

# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme



## Latest news on the IESF Group

### From Social Protection to Organisation of Informal Workers

By RNSF Team

#### Newsletter revisited

Welcome to the new RNSF newsletter! It is a shorter, more "straight to the point", refreshed format, providing you with update on the latest development on the RNSF project and its partners of the IESF Group. The other contributions may be more interactively found on the blog of the IESF Group. Click on the following to find them and participate to the discussions: <http://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/blog>.

#### New Regional Workshop on the way

The RNSF team is proud to announce that, following the success of the previous Regional Workshop on Social Protection in the Informal Economy in Kenya last February, a new Regional Workshop is under way. It will take place next November in Peru and will address the theme of the organisation of informal workers. Following the same Writeshop methodology, it will involve researchers and practitioners of the IESF Group in the drafting of a collective book.

To introduce this new topic, read our Special Focus on the key issues of the organisation of informal workers and the Reporting section with a recent article of WIEGO researcher Chris Bonner on lessons learnt regarding collective bargaining in the informal economy. The Good Practices section presents the latest research on the matter.

To know more on the upcoming workshop, follow the IESF Group and in particular the following page: <http://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/wiki/11-regional-workshop-organisation-informal-workers-peru-20-24-november-2017>.

#### The Good Book

And to access *Extending Coverage: Social Protection and the Informal Economy* on your computer, your tablet or your e-reader, click on the following link of the IESF Group: <http://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/wiki/8-rnsf-book-social-protection-informal-economy>.

## In this issue

### Special Focus on

Organizing and mobilizing informal workers: upcoming Regional Workshop in Lima next November

### Reporting

Strategies for Successful Collective Negotiation: solidarity, clarity and accountability

### Good practices

Organising informal economy groups



# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme

## Special Focus on

**Organizing and mobilizing informal workers: upcoming Regional Workshop in Lima next November**

By RNSF Team

### *Why the organisation of informal workers?*

Organising and mobilizing informal workers is at the core of the actions and policies designed to enhancing the livelihoods of populations dependent on the informal economy. Waged employed or self-employed informal workers need to be supported in order to negotiate with employers and authorities, improve their incomes, improve working conditions.

Formal workers have their trade unions and employers their own organisations. Each on their side these organisations have opened their eyes and get awareness about the informal economy and both have attempted to open to the self-employed as well as to the informal workers. Since the first discussions that paved the way to the adoption of the ILO Recommendation 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy, trade unions, engaged into the support and coaching of workers' cooperatives and other types of associations of informal workers.

### *Major issues on the organisation of informal workers*

**Organising is key for financing.** Many community-based organisations are created and implemented in order to initiate saving and lending groups. Pooling resources helps increasing access to financing. They are a manifestation of the strength resulting from organising. These grassroots organisations are typically the background upon which public actors and/or Civil Society Organisations can build broader policies towards delineating more ambitious strategies for supporting micro-businesses or cooperatives, or achieving universal health or social protection coverage, or more generally transitioning from the informal to the formal economy.

**Organising is key for extending social protection.** In the informal economy where most workers are self-employed community-based organisations gather into larger saving and lending groups, which are a first step towards regular and adapted contribution to mutual funds ensuring health cove-



rage and other risks that fit with the needs of populations. Governments as well as other actors in the field can help promoting these kinds of organisations.

**Organising is key for being taken into account as a player in the value chains.** Seizing opportunities in value chains requires from producers at the bottom of the chains to be organised. Community-based organisations eventually supported by government actions or NGOs are generally the starting point towards increasing quantities collected and quality. These are the required conditions to be in a better position to negotiate with intermediaries or multinationals firms in order to receive better prices and gain more room in the value chains.

**Organising is key for gaining visibility and voice and having their rights recognised.** "We are poor but so many" is the title of a famous book written by Ela Bhatt, the founder of the Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA) in India. Collective action is the origin and purpose of trade unions and employers' associations in the formal economy. The informal economy needs to follow the footprints of their predecessors in the formal sector, that can themselves help in this regard.

### *Why in Latin America?*

Latin American countries have a long tradition of political and trade unionist struggles from the part of workers in precarious jobs. The struggle for recognition conducted by Bogota's waste pickers is famous and is actually a school case in this area. The RNSF aims at leveraging on success stories in organising the informal workers such as:

**Waste pickers of Bogota and in Latin America:** Further to the privatisation of the waste management system by the Municipality of Bogota, the cooperatives of waste-pickers were excluded from a bid launched by the Municipality. The cooperatives



# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme

introduced an appeal before the Constitutional Court that recognised their rights and the illegality of the bid. There were several episodes punctuating this struggle that serve as an experience and school case. In Brazil, the vast majority of waste pickers were on individualistic positions and the cooperative movement, with the government support, undertook to organise them at the favour of a new law granting a bonus to those members of cooperatives or workers' associations.

