their work and livelihoods.

At the same time, this has been a year of reflection for WIEGO. With all four global networks now established and deepening their leadership in their respective sectors, we are entering a period in which our role must evolve. The year ahead will require careful thought, listening and adaptation as we consider how WIEGO can best serve a movement that is itself growing in strength and complexity.

I am grateful to our team, our partners and funders, and above all to the workers and organizations who walk with us. As we prepare for this period of transition, one thing remains clear: WIEGO’s strength lies in its role as a bridge among workers, knowledge and policy in a way that allows workers, especially women, to lead change.

Laura Alfors
International Coordinator, WIEGO



Our Impact in Numbers

Our Impact in Numbers

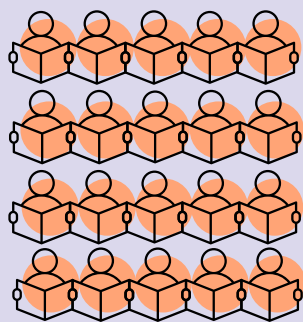
From grassroots organizing to policy advocacy, WIEGO’s impact is reflected in the people we reach, the organizations we strengthen, and the systems we help transform.

PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONS



270 +
Organizations Supported

Strengthened through research,
capacity building and policy
advocacy



Nearly
2,000
People Trained

With a focus on women workers
in informal employment

SYSTEMS & KNOWLEDGE



+60
**Publications & Research
Outputs**

Including policy briefs, reports, guides
and advocacy materials

REACH & ENGAGEMENT



207,000 +
Website Visits



14,000+
Downloads



57,000+
**Followers Across Social
Media Platforms**



Stories of Change

Stories of Change

Our mandate is to challenge the systems that cause poverty and inequality for workers in informal employment, in order to build a more just world of work. This requires **systems change**, which means fixing social, political and economic problems through changing the structures, relationships and mindsets that keep things stuck. WIEGO contributes to system change in four main ways:

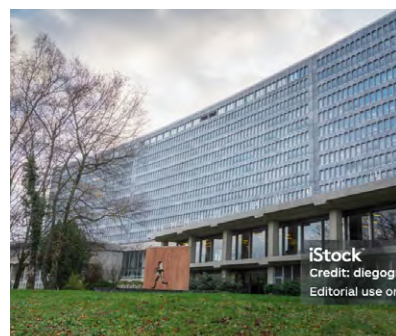
- leveraging partnerships with multilateral organizations to influence how norms, laws and standards measure, regulate and protect workers
- shifting narratives by disseminating research findings, and supporting workers' demands in policy engagements and with the media
- putting research, statistics, knowledge of the law and policy arguments in the hands of worker organizations so they can bring about change
- convening spaces for new partnerships and alliances to emerge among researchers, policymakers and worker organizations and for workers to be directly involved in policy making at multiple levels

With the world now **plagued with crises** and the very foundations of democracy under attack, this work to transform systems has become more daunting. The seven stories in this section show how WIEGO is rising to this challenge – using its role as a bridge among research, law and policy, and grounded realities to bring about changes in systems to improve the lives and livelihoods of workers in informal employment.



Advancing Tax Justice for Workers in Informal Employment in Africa

shows how WIEGO supports national governments to raise revenue in a way that is evidence-based, strategic and done in communication with taxpayers.



In WIEGO Joins ILO Effort to Develop Statistics on Digital Platform Work

we see how WIEGO is supporting the development of statistical standards and recommendations for measuring digital platform work and employment. WIEGO's Statistics Programme, represented in a working group set up by the ILO's Department of Statistics, is advising the ILO in preparing draft statistical guidelines for consideration at the next International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2028.



Engaging the Research Community to Explore Economic Orthodoxies

describes how WIEGO produces research to challenge the assumed link between social insurance subsidies and informality – and other dominant narratives – and builds alliances with key international organizations to ensure the research is carried into broader policy discussions.



Domestic Workers in Togo and Zimbabwe Become Legal Advocates

explains what “legal empowerment” really means and how WIEGO's law team supports workers in informal employment to know, use and shape the law.



Bridging Research on Informality and the Climate Crisis into Indian Media and Policy Debates

looks at how WIEGO uses participation in high-level international forums as well as writing newspaper articles to bring the plight of urban workers to the attention of climate policy makers, and the success this has had in India.



Developing Research on Access to Social Protection in Lao PDR and Cambodia for Policy Engagement and Action

shows how – with a strong partnership with the ILO – WIEGO used its qualitative research to get the government in Lao PDR to make changes to their social security system to enable easier access for workers in informal employment.



Cooperatives and the Social and Solidarity Economy as a Pathway to Formalization and Decent Work

shows how WIEGO's research makes widely known the practices of workers in cooperatives and other entities of the social and solidarity economy and brings cooperative members into dialogue and decision-making spaces. This consolidates their role as key actors in formalization processes.



Advancing Tax Justice for Workers in Informal Employment in Africa

“We don’t have electricity, there’s no water in the market; for security we have to look for people and we pay them. The drainage system is very bad. [Government officials] should come to the market, involve us, let us know what it is about and the benefits it will bring to us. So that whenever we are paying all those taxes, we will know why we are paying.”

– Josephine Lomokie Dugbatey, who sells dried fish at Accra’s Abokobi market and is on the committee of the Informal Hawkers and Vendors Association of Ghana (IHVAG)

Across Africa, millions of street vendors, market traders and other self-employed [workers in the informal economy](#) feed and sustain urban communities. Yet they face unfair tax burdens that erode their meager earnings, which are well below national income tax thresholds. Over [90 per cent of Africa's small businesses are informal](#) and operate with limited bookkeeping. Research by WIEGO and partners finds that – while these workers are the prime target of tax policies aimed at collecting more revenue in many low-income countries – it costs substantially more to collect these taxes than the amounts raised.

Most African countries have simplified tax regimes, which are aimed at increasing revenue, facilitating formalization and improving revenue authorities' data. But [evidence](#) suggests that simplified tax regimes often raise little money, disproportionately impact the poor and are applied inconsistently.

There is a clear need for data-driven taxation. Often, policy proposals are based on the assumption that workers in informal employment do not pay taxes or are unwilling to pay taxes. Not only is this [untrue](#), but it undermines the potential to develop fairer ways of taxing workers.

Along with partners, including the International Centre for Tax and Development ([ICTD](#)), WIEGO began paying close attention to tax justice in 2018, when there was a lot of civil society attention on tax evasion prompted by the [Panama Papers](#). Lost in the noise was another urgent issue: the unjust taxation of workers in informal employment. WIEGO started a project that would support low-income countries to raise revenue in a way that is [evidence-based](#), strategic and done in communication with taxpayers. The project emerged through listening to workers in informal employment, who were saying how hard it is to make a living while paying so many taxes and fees to the government. To enable the development of appropriate tax



policies, WIEGO's tax team analyzes existing tax systems and works to ensure that the contributions workers in informal employment make – both to revenues and local economies – are recognized by policymakers.

> TAKING ROOT IN ACCRA

Accra, Ghana – a city in WIEGO's Focal Cities initiative – was where WIEGO started work on tax justice – which, in broad terms, refers simply to fairness and equity. “Showing up and staying put” is largely what has led to progress towards tax justice in Ghana, said Mike Rogan, Research Associate in WIEGO's Urban Policies Programme. WIEGO and allies have developed a strong relationship with the national and local revenue authorities in Accra. In early 2025, Charles Addae from the Ghana Revenue Authority told a webinar that the Authority is rethinking its approach to presumptive taxation after having learned, largely through WIEGO/ICTD research, that Ghana's tax stamp is regressive. The tax

stamp is the official national tax (a presumptive tax) that targets the informal sector. WIEGO has begun a third survey in Ghana, where informal employment represents [89 per cent of employment nationally](#) and 83 per cent in urban areas. This study – funded by Co-Impact – focuses on market traders in Accra. It builds on a 2022 survey of 2,700 informal enterprises in the Accra metropolitan area in Ghana, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The 2022 study found workers in informal markets pay various local fees and levies that amount to regressive tax rates, with low-earning operators paying significantly more in relation to their earnings. It also found that workers are willing to pay taxes if the taxes are fair and transparent and they see benefits in return.

Drawing on the 2022 survey, Rogan co-authored an [article](#) for Development Policy Review that is among the publisher's 10 most-cited papers in 2024.

> BUILDING A FAIR TAXATION SYSTEM

Direct engagement with informal workers and their organizations is essential to building a fair system of taxation. “Tax justice requires an exchange where those who pay tax receive benefits. Giving workers a seat at the table empowers them to bargain to ensure they receive benefits and enables collective action,” Rogan said.

In February 2025, as the five-year research project funded by Co-Impact was launched in Accra by WIEGO, ICTD, the University of Ghana and the Ghana Revenue Authority, women market trader leaders used the multi-stakeholder platform to tell both the Ghana Revenue Authority and the Accra Municipal Assembly authorities about their experiences with taxation.

“When tax relief happens, then I want to expand my business. If taxes get lower in Ghana, here we can buy plenty of goods to sell to customers, but when taxes are high you cannot get plenty, and sometimes the bank [interest] rate is also high.”

– Aboagye Maxwell, who sells second-hand shoes from his stall in Tema Station Market, Accra, Ghana

Having the revenue authorities partnering in the project, including contributing topics to the research instrument, will place the research outcomes directly in policy spheres. “Our goal is to get revenue authorities to actually change their policy,” for example, by providing exemptions for low-income earners in the informal sector, Rogan said.

