



Women in Informal Employment:
Globalizing and Organizing

Extending Social Protection to **Workers** in the Informal Economy

Workers in informal employment need access to social protections that will mitigate risks to their incomes. These resources share evidence and policy innovations.



October 2026

Natthakitta Kaewsirang, a home-based worker in Thailand.
Credit: Eduardo Derrico/HomeNet International

Linking Social Protection & Rights-Based Formalization



Global Position Paper on Formalization: Collective Action for Risk Reduction and Decent Work

Using the ILO's decent-work framework, WIEGO and five organizations of workers in informal employment call for a rights-based approach to formalization that centres risk reduction, access to social protection, economic policies that promote enabling conditions for entities in the social and solidarity economy, and legal frameworks that guarantee labour rights and collective bargaining.



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A Rights-based Approach to Formalization: Transformative Change through Collective Bargaining

WIEGO's Working Paper No. 50 advances a rights-based approach to formalization, grounded in a political economy understanding of the law. This approach highlights how states' failure to reconstruct their labour laws to extend collective bargaining rights to all workers mediates political and economic relationships in ways that contribute to the persistence of informality.



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From Commitment to Action: Recommendations for Strengthening Social Protection for Workers in the Informal Economy in ASEAN

This brief – from the Asia Monitor Resource Centre, the Asian Roundtable on Social Protection, Oxfam, HomeNet Southeast Asia, IDWF and WIEGO – informs regional dialogue on building inclusive, rights-based, care-centred, gender- and climate-responsive systems. Among its recommendations are that the ASEAN member states expand social protection coverage beyond formal employment and across borders, make contributory social protection more accessible through flexible financing and administration, and develop responsive social protection systems for climate change and labour market transitions.



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Learn more about WIEGO's work on social protection:



<https://www.wiego.org/>



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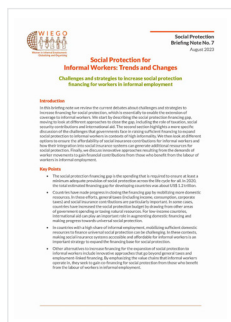


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Asma Ben, a street vendor in Savda Ghehra, New Delhi, India.
Credit: Ruhani Kaur



Fair Financing for Social Protection



Challenges and Strategies to Increase Social Protection Financing for Workers

This briefing note reviews debates about strategies to increase financing for social protection, which is essentially to enable the extension of coverage to workers in informal employment. It describes various approaches such as taxation, social security contributions and international aid, and also looks at innovative approaches resulting from the demands of worker movements to gain financial contributions from those who benefit from the work of workers in informal employment.



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Busting Myths and Exploring Fairer Ways to Finance Social Protection for Workers in Informal Employment

This ebook critically examines the narratives that often undermine fair and inclusive social protection systems. Through rigorous analysis and collaboration with worker organizations, it shows how grounded evidence and worker-led perspectives can open the way for more equitable and sustainable policy solutions.



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Tight Tax Net, Loose Safety Net: Taxation and Social Protection in Accra's Informal Sector

Using representative data on informal workers in Accra, Ghana, WIEGO's Working Paper No. 45 contributes novel evidence on the extent to which workers in informal employment in Accra have access to social protection.

The paper explores their tax burdens and the degree to which they might be able to make additional contributions through taxes or contributions to social protection schemes. It investigates the equity, redistributive and gendered impacts of workers' fiscal burdens and access to social protection.



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Innovative Country Case Studies



Inclusive Social Insurance – Exploring Real Solutions to Reach the Self-Employed

Drawing from 10 country case studies, this working paper, prepared by the ILO in partnership with WIEGO, sheds light on debates about the design and implementation of solutions to extend social insurance coverage to self-employed workers.



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Social Dialogue for Social Protection: A Perspective from the Informal Economy in Southeast Asia

WIEGO's Working Paper No. 49 explores how workers in informal employment in Southeast Asia use social dialogue to improve access to social protection. Drawing on examples from across the region, it shows how workers use a mix of formal engagement with governments and institutions, grassroots organizing and advocacy to influence social protection policies.



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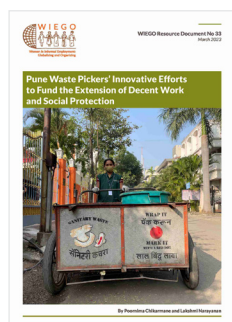


'I Want to be Protected': Experiences and Perspectives of Informal Workers on Social Security in Thailand

This policy brief explores the experiences of self-employed workers with Article 40 of Thailand's Social Security Fund on the basis of focus group discussions with home-based workers, street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers in Bangkok.



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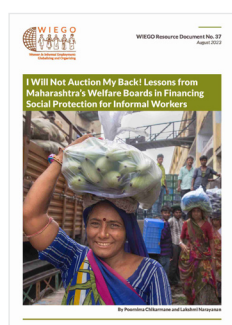


Pune Waste Pickers' Innovative Efforts to Fund the Extension of Decent Work and Social Protection

Taking inspiration from India's long experience with welfare boards, organizations of workers in informal employment in Pune are exploring ways to forge relationships with entities outside the typical frameworks of employment to gain additional financing for social protection.



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I Will Not Auction My Back! Lessons from Maharashtra's Welfare Boards in Financing Social Protection for Informal Workers

India's welfare boards have existed for more than half a century and represent a unique approach to ensuring sustainable and fair financing for informal workers' social protection. This paper explores the design, financing and implementation of Maharashtra's Mathadi Boards.



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Registration Mechanisms to Expand Social Protection for Informal Workers: Lessons from Latin America

This brief explores the experiences of registration mechanisms that have worked for workers in informal employment in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

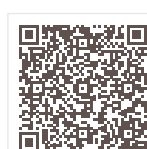


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New Forms of Social Insurance: The Case of the FIWON Cooperative Scheme in Nigeria

The findings from this case study of the FIWON cooperative in Lagos and Osun, which facilitates access to insurance for its members, could be useful to others in contexts where public trust has been eroded and government investment in social protection is low.



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Exploring Labour Market Impacts and Digitalization



Financing Universal Social Protection: The Relevance and Labour Market Impacts of Social Security Contributions

This paper shows that social contributions are one of the main sources of financing for public policy, and have remained a stable source of financing in the 21st century. The available evidence does not show a clear pattern between contribution rates and informal employment.



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Does Social Protection Cause Informality? A Critical Review of the Literature

Several influential international organizations and others claim that social protection drives informality. Working Paper No. 48 critically reviews the available evidence.

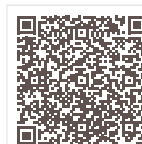


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The Digitalisation of Social Protection in Africa: The Perspective of Marginalised Workers

Six studies were carried out with and by domestic workers and home-based workers in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. This IDS Research Report in collaboration with WIEGO synthesizes their findings.



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Digital Learning Resources



Financing Social Protection – Social Protection Capacity Development Journey

This training introduces participants to the key building blocks of social protection systems, as well as concepts and evidence on the financing and economics of social protection. It shows how to make the economic case for investing in social protection for workers in the informal economy.



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Podcast Channel

This monthly podcast discusses social protection from the perspective of workers in informal employment.



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About WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (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. WIEGO works to expand research and statistics on the informal economy, promote change through policy advocacy, and build collective voice by supporting, strengthening and connecting organizations of workers in informal employment. Visit www.wiego.org