Evidence shows it is a waste of time taxing the working poor – the cost of collecting taxes from low earners in informal employment costs up to nine times more than the revenue raised. Tax policies that instead focus on unregistered large businesses, high-net-worth individuals who operate informally and others would increase national revenues and improve the social contract.

> USING RESEARCH FOR IMPACT

Research is a critical part of WIEGO’s tax justice work. In September 2024, the G20 (Brazil) published WIEGO’s tax work as a technical policy brief, [Task Force 01: Fighting Inequalities, Poverty and Hunger](#), with the Ghana research as the basis.

In January 2025, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) added WIEGO’s inputs to the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development draft statement. This provided an opportunity to have a key recommendation in the final conference report.

In March 2025, the ICTD and WIEGO published a joint policy brief on [gender and taxation](#). A few months earlier, the tax team published a [joint](#)

[policy brief](#) with the World Bank for the first time, enabling WIEGO to reach new audiences.

Tax justice in practice should entail using evidence-based data to determine what taxes workers should pay, with workers in informal employment understanding their rights and obligations – and their organizations having a seat at the table where tax policies are made.

To contribute to conversations on taxation and the way that informal enterprises and workers interact with tax systems, WIEGO is part of a newly formed community of practice that brings together workers in informal employment, representatives from African revenue authorities, civil society organizations, academic researchers, the World Bank and others. We also work through an umbrella organization called the African Tax Administration Forum to develop guidelines and training.

Building on the learnings from Accra, WIEGO is taking the tax work to new countries and regions. Funded by the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, the tax team is training worker leaders in advocacy for fair taxation in Ghana, Colombia and Ecuador. And, through the community of practice, and funded by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), WIEGO is now extending the tax justice work to Tanzania.

This community of practice is one example of how WIEGO convenes space for new alliances to emerge and for workers to be directly involved in policymaking.





WIEGO Joins ILO Effort to Develop Statistics on Digital Platform Work

“When someone makes the claim that platform workers are the new informal workers, the first thing people want to know is the statistics. How many workers are there? What are the characteristics of the workers and their households, and of the job and the activities?”

– Françoise Carré,
Statistics Programme
Director





As part of a working group set up by the ILO's Department of Statistics, WIEGO's Statistics Programme is supporting the development of statistical standards and recommendations for measuring digital platform work and employment.

Carré and WIEGO Senior Advisor Joann Vanek attend all meetings of the group that will advise the ILO in preparing draft statistical guidelines for consideration at the next International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2028. The ICLS is convened every five years by the ILO and is the global standard-setting body in labour statistics.

The decision to set up the working group on digital platform work was made at the 21st ICLS

in Geneva in 2023. The ICLS saw the need to develop statistical standards to better guide data collection and improve the coverage, quality and harmonization of statistics in this area.

Digital platform "work" as well as "employment" are covered by the working group. Work covers all work activities, whether paid or not. Employment is a subset of "digital platform work" and means work activities that are for pay or profit.

The new set of working arrangements that has emerged with ride-hailing and ride-sharing applications and digital microtasks has created the need to have these statistical standards, Carré said, noting that, "This is brand new for everybody and there is urgency to be addressing this."

> KEEPING WIEGO – AND WORKERS – UP-TO-DATE

Over the last quarter-century, WIEGO's Statistics Programme has collaborated with the international statistical community to update the standards to better capture the reality of the informal economy and to reflect the growing availability of official statistics about informal employment. The Programme has been characterized consistently by the core values of [credibility, collaboration and adaptability](#).

As well as contributing to the working group – a tripartite group of governments, workers and employers – Carré and Vanek are also in a subgroup on "Measuring digital platform employment". In addition to online meetings, the subgroup has an online forum for members to share issues. This enables WIEGO to keep abreast of the debates and hear what the country specialists are saying about their own experiences, Carré said.

Among many points the working group discusses is whether and how to include content creators, she said. "At what point do you decide this is a digital platform worker as opposed to somebody playing online trying things out?"

WIEGO is particularly interested in the ways of working that might interface with those of domestic workers, street vendors, waste pickers and home-based workers – the four occupational groups that WIEGO focuses on. For example, digital platform workers and home-based garment workers both have household members contributing to the operation. It may look like there is one supplier but in fact there is a chain, including those with the [status in employment](#) of unpaid contributing family worker.



Once the statistical standards have been devised and recommendations made on what to measure, the Statistics Programme will focus on ensuring that these are relevant to the workers with whom WIEGO works.

The standards set by the ICLS provide the basis for internationally comparable data and create a guide for national offices in the development and publication of labour force statistics. This improves the availability and quality of the statistics needed by WIEGO to identify and describe workers in informal employment and their jobs and is reflected in the [statistical briefs](#) that the Statistics Programme prepares.

> PARTNERING WITH THE ILO AND UN

From its start in 1997, WIEGO has recognized the importance of official statistics to its work. When workers in informal employment have access to accurate information, they can organize and advocate more effectively.

The ILO's main database on employment ([ILOSTAT](#)) includes informal employment as a major data area and refers to WIEGO as a resource.

Since the lead up to the 2003 ICLS, which broadened the definition of informal employment, WIEGO has had a key role in contributing to discussions of needed changes in statistical standards and has engaged in developing the new recommendations. The 2023 ICLS, which adopted a [landmark resolution on informality statistics](#), was particularly important to WIEGO.

While WIEGO has played a critical role in shaping understanding of the issues, it has done so while working in a productive relationship with institutions such as the ILO and the UN Statistics Division.

The Statistics Programme is using its customary tactics in the digital platform working group discussions.

“When things are very complex, [we] try to bring it down to earth. And ... when examples and standards are being discussed only in terms of wage employment, or high-income countries, we inject examples from developing countries and on self-employment that we know.”

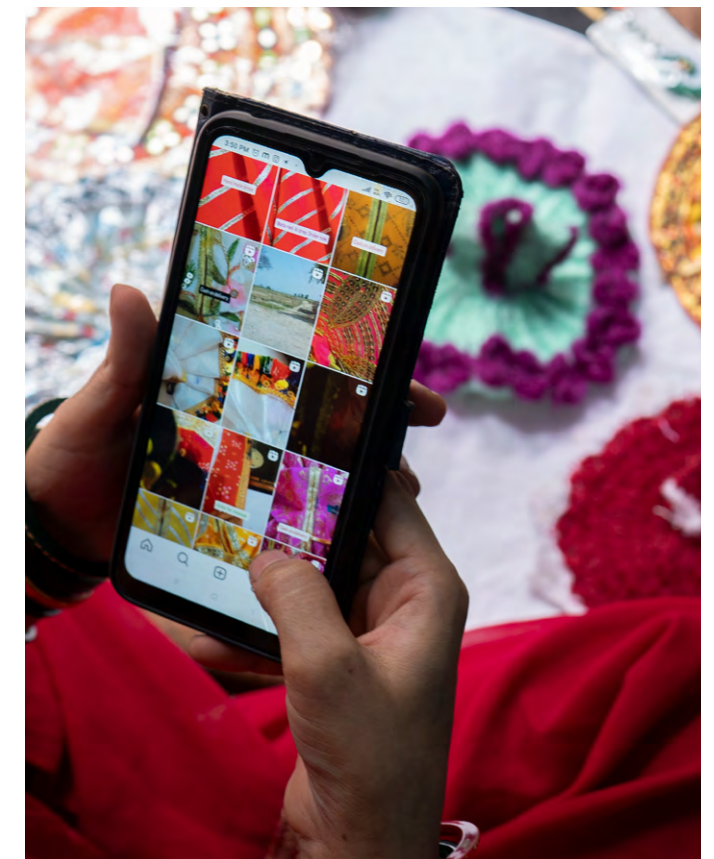
– Françoise Carré

The working group's first meeting – part of a series of online meetings in November 2024 – was highly technical and discussed the scope and structure of the conceptual framework for digital platform work and employment. It identified key issues and developed strategies for addressing these.

> POLICY INTEREST BRINGS STRONG DEMAND FOR STATISTICS

The meeting's concept note explained that while the growth of digital platforms offers opportunities for job creation, increased productivity and more flexible organization of work and production processes, it also presents challenges in ensuring fair competition among enterprises and securing adequate employment benefits and social protection in line with decent work standards and international labour regulations.

With increased policy interest in digital platforms, “there is a strong demand for reliable and relevant statistics on digital platform employment to inform policy discussions and foster a common understanding among policymakers,” it said. The differences in the measures that various statistical offices have come up with to meet this demand limit comparability, the note said. Also, these measurements cover only a few countries, leaving substantial data gaps.



As the International Labour Conference continues discussions towards an [international labour standard on platform employment in 2026](#), the need for better and more accurate statistics will be more important than ever in enabling national governments to design policies which respond to workers' needs and realities.



Engaging the Research Community to Explore Economic Orthodoxies

“It’s essential that we keep on pushing back against economic orthodoxies that are wrong as well as harmful to workers in informal employment. We could not have done this engagement without having done the research and developing the evidence base, which made our arguments credible.”

– Florian Juergens-Grant – Global Social Protection Adviser



Contrary to popular belief, [most of the world's workers are in informal employment](#): 58 per cent of all working people in the world and over 80 per cent of those working in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

While the idea of [Universal Social Protection](#) has gained wide support, progress in achieving universal social protection has been slow. Part of the reason is the persistence of assumptions about the financing of social protection, informed by economic theory. WIEGO's commitment to support the building of fair social protection systems drives its concerted effort to challenge these assumptions.

Its engagement with both the academic research community and organizations of workers in informal employment means WIEGO is ideally placed to reach international financial institutions to challenge economic orthodoxies that do not match worker realities.

So, with funding from Sida, WIEGO set up a project – [Challenging the Economic Orthodoxies Undermining Universal Social Protection](#) – to tackle these dominant and harmful narratives head-on.

“We had to do two things: produce research that could challenge the dominant economic narrative, and build alliances with key international organizations to ensure our research was carried into broader policy discussions,” said WIEGO's research coordinator, Ana Carolina Ogando, and international coordinator Laura Alfes in a [blog](#). “We worked with highly skilled econometricians to produce analyses that questioned the assumed link between social insurance subsidies and informality.”

> HONING IN ON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The project focused on three prevalent narratives:

- that [social protection systems – particularly subsidies to social insurance for workers in informal employment – drive the informalization of the labour market](#)
- that social expenditure is an economically unproductive expenditure
- that [informalized labour markets](#) mean that “social contributions” from employers, governments and workers are no longer a viable way to finance social protection, meaning that it is workers themselves (and sometimes the state) who are left to shoulder the financing burden

These ideas rely on questionable assumptions, among them that social policy is a lead driver of informality (as opposed to lack of formal work) and that workers have a choice as to their employment status. Believing these ideas is problematic for many reasons, including that the dismantling of contributory social insurance systems weakens a fundamental element of a social protection system. Social insurance funded by employer, state and worker contributions opens greater fiscal space for social assistance programmes that rely on general taxation, and may even cross-subsidize such programmes, thereby playing an important redistributive role.

Also, accepting the claim that social expenditure is an economically unproductive expenditure means that governments and international financial institutions are unlikely to find the



financing required to achieve social protection for all, and that spending on social protection is vulnerable to cuts during economic crises, when it is most needed.

“We felt it was important to acknowledge these ideas, who promotes them and why, and [develop an evidence base](#) in response,” said Florian Juergens-Grant, WIEGO's global social protection adviser.

WIEGO prioritized reaching the organizations that actively promote the orthodoxies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). To do this, WIEGO leveraged its connections with intermediary organizations and policy spaces with strong links to the target organizations. Through its direct work with worker organizations, the WIEGO team knew

of the [demand for subsidies](#) to social insurance schemes to enable poorer workers' inclusion. But WIEGO also knew that, particularly in Latin America, these demands come up against an [established economic narrative](#) that subsidies are an incentive to informality and unemployment.

> GATHERING THE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT

In developing a framework for a joint work agenda, WIEGO experts met regularly to discuss how best to engage key international organizations. These internal conversations are ongoing so that new developments can be shared and actions planned.

The team gathered evidence to take to the table. WIEGO's [Working Paper](#) based on a survey of taxes paid by workers in informal employment in Accra shows how little workers receive in terms of protection in return for their taxes. The team re-ran the data on [Mexico's Seguro Popular](#) – often cited as key evidence that subsidies to social insurance schemes decrease formality and increase informality. The new analysis could find no robust evidence of a decrease in formal employment. Also, [a review of existing literature on the impact of social insurance subsidies](#) showed that on the whole these have few significant impacts on formality. WIEGO also undertook grounded research to show how worker organizations are making the case for social protection to be financed by corporate actors who – even if they are not employers – profit from the work of organization members. Case studies were done on novel efforts in several countries to ensure that those who benefit from the labour of workers in informal employment contribute to the [financing of their social protection](#). For example, in [Argentina](#) and [India](#), waste picker organizations have been advocating

for the corporate sector and state actors, such as local governments, to finance social protection benefits for waste pickers in return for the waste management and recycling services they provide.

> EXCHANGING IDEAS IN ROBUST DISCUSSIONS

With evidence in hand and a list of potential participants from groups including the World Bank, the IMF, the ILO and other UN agencies, WIEGO set up a global learning exchange. The themes for these experts' online engagements were taxation, social protection, productivity, and working conditions. To encourage an open exchange of ideas and questions, Chatham House rules were followed.

Robust discussions followed on questions, including:

- “How can direct and indirect tax regimes be made to be progressive, sustainable and transparent in countries with large informal economies?”
- “What do we know about the financing and design of social protection systems and schemes in contexts of informality?”
- “What are the key research questions around poverty and occupational risk in the informal economy?”

The global learning exchange gave WIEGO the space to share its research findings, build relationships with experts in international



financial institutions, and develop a [collective research agenda](#) so as to keep the workstreams and collaborations alive.

Through a collaboration that grew out of this work, Alferts and Juergens-Grant were part of the team that produced the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, [Breaking the Vicious Circles of Informal Employment and Low-Paying Work](#). Among much other joint work, WIEGO [did a study](#) with the ILO that shows that social insurance contributions have remained a stable source of social protection financing over the 21st century, counteracting the argument that they are increasingly irrelevant as a source of financing. Webinars and [podcasts](#) extend the reach of the research findings.

> BUILDING WORKER CAPACITY TO USE RESEARCH

WIEGO brought these arguments and resources directly to worker leaders through [training on the financing and economics of social protection for workers](#). The comprehensive training programme, developed and provided by WIEGO, bridges local organizing with national and global policy debates.

The multi-year training programme brings “a more in-depth, systems-level understanding of social protection, beyond the outcomes,” said Juergens-Grant. It gives participants the confidence to engage in economic and financial discussions and processes, and the tools and evidence to make the economic case for more and better spending.

The 16 participants – who attend all courses in the programme and hold this knowledge for their networks and organizations – are mostly regional organizers or members with technical knowledge who are familiar with the basics of social protection.

In May 2024, the first training course was held in Nairobi, funded by the [Wellspring Philanthropic Fund](#). It introduced concepts and evidence on the financing and economics of social protection systems.

“Participants gain the skills to make strong arguments in forums at all levels” for social protection coverage for workers in informal employment, said WIEGO social protection specialist Aura Sevilla. With strategies to expand fiscal space for social protection in the curriculum, participants are able to suggest to policymakers where money can be found to pay for social protection programmes.

Training on social protection is a consistent demand WIEGO receives from global and national worker organizations because it is an issue that brings workers together and builds unity within an organization. Developing a dedicated training programme on social

protection will strengthen workers' demands and support movement building. It also will serve as a repository of tools that other social protection training programmes targeted at policymakers and social security officials can use to better reach and communicate with workers in informal employment about their social protection needs.





Domestic Workers in Togo and Zimbabwe Become Legal Advocates

**“Now that I see myself in the law,
I feel like I am someone.”**

– Domestic worker in Harare,
Zimbabwe, in a training workshop
on legal empowerment run by
WIEGO’s Law Programme

Across sub-Saharan Africa, [over 8.7 million domestic workers](#) provide a range of services in private homes: they sweep and clean; wash clothes and dishes; shop and cook; care for children, older people and people with disabilities. They provide essential services that keep households working, yet in many countries, domestic work is not protected by law or in practice.

This systemic exclusion and isolation from fellow workers means domestic workers do not benefit from legal and social protections and have little knowledge about their rights as workers. In a workshop, one asked, “I have been working 12 hours a day and haven’t been given vacation leave in years. Is that right?”

In partnership with the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) and four of its African affiliates and other allies, WIEGO’s Law Programme launched the [Legal Empowerment for Domestic Workers project](#) in 2022 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The project seeks to empower domestic workers to [know, use and shape the law](#) – which WIEGO’s law team calls legal empowerment.

The approach has three components:

- building legal knowledge through multi-day in-person training workshops with domestic worker union organizers
- deepening knowledge through online follow-up sessions
- putting what was learned into action by supporting trained domestic workers as they start providing paralegal services, including legal education, legal assistance, outreach, and evidence-based advocacy

> EMBEDDING LEGAL EMPOWERMENT TRAINING WITHIN TRADE UNION STRUCTURES

The project embeds legal empowerment in a trade union setting, in line with the [Critical Legal Empowerment conceptual framework](#) as described by Margaret Satterthwaite. The thinking is that legal empowerment work can be sustainable in the long term and build traction to effect systemic change when successfully institutionalized within a union structure.

A major focus is strengthening the national trade unions so that domestic workers can easily access organizations for support. The promise of legal empowerment, offered by WIEGO through the unions, draws domestic workers to join unions – or to become more active members. In this way, WIEGO increases the unions’ outreach capacity so that the knowledge generated through the project reaches large numbers of domestic workers. Strong emphasis is put on the practical application of legal empowerment training, which demands that participants share their acquired knowledge and skills, ensuring that individual empowerment gained through workshops can lay the foundation for more systemic change at the sector level.



“The workshop had a few days and a lot of information to capture; however, with the help of WhatsApp training where content was broken down, it became understandable and easily accessible at my own convenience.”

–Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU) training participant

Zimbabwe and Togo were selected to pilot the project largely because both countries have labour laws – albeit poorly implemented – that cover domestic workers. Neither country has ratified ILO Convention No. 189 (C189) concerning decent work for domestic workers.

Also, ZDAWU has strong leadership and would benefit from being energized through legal empowerment amid Zimbabwe’s economic and

political difficulties. The opportunity to implement the project in a Francophone country and to strengthen the Syndicat National des Domestiques du Togo (SYNADOT), a young and dynamic union, played a role in choosing Togo.

> TRAININGS BUILD DOMESTIC WORKERS’ CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAW

Since 2022, 13 domestic workers from the Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union and 17 from the Syndicat National des Domestiques du Togo have completed WIEGO’s training and follow-up sessions.

The training helped participants to master facilitation skills, which has increased the unions’ capacity to offer legal education to its members. In 2024 in Zimbabwe, ZDAWU members who had completed the training facilitated in-person training sessions with 110 domestic workers on their statutory rights and, from September to December, they provided in-depth training to 20 workers. The earlier sessions, held in three towns in Zimbabwe, included workers who were not union members, as they were included strategically for outreach.

In both countries, participants and their organizations have reported a shift in their ways of thinking. The critical understanding of the laws that govern domestic work has brought a new consciousness, with many domestic workers becoming aware that they are entitled to labour rights and protections just like other workers.



“From my experience doing the legal empowerment training in Zimbabwe, the first day was most of the participants’ first-ever legal training. A number kept saying it was a moment of rebirth and self-worth to know that there was a law that was meant for domestic workers and they felt protected.”

– Tapiwa Gorejena, WIEGO Law Officer, Southern Africa

“I was lost and I did not know I was donating my working hours to the employer thinking I was a nobody, yet I had a law that recognizes me as a worker like any other.”

– ZDAWU training participant

> FROM TRAINING TO ACTION

Almost one-quarter of fully trained domestic workers in the two countries have reported that they have [used the knowledge and skills](#) gained through the training to negotiate with employers for better working conditions. Some obtained vacation leave for the first time and others who had never had a written contract of employment managed to obtain one from their employer.

In Zimbabwe, domestic worker Lessiwe Madhambi had not had paid vacation leave for two years,

but after the training not only did she ask for and receive vacation leave, but was paid in full for the leave she should have had in previous years. Another worker successfully negotiated with her employer for free protective clothing to wear at work, and Madhambi did the same for herself as well as six other domestic workers.

In May 2024, SYNADOT member Elyse Goumaye discussed with the employer of a fellow domestic worker the employer’s statutory obligation to provide the worker with paid leave, a daily rest period and adequate food. After the discussion with Goumaye, the employer agreed to recognize the domestic worker’s rights and asked if she could approach the union to learn about labour law and domestic workers’ rights. SYNADOT has reported that several employers have approached the union expressing interest in doing the legal training themselves.

> LEGAL KNOWLEDGE AS A TOOL FOR OUTREACH, SUPPORT AND ORGANIZING

Trained domestic workers also leverage their unions’ structures and organizing practices to spread knowledge of the law and provide support and protection in cases of abuse. ZDAWU now

intervenes in such cases, educating both employers and employees about workers' rights and employers' obligations.

"WIEGO helped strengthen the already existing relationship between employees and employers by supporting domestic worker trainings, capacity-building of the union, and engagement with the Domestic Workers Employers Association," Gorejena said.

The project's organizing of legal training sessions has been useful for the unions in recruiting and maintaining members. ZDAWU found that the training led to new members joining, and some domestic workers who had let their membership lapse renewed it. The union, which was finding it difficult to keep up regular meetings, benefitted from the regularity of the project's training sessions and follow-up.

In Togo, SYNADOT gained another 65 members following a social media campaign it started after the training to spread legal awareness. As its members who had done the training (parajuristes) shared their learnings at the union's monthly meetings, other members' interest grew. This robust engagement has enabled SYNADOT to base its advocacy strategy on the needs of its members.

> BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Legal empowerment contributes to the global momentum of domestic workers' rights. Domestic worker organizations secured a major victory



in 2011, when the ILO adopted C189. But getting governments to ratify and implement the Convention is challenging. By building workers' critical consciousness and their ability to challenge power dynamics, WIEGO's legal empowerment training strengthens the ability of domestic worker unions to fight for systemic change.

Teresa Marchiori, WIEGO's Access to Justice Specialist, explained: "I think the path to systemic change leading to the full realization of domestic workers' rights starts with building domestic workers' 'power within' – or inner power. This entails building their identities as workers and as right holders, and an understanding that the law is



not sacrosanct, but a human artifact that reflects existing skewed power dynamics. Once workers see that, they have the power to act for change."

A key lesson from this project: integrating worker education into legal empowerment and rooting this in domestic worker organizations can bring about significant change (both at the individual and collective level) and ultimately lead to the effective recognition and protection of domestic workers' rights.

With WIEGO's project work in Zimbabwe and Togo complete – having empowered the local unions to keep up the necessary support – the law team is now

working in Tanzania with the Conservation, Hotels Domestic and Allied Workers Union (CHODAWU). Training workshops were held in March 2025, and the follow-up phase is under way. Next will be Kenya, with the law team working with the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals & Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA).



Bridging Research on Informality and the Climate Crisis into Indian Media and Policy Debates

“I believe that consistently voicing and sharing our work across different platforms is critical – and it has brought results. We continuously reached out through various forums and spaces to emphasize the need to include workers’ perspectives in heat action plans. This really helped build momentum.”

– Shalini Sinha,
Home-Based Work
Sector Specialist
& Asia Strategic Lead



Sinha was invited to represent WIEGO at a March 2025 conference on climate change hosted by Harvard University. It brought together about 100 academics, policymakers, practitioners, workers' organization representatives and others from around the world. At the conference, titled "India 2047: Building a Climate Resilient Future", Sinha presented on informal livelihoods and highlighted WIEGO's role in linking the local to the global.

Informal livelihoods remain [largely invisible in climate policy](#), and only 3.5 per cent of global climate finance in the last two decades has reached the urban poor.

> BUILDING A LIVELIHOODS PERSPECTIVE INTO CLIMATE POLICY AND RESEARCH

Since its beginnings in 1997, WIEGO has been using its expertise in research and advocacy to support street vendors, home-based workers, waste pickers and domestic workers in Delhi. Sinha's participation in the conference gave voice to these urban workers in informal employment, whose situation is often ignored in mainstream conversations on climate change.

"We spotlight pathways of impact of climate change on livelihoods," Sinha said, noting that this opportunity to reach not just policymakers, but a wide variety of stakeholders talking about climate was important. For women workers in informal employment, the effects of extreme weather events on income are huge. The multi-year [Climate Justice and the Urban Informal Economy study](#) – funded by the IDRC and done in partnership with worker-based movements – is focused on understanding the impacts of climate change and strengthening resilience. It brings the urban informal economy to the [centre stage of discourse on climate change](#).



> USING MEDIA COVERAGE TO GET SPECIFIC SUPPORT

WIEGO took advantage of the media attention on India as it experienced one of its hottest summers on record in 2024. WIEGO's Delhi team made known its monitoring of extreme-heat impacts on workers in informal employment through [newspaper](#) and [online media](#) articles. These drew attention to the reality that places of work are not always factories and offices – people work on roadsides, in urban slums, next to a waste dump, or in [small, congested homes](#) that are like pressure cookers in heatwaves.



WIEGO used this media exposure to urge government officials in Delhi to take specific actions that would support workers in informal employment in heatwaves and other crises. India's National Disaster Management Authority released an [Advisory for Protecting Informal Workers During Heatwaves in Indian Cities](#), which incorporated WIEGO's recommendations. It includes health and safety protocols for workers exposed to extreme heat, measures to ensure the security of women workers during early morning and late evening shifts, coordination for relevant authorities and community-based organizations, and inclusive approaches to heat action planning. In an [opinion piece](#), Sinha lauded the progressive advisory and noted that its inclusion in the action plans of all India's cities must follow to ensure its measures protect India's millions of workers in informal employment from the scorching heat.

"We want decent work conditions, which we've been asking for for the longest time, but now with this media attention we have a foothold."

– Shalini Sinha

> BOOSTING ADVOCACY THROUGH STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Aware of the power of cross-disciplinary alliances, WIEGO's Delhi team holds inclusive dialogues with climate activists, town planners, academics, worker groups, urban geographers, health activists and others.

With the Mahila Housing Trust and [CityCollab](#), WIEGO developed a "climate solutions matrix" that synthesizes grassroots initiatives, pilot projects, climate innovations and policy advocacy across multiple cities. These practical approaches show what can be done when informal workplaces are recognized in urban climate adaptation.

Local level advocacy also feeds into alliance building on research and policy platforms at the global level. The urban policies programme is participating in working groups of COP30 and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with local-level partners like Mahila Housing Trust. In January 2025, the chair of the [Marrakech Partnership Nexus Area Working Group on Empowering People Living and Working In Informality](#) invited WIEGO to join the group in the lead-up to COP30. The group amplifies workers' voices, integrating their perspectives into global climate dialogues, and WIEGO uses this space to highlight workers' role in climate mitigation, advocate for inclusive financing, and advance a just transition agenda.





Developing Research on Access to Social Protection in Lao PDR and Cambodia for Policy Engagement and Action

“I didn’t know VSS [the government’s voluntary social security scheme] was for people like me. I thought it was only for factory workers.”

– A home-based worker who took part in the WIEGO study in Lao PDR

In Cambodia and Lao PDR, WIEGO has worked for systems change to promote access to social protection systems through research, policy engagement and action.

Lao PDR's social protection system has three pillars – health insurance, social security and social welfare – and its National Social Security Fund (NSSF) extends benefits to the self-employed and workers outside of formal enterprises through a voluntary scheme.

Aware that many workers in informal employment in Lao PDR knew little or nothing about the voluntary social security scheme (VSS), WIEGO provided support to fill this critical gap through its partnership with HomeNet Laos. As well as providing information, particularly to women home-based workers, the project helped workers access state schemes such as health insurance, pensions and maternity coverage.

At the time, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was conducting a nationwide study to provide a detailed understanding of the Lao PDR's social security system. WIEGO's [qualitative study](#) focused on home-based workers' access to social security in Vientiane Capital. The team, led by WIEGO social protection specialist Aura Sevilla, worked closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

> STRONG PARTNERSHIPS BOOST THE IMPACTS

Having a strong partnership with the ILO team enabled the WIEGO team to ensure the qualitative research added value to the ILO's study. In November 2024, a joint [launch](#) of findings added impact to WIEGO's work.



It was crucial for the WIEGO team to work closely with stakeholders – including the Lao Social Security Organization (LSSO), HomeNet Southeast Asia and Oxfam – before the survey and focus group discussions began, Sevilla said. HomeNet Laos had many consultations with government departments, civil society organizations and others where it presented the research objectives and gathered useful information.

Representatives of the LSSO – the government office that oversees the social security system and



aims to extend coverage – told WIEGO they wanted to know why workers in informal employment often opt for private insurance over VSS. This led the team to include a question for workers on the comparative advantages.

The focus group discussions found that home-based workers' low and irregular incomes were among barriers to accessing the state system. Convenience was another major factor. Private insurers collected payments from workers in their villages, while paying and receiving benefits from the state scheme required travel of about 15 km to the nearest office, among other difficulties.

The research also found that private insurers had established networks of agents at the grass-roots level long before the VSS was introduced. Some

home-based workers said they had purchased insurance for several years and were hesitant to switch providers for fear that they would lose their accumulated benefits.

> HELPING THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT WORKERS

The state system offers a range of benefits at a reduced cost, but many workers in informal employment had not had its advantages explained to them, Sevilla said. She noted that it is useful for the LSSO to know how workers experience private insurance and where the government can improve their own services, such as in providing more flexible contribution schemes.

“Before speaking with you, I believed social security was costly. Now I understand it’s affordable, but can they collect payments from us in the village? I’m aware that someone can assist with transferring the contribution, but I still want to keep the receipt.”

– Woman waste picker in a focus group discussion

The team also provided peer-to-peer training as a sustainable way for workers to access up-to-date information on social protection as they need it. With WIEGO’s support, home-based workers began engaging with government social security officials, which has contributed to shifts in local governance dynamics. The workers said their awareness of their rights has grown, along with their willingness to enrol in VSS. Also, the government has expanded mobile registration for VSS, with support from HomeNet Laos.

At the policy level, WIEGO’s work with HomeNet Laos has led to home-based workers contributing to dialogues on social protection reform at national and regional levels, thereby becoming directly involved in policymaking processes. With WIEGO support, HomeNet Laos took part in the [National Assembly meeting](#) on social protection in March 2025 and, as a result, the government committed



to considering the flexible and fair VSS contribution rates that workers in informal employment are calling for.

HomeNet Laos’s participation in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) advocacy through HomeNet Southeast Asia has also allowed home-based workers to gain exposure to broader movements and policy models.

“Our collaboration gave HNL access to policy tables and helped them align national work with international momentum.”

– Suntaree Saeng-ging,
HNSEA Executive Director



> WORKERS IN CAMBODIA GAIN ACCESS TO PROTECTIONS THROUGH THE IDPOOR CARD

Sevilla also led WIEGO’s support for HomeNet Cambodia in its project to improve social protection for home-based workers. The project had among its aims to increase workers’ access to government social assistance through the [IDPoor programme](#).

Following a survey of home-based workers, WIEGO and partners called for a new category of “at-risk households” to be included in eligibility criteria for IDPoor cards. This was achieved and means that workers in informal employment living in poverty, mostly women, are now covered.

WIEGO is continuing efforts to strengthen HomeNet Cambodia’s institutional capacity and supporting it to form alliances with other groups working to increase social protection coverage in Cambodia. In Lao PDR, the WIEGO team is working towards formalizing partnerships between home-based-worker networks and government entities, including the social security office, to institutionalize shared responsibilities.



The success of the initiatives in Lao PDR and Cambodia with home-based workers is informing ASEAN discussions with senior labour officials to improve social insurance coverage among workers in other countries.

“Getting the IDPoor card through HomeNet’s help has made a real difference for my family’s health.”

– Chheav Lery, representing the 30-member Tekvel Kangkert handicraft group in Siem Reap province



Cooperatives and the Social and Solidarity Economy as a Pathway to Formalization and Decent Work

“We always understood that being a waste picker cooperative wasn’t just about taking out a collection box and asking for donations. We understood that to remain strong we had to prepare ourselves. ...We’ve incorporated a key ingredient into what Planeta Verde has become: Training and education. Today, almost all of the 105 waste pickers in Planeta Verde can read and write. This was a goal we set for ourselves more than 20 years ago.”

– Martha Elena Iglesias,
Planeta Verde leader



A basic demand from workers in informal employment is to gain formal recognition as workers. By forming a legally recognized entity in the [social and solidarity economy \(SSE\)](#), such as a cooperative, workers around the world have found a way to achieve this recognition, as well as to increase their income and improve their productive capacities and working conditions.

Formal recognition is especially important for workers in sectors such as waste picking and street vending, where their work has been invisible to policymakers and even [criminalized](#).

By forming cooperatives and other SSE entities, workers in informal employment have been able to build a [collective identity as workers](#) and engage in successful collective struggles for recognition and rights. One example is the [Planeta Verde cooperative](#) in the municipality of Rionegro in the Antioquia region of Colombia. Planeta Verde defends the rights of waste pickers and promotes their recognition as essential service providers in municipalities across Colombia, in coordination with the National Association of Waste Pickers (ANR).

After years of advocacy, in 2024 the government of Colombia issued Decree 1381, which expressly recognizes the exclusive rights of waste pickers to provide public waste management services. Most significantly, it reaffirms recycling as an integral part of the public waste management service and, with this, requires that waste pickers are paid through residents' waste management fees. This is a key step towards formalization for waste pickers, as their payments are now linked to service provision and do not depend solely on the sale of recyclable material. The decree prohibits companies or corporations from carrying out selective collection (the process of sorting and separating different types of recyclables) in competition with waste pickers. Along with organizations of waste pickers in Colombia, WIEGO is now focused on implementation and the need for persistent vigilance in protecting waste pickers' rights.

In November 2024, WIEGO published a [case study](#) of Planeta Verde, based on a survey conducted from May to July 2024. The study examines how the cooperative integrates SSE practices into its daily recycling activities while extending these principles to broader aspects of its members' lives.



“We have nine social funds – we have a solidarity fund, we have a fund for the elderly because 60% of members are over 60 years old. We have a fund for innovation and technology [because] we have to look at all fronts.”

– Martha Elena Iglesias

> SHOWING GLOBAL POLICY SPACES HOW SSE STRUCTURES BENEFIT WORKERS

Experiences like Planeta Verde's are not isolated. Through research and advocacy, WIEGO brings into global policy spaces workers' interests, needs and experiences. Workers who are productively and politically organized through SSE structures thus have the platform to show how this structure can improve their lives and livelihoods, drive formalization and provide a path to more dignified and decent work.

Formalization of employment refers to progressive access to the rights and benefits associated with full employment, such as minimum social protection floors, labour law coverage, and fair incomes and working conditions. For most workers in informal employment, the move toward formalization is complex due to multiple structural, regulatory and economic barriers.



“Through their participation in dialogue and decision-making spaces, SSE entities not only make their interests and challenges visible, but also consolidate their role as key actors in processes of recognition, formalization, and public policy influence.”

– Federico Parra, WIEGO’s social and solidarity economy specialist



WIEGO led a panel on the [role of cooperatives](#) in the transition from the informal to the formal economy at the International Cooperative Alliance’s conference in Delhi, India, in November 2024. It included presentations by Planeta Verde, HomeNet Thailand, the Unión de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de la Economía Popular ([UTEP](#)) and the [SEWA Cooperative Federation](#). And with delegates at the conference, HomeNet International, International Association of Waste Pickers and StreetNet International were able to explain how embracing SSE practices, principles and values has enabled many workers in informal employment to be recognized as workers by policymakers and has improved their working conditions.



> GAINING ACCESS TO COLLECTIVE FINANCING MECHANISMS

Institutional recognition is essential for workers in informal employment in that it facilitates progressive integration into the formal economy and offers a more secure and stable environment, Parra said.

One of the biggest barriers workers in informal employment face is exclusion from the traditional financial system. Banks often refuse them credit, and conventional savings mechanisms do not suit their irregular incomes. Here, the social and solidarity economy plays a key role by providing alternatives tailored to workers’ realities. Through belonging to cooperatives or other SSE entities, workers in informal employment receive training

in financial management and access to collective financing mechanisms, cooperative savings and credit institutions, and other resources.

WIEGO’s Organization and Representation Programme trains worker organizations in SSE principles and practices and is supporting StreetNet International in a plan to [promote and implement](#) SSE practices among organizations of street vendors and market traders. A practical toolbox has been developed to demonstrate how solidarity savings and credit systems work and their benefits to workers in informal employment.

As more worker organizations adopt SSE principles and practices, the lines separating “informal” and “formal” work are becoming less rigid. In their place, a new economic model is taking shape, rooted in solidarity, where every worker is empowered and recognized as deserving of dignity and decent work.

The image is a composite. The left half shows several pineapples in a row, with the one in the foreground being in sharp focus. The right half shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a pineapple. The hand is dark-skinned and has a beaded bracelet on the wrist. The background of the right half is a warm, reddish-brown color. The text 'WIEGO's Global Presence' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image, spanning both halves. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the word 'Presence'.

WIEGO's Global Presence

WIEGO's Global Presence

This map illustrates WIEGO's presence around the world, showing not only the countries that directly benefit from our programmes and collaborations, but also the people and partners working to make that impact possible. It reflects the combined footprint of our global team, institutional members and programme activities during the reporting year.

By including where our team members and key consultants are based, as well as where our institutional partners and beneficiaries are located, we aim to offer a clear view of WIEGO's network and the collective effort driving our mission. The map captures the depth of our engagement, from where we design and coordinate activities, to where we collaborate and deliver on-the-ground impact.

WIEGO Team & Key Consultants

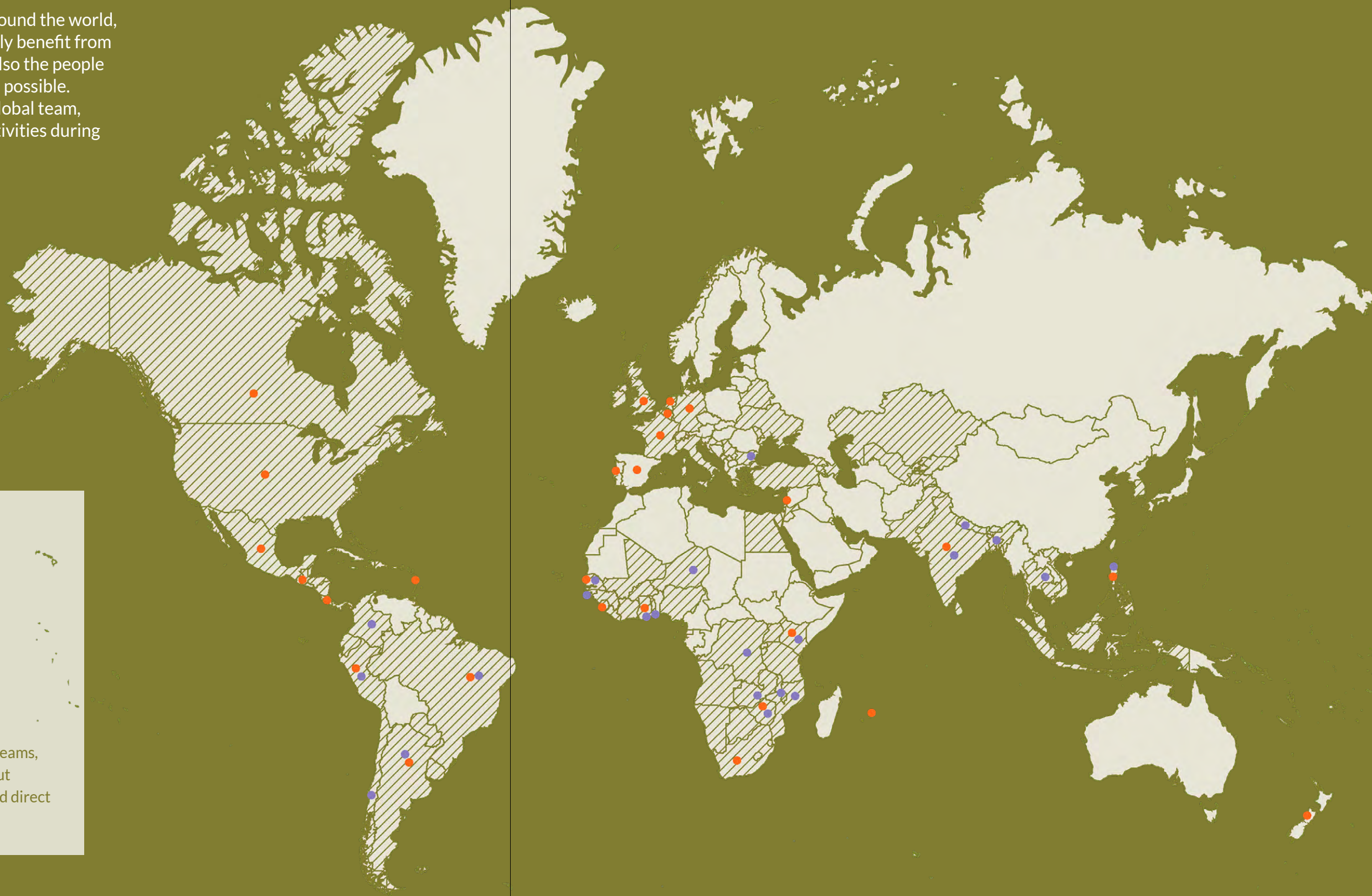
Countries where WIEGO staff and consultants are based.

Institutional Members

Countries where WIEGO works with institutional members and partner organizations.

Collaborators

Countries where WIEGO programme teams, networks and members have carried out projects, or where WIEGO has provided direct grant support.



GLOBAL IMPACT

During the 2024–2025 financial year, WIEGO provided support to workers in informal employment globally through a combination of research, capacity-building, policy advocacy and worker accompaniment.



Its **Social Protection Programme** focused on strengthening health and social protection systems, conducting studies on micro-pensions, work injury insurance and home-based workers’ access to social security, as well as implementing childcare initiatives in markets across Africa.



The **Law Programme** advanced legal empowerment and worker rights by delivering training, conducting research on urban governance and informal work, documenting human rights issues for street vendors, and engaging in high-level advocacy at national and international forums.



WIEGO’s **Statistics Programme** strengthened workers’ visibility through data collection, country statistical briefs, and collaborative projects with institutions such as the ILO and the UN Statistics Division. The evidence produced, including detailed studies on waste pickers, street vendors, and market traders, informs social protection policies and understanding of labour informality.



The **Urban Policies Programme** focused on climate resilience, establishing near real-time climate monitoring in 16 waste picker cooperatives in six Brazilian cities, delivering climate-consciousness training, and monitoring climate impacts on

home-based workers and street vendors. The team also engaged with governments and worker organizations to inform policy, and conducted research, advocacy and capacity-building on tax issues affecting workers in informal employment. The Focal Cities initiative largely worked on collective bargaining, tax justice, climate-resilient infrastructure and social protection financing; often with worker organizations and local authorities.



The **Organization and Representation Programme** trained worker organizations in principles and practices of the social and solidarity economy and is engaged in a collaborative effort to support implementation of these practices. Its work included the development of a practical toolbox to explain solidarity savings and credit systems and how they can benefit workers in informal employment.

Overall, WIEGO’s interventions in 2024–2025 at global and local levels reflect a systems-change approach integrating research, training, advocacy and policy engagement to strengthen the rights, livelihoods and resilience of workers in informal employment worldwide.

GLOBAL PRESENCE

Countries	WIEGO Team & Consultants	Partners	Collaborators
ANGOLA			●
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA			●
ARGENTINA	●	●	●
ARMENIA			●
AZERBAIJAN			●
BANGLADESH		●	●
BELARUS			●
BELGIUM	●		●
BENIN			●
BHUTAN			●
BOSNIA HERZOGOVINA			●
BOTSWANA			●
BRAZIL	●	●	●
BULGARIA		●	●
BURKINA FASO			●
BURUNDI			●
CAMBODIA			●
CANADA	●		●
CHILE		●	●
COLOMBIA	●	●	●
COSTA RICA	●		●
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO			●
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC			●
ECUADOR			●
EGYPT			●
EL SALVADOR			●
ESWATINI			●
FRANCE	●		●
GEORGIA			●
GERMANY	●		●
GHANA	●	●	●
GUATEMALA	●		●
GUINEA		●	●
HONDURAS			●
HONG KONG			●
INDIA	●	●	●
INDONESIA			●
ITALY			●
IVORY COAST			●
JAMAICA			●
JORDAN			●
KAZAKHSTAN			●
KENYA	●	●	●
KUWAIT			●
KYRGYZSTAN			●
LAO PDR			●
LEBANON	●		●
LESOTHO			●
LIBERIA			●

Countries	WIEGO Team & Consultants	Partners	Collaborators
MACEDONIA			●
MALAWI		●	●
MALAYSIA			●
MALDIVES			●
MALI			●
MAURITIUS	●		●
MEXICO	●		●
MOLDOVA			●
MONTENEGRO			●
MOZAMBIQUE		●	●
NAMIBIA			●
NEPAL		●	●
NETHERLANDS	●		●
NEW ZEALAND	●		●
NICARAGUA			●
NIGER		●	●
NIGERIA			●
PAKISTAN			●
PANAMA			●
PARAGUAY			●
PERU	●	●	●
PHILIPPINES	●	●	●
PORTUGAL	●		●
QATAR			●
RWANDA			●
SAINT LUCIA	●		●
SENEGAL	●	●	●
SERBIA			●
SIERRA LEONE	●		●
SOUTH AFRICA	●		●
SOUTH KOREA			●
SPAIN	●		●
SRI LANKA			●
SWITZERLAND			●
TAJIKISTAN			●
TAIWAN			●
TANZANIA			●
THAILAND		●	●
TOGO		●	●
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO			●
TÜRKIYE			●
UGANDA			●
UKRAINE			●
UNITED KINGDOM	●		●
UNITED STATES	●		●
URUGUAY			●
UZBEKISTAN			●
ZAMBIA		●	●
ZIMBABWE	●	●	●

What We Shared with the World



What We Shared with the World

A Snapshot of WIEGO's Key Knowledge and Learning Resources

In 2024–2025, WIEGO continued to generate and share high-quality research and learning resources designed to build knowledge, support advocacy and strengthen organizations of workers in informal employment. Our outputs took many forms, from policy briefs and reports to advocacy materials, guides, toolkits and podcasts. Each resource helped translate WIEGO's research and on-the-ground experience into practical insights and evidence to support learning for workers, policymakers and practitioners.

ADVOCACY MATERIALS, GUIDES & TOOLKITS



How We Can Make R204 Matter: Hands-on Guide for Workers in the Informal Economy

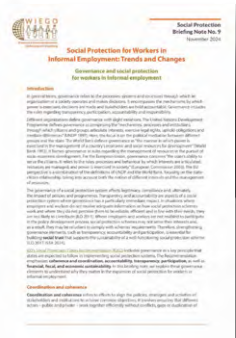


Domestic Workers' Labour and Employment Rights



Waste Picker Collectives and Climate Vulnerability in Belo Horizonte

BRIEFS & SUMMARIES



Social Protection Trends and Changes: Governance and Social Protection for Workers in Informal Employment



Social and Solidarity Economy Practices of the Planeta Verde Cooperative of Waste Pickers

CASE STUDIES & REPORTS



Unión de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de la Economía Popular (2011-2024): La Experiencia Argentina

[Union of Workers of the Popular Economy (2011–2024): The Argentine Experience] Available in Spanish only



No Inclusion Without Work: A Study on Andahuaylas Street Vendors with Disabilities in Historic Downtown Lima

INFOGRAPHICS & INTERACTIVE RESOURCES



Homeworkers in Global Supply Chains



Child Care in Markets

PODCASTS & OTHER MULTIMEDIA

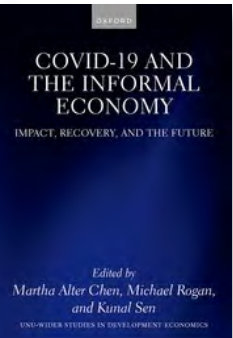


IDWF & WIEGO Podcast Series: Domestic Workers Organizing for Legal Change in Asia



Innovations to Financing Social Protection in a Changing World of Work

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



COVID-19 and the Informal Economy: Impact, Recovery and the Future



From 'Battles' to Collective Agreements Between Street Vendors and Local Authorities in Zimbabwe



Improving Home-Based Workers' Access to Social Security in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR



Street Vendors and Market Traders in 12 Countries: A Statistical Profile

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)



Implementing ILO Recommendation
204 on Transitioning from the Informal
to the Formal Economy: Lessons from
South Africa's Experience



From the Palace to the Kitchens:
Making C189 Real for Domestic
Workers in Africa

TRAINING MODULES AND LEARNING MATERIALS



Social Protection Capacity Development
Journey: Financing & Economics
of Social Protection

Find WIEGO's latest publications, research, policy analysis, statistics, and practical tools on the informal economy, along with other resources, in the [WIEGO Research Library](#).





Financial Report

Financial Report

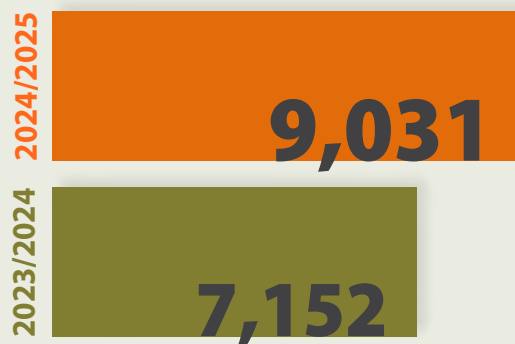
> FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

The Finance Committee is a subcommittee of the WIEGO Board and has responsibility for overseeing the financial management and audit of the accounts, to ensure the sustainability and future viability of WIEGO. This includes review of annual budgets, as well as continuous review of budgetary and financial controls to reduce the risk of underspending or overspending, and to mitigate the possible shortfall in income in any financial year. This risk is further mitigated by the building of designated reserves, mainly for the General Assembly, which is held every four years. The next General Assembly will be held in November 2026. Additionally, free reserves as of 31 March 2025 are US\$681,000, which will be used to maintain core programmes for a three-month period in the event of cash flow uncertainties arising from funding difficulties, as well as other uncertainties.

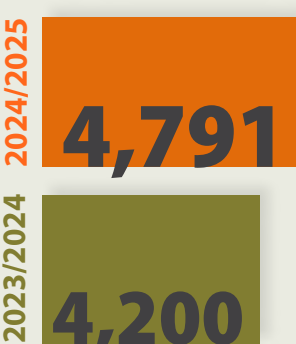
The Finance Committee reports to the WIEGO Board of Directors for final decisions on budgets and risk management.

Financial Highlights for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 (\$'000s)

WIEGO Total Income



Grants to Partners



WIEGO Total Expenditure



> FINANCIAL SUMMARY

For the year ended 31 March 2025, WIEGO received an unqualified opinion from its auditors, Crowe U.K. LLP. The figures in the financial summaries for the Balance Sheet, Source of Funds, and Use of Funds, are extracted from the statutory accounts, which were approved by the Board of Directors on 2 September 2025. The auditors have confirmed to the Directors that the extracts are consistent with the statutory financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025.

These extracts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the company. Therefore, the full statutory accounts should be consulted together with the Auditors' Report and the Directors' Report, which are available from the Company Secretary at the company's registered office in Manchester, United Kingdom. Additionally, the full statutory accounts will be available online, after completion of all regulatory filings.

Balance Sheet

		2024-25 US \$000	2023-24 US \$000
CURRENT ASSETS	Accounts Receivable	459	718
	Cash at bank	16,787	25,407
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		17,246	26,125
CREDITORS	Accounts Payable	(1,834)	(3,663)
NET ASSETS		15,412	22,462
FUNDS	Restricted Funds	10,831	16,724
	Unrestricted Funds	4,581	5,738
		15,412	22,462

Source: Extract from the statutory accounts

> SOURCE AND USE OF FUNDS

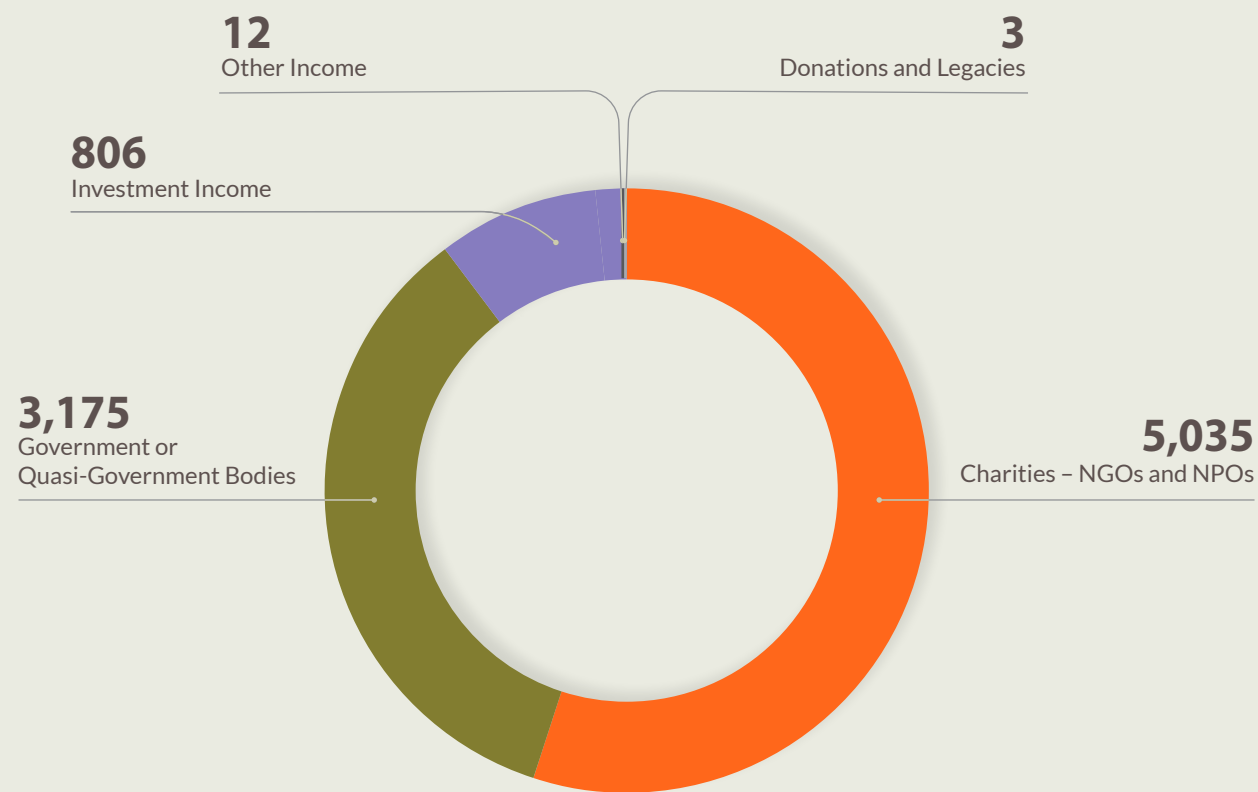
The total incoming resources were US \$9 million for the financial year ending 31 March 2025 compared to US \$7.2 million in the previous year. Total resources expended were US \$16.1 million, compared to US \$15.1 million in the previous year.

Source of Funds

Over the last 28 years, WIEGO has been fortunate to receive support from several funders in our efforts to support the movement of workers in informal employment. During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, WIEGO received funding from 15 institutional funders. Additionally, US \$806,000 was received as interest income compared to US \$1.1 million in the previous year.

WIEGO is grateful to the various organizations, foundations and governments for their generous financial support over the years.

WIEGO 2024/2025 Income (\$'000s)



Source: Extract from the statutory accounts

Source of Funds

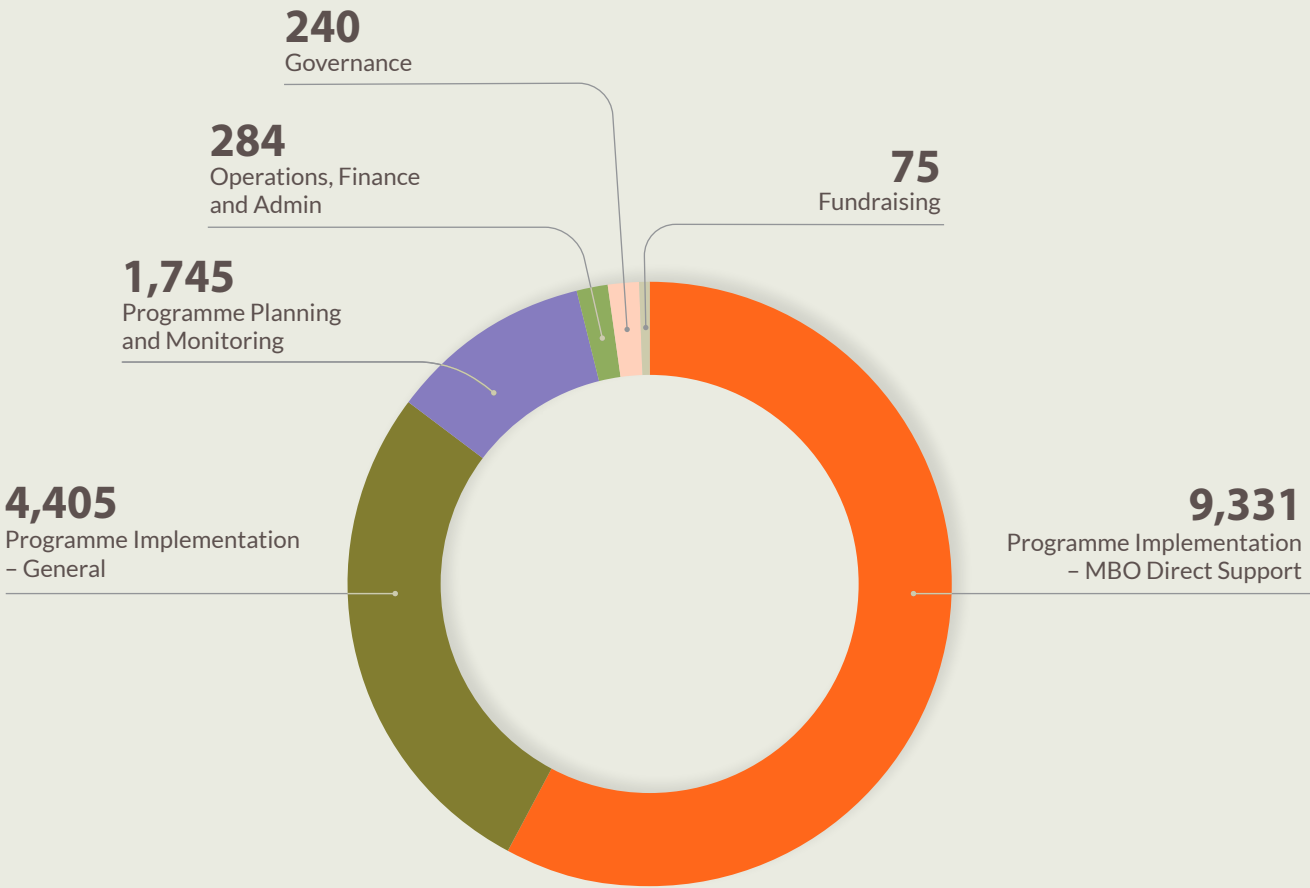
	2024-25 US \$000	2023-24 US \$000
Ford Foundation	0	49
Swedish International Development Agency	2,857	2,770
Schwab Charitable Fund	250	250
International Development Research Centre COVID-19 Study	12	89
IDRC Climate and Cities	306	0
Comic Relief	26	114
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund	200	200
International Labour Organization	6	15
Stiftung Auxilium	133	133
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	3,900	2000
Co-Impact	368	0
Investment Income	806	1,143
Other Sources	167	389
TOTAL	9,031	7,152

Source: Extract from the statutory accounts

Use of Funds 2024-2025

WIEGO’s strategy is designed to ensure that the maximum possible resources are channeled directly into programmes to meet the objective of delivering high-quality improvements in research, policy advocacy and capacity-building. It is worth noting that 96 per cent of resources were expended in the direct and indirect support of MBOs for programme implementation, planning and monitoring.

WIEGO 2024/2025 Expenditure (\$'000s)



Source: Extract from the statutory accounts





Looking
Ahead

Looking Ahead

With the last of four global networks launched, and in a spirit of strength and solidarity, WIEGO is envisaging its new role in the movement of workers in informal employment.

It is a time for internal reflection, and WIEGO is committed to listening and learning throughout this period of transformation.

“Recognizing the need to be more nimble and proactive in a changing global context, WIEGO is adapting to keep pace with the major trends impacting the world of work.”

We celebrated with the global networks of workers in informal employment in their achievements in 2024/2025, including:



The [International Association of Waste Pickers](#) (IAWP) – the global network of waste picker organizations representing 460,000 waste pickers across 34 countries – held its first elective congress in May 2024. It was a milestone for the movement of workers in informal employment.



The International Federation of Domestic Workers (IDWF) showed evidence of its sustainability in celebrating its 11th anniversary while being recognized by the United Nations as [“Care Champions”](#).



StreetNet International increased its membership to [close to 1 million workers](#).



[HomeNet International](#) advocated vociferously for the ratification of ILO C177.

> RESPONDING AND ADAPTING TO SHIFTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

WIEGO is also responding to an external push for change: We are in the midst of multiple and intensifying crises – war, economic instability, climate change inaction, and the rise of authoritarian politics globally. Workers in informal employment, particularly poorer workers and particularly women, are vulnerable to the compounded effects of these crises.

The [crisis](#) in the development sector is worsening and, along with the global networks of workers in informal employment, non-governmental and other civil society organizations, WIEGO is reacting quickly.

With funding for the Focal Cities project coming to an end, work in Dakar, Senegal, and Mexico City has wound down, and WIEGO aims to ensure that the membership-based organizations of workers in these cities continue to work closely with the global networks with which they are affiliated.

> KEEPING PACE WITH EMERGING TRENDS IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Recognizing the need to be more nimble and proactive in a changing global context, WIEGO is adapting to keep pace with the major trends impacting the world of work. Calls for new approaches to [economics](#) and [politics](#) are gaining traction, and WIEGO is exploring what that “new political economy” might look like for the informal economy.

It is a time to specialize and align, and WIEGO is sharpening and deepening its work to develop statistics, research and policy analysis in service to the worker movement.

In this process of change – made essential by the changing context and to secure sustainability in an uncertain funding environment – WIEGO is holding the tension as it establishes itself anew and at the same time brings out the best in its original ways of working. The newness must be rooted in WIEGO’s founding mandate, values and principles and ensure its mission stays alive: to improve the working conditions of workers in informal employment and to challenge the systems that cause poverty and inequality to build a more just world of work. We look forward to sharing more with you as our evolution takes place.

“The newness must be rooted in WIEGO’s founding mandate, values and principles and ensure its mission stays alive.”

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

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Pages 10-11: A market trader in Uganda who sews clothes to sell. Photo credit: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

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Pages 40, 46, 47: Participants in legal empowerment training workshops in Togo. Photo credit: Teresa Marchiori

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Page 44: (from left) Hazel Makumbe, Anywhere Mapuranga and Charity Ngaliwa. Photo credit: Fungai Munetsi

Page 48: Home-based worker Babita Ben in Delhi. Photo credit: Ruhani Kaur

Pages 50-51: Trainers and Mahila Housing Trust members in Delhi. Photos credit: Ruhani Kaur

Page 52: Home-based worker Gulshan Bano in Delhi. Photo credit: Ruhani Kaur

Page 53: Babita Ben (top photo) and street vendor Shanti. Photos credit: Ruhani Kaur

Page 54: Home-based worker Phuong Savdi, a member of the "Khmer Broom, Clean Environment" group in Svay Thom Village in Cambodia. Photo credit: Aura Sevilla

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Page 58: Aura Sevilla working in Lao PDR. Photo by colleague

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Page 89: Waste pickers in Bogotá, Colombia. Photo credit: Juan Arredondo/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

Pages 90-91: Waste picker cooperative members Justina Mokoena (left) and Liberia Mapesmoawe at the Boitshepi landfill site in South Africa. Photo credit: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images Reportage/Images of Empowerment

Connect with Us & Support Workers in Informal Employment

Stay connected and help amplify the voices of workers in informal employment globally. Follow, share and engage with WIEGO here:



www.wiego.org



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[linkedin.com/company/wiego](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wiego)



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Join us in supporting the movement of workers in informal employment, especially women and people living in poverty. Whether you're a donor, policy maker or researcher, your support can help expand our impact and strengthen our partnerships with organizations of workers in informal employment across the world.

Together, we can build a more inclusive and equitable economy!