**Domestic workers:** The domestic workers are the most challenging type of workers to get organised because of their isolation and dispersion in private homes. Their organisation at national level and through international alliances was the primary condition that led the profession to be recognised with the adoption of the convention on domestic workers in 2011. Trade unions of domestic workers have existed since a long time in Latin America (since 1985 in Uruguay for instance) and have gained recognition ever since the 2011 ILO Convention.

**Street vendors:** In Sao Paulo the defence of the rights of street workers through a publicized report compiling violations of their rights and humanising them through life stories, organising experiences and international comparisons played a major role. The report was used to reverse the negative image of street workers by defending and legitimating their cause and to provide a foundation for Public Civil Action. The individualistic character of street workers and the tradition of corruption, violence and discredit included in most of the workers organisations (unions and associations) needed to be addressed for success in improving the well-being of street workers.

## Reporting

### *Strategies for Successful Collective Negotiation: solidarity, clarity and accountability to record bargaining wins*

By Chris Bonner, WIEGO

It might be surprising to learn that workers in the informal economy – just like those in formal employment – engage extensively in collective negotiations. This common strategy is one of the most vital in the fight for workers' rights and yet it is often seen – even by trade unionists – as limited to those with a traditional employer-employee relationship.

From this perspective, most informal workers lack opportunities to negotiate collectively, being self-employed (such as

WIEGO is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for informal workers, especially women, through capacity building of informal worker organizations, dissemination of knowledge, and influencing local, national and international policies..



many street vendors and waste pickers) or having disguised or unclear employment relationships (such as many homeworkers). Even where they have an employment relationship, they are often excluded from collective negotiation provisions, in law or in practice. However, through their membership-based organizations (MBOs), informal workers are waging a struggle on many fronts and in many spaces, from local to global, to achieve workers' rights, including the right to collective bargaining, and to protect and advance their economic and social positions through negotiations.

WIEGO shares a few lessons learned along the way and proposes a series of steps that organizations can take to be successful in collective negotiations – in whatever form they may take. These strategies can be adaptable for a variety of sector or geographical needs.

### *Starting with a Strong Voice: Unity and Allies*

A prerequisite for any negotiation to take place is having an informal worker organization – preferably a strong and representative MBO – with real or perceived power to reach and enforce an agreement.

Where there are multiple organizations in the constituency, forging unity among them is very important. This can be through permanent or temporary alliances, or through mergers. In the case of street traders in Monrovia, during an engagement with Monrovia City Council, two associations of "petty traders" merged to form one union, the National Petty Traders Union of Liberia (NAPETUL), strengthening their position. Having the support of allies such as trade unions or NGOs can contribute to success. Allies can open up institutional doors, assist with advocacy and publicity, provide information, formulate arguments, and help build negotiating skills and capacities. However, it is important to ensure that the MBOs "speak for themselves" and are not replaced by their supporters.

### We want you!

In the last newsletter we had ADG Gembloux in the spotlight. This time it is WIEGO. Who wants to collaborate with us for the next newsletters? Please let us know!



This project is funded by the European Union.

Research,  
Network and  
Support Facility

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme



Credit: Juan Arredondo/Getty Images Reportage

## Identifying Appropriate Negotiating Counterparts

Each category of informal worker faces multiple actors that can affect their work environment and economic conditions. Street vendors need to negotiate with different local government departments for the use of public space and freedom from harassment. Waste pickers need to negotiate with local government for the right to access or obtain contracts to collect recyclable waste, and/or to receive payment for their services. They also need to negotiate with private sector buyers. Home-based workers negotiate with local authorities for improvements to housing, infrastructure, and transport, as the home is their workplace. But they also need to negotiate with suppliers and buyers on price and payment. All categories of informal workers are affected by national government policies, and need to negotiate with national governments, as well.

So, one essential factor in any successful negotiation is identifying the appropriate level at which to negotiate and the negotiating counterpart(s) that have decision-making power over the workers' demands. And, crucially, ensuring they are the ones around the table. This is often a stumbling block when negotiating with government: different departments are responsible for different functions, e.g. police for enforcement of regulations, business departments for allocating licenses, and so on.

Where there is no ready or obvious counterpart, the challenge is to create one. This is a big issue for domestic workers working individually for individual employers. While there are examples of domestic workers' unions negotiating with national governments to change the law, there are fewer examples of negotiations with employers. In Uruguay, a tri-partite negotiating council was formed with La Liga, a housewives league initially established to promote the dignity of housewives and defend consumer rights, taking on the role of representing employers.

## Negotiations Take Many Forms

Where strength and unity are not present in and among the MBOs, it does not preclude attempts to influence the "other side". Negotiations often take place when an immediate conflict needs to be resolved. Different forms of engagement such as a dialogue, a round table, regular informal meetings, or a workshop format are often used and can be important steps towards later, fully-fledged, and representative negotiations.

HomeNet Thailand, for example, facilitated dialogues with home-based workers, their communities, bus companies, government agencies, and others in Bangkok on transportation issues. Home-based workers had been relocated to the outskirts of the city but needed to commute to the centre to buy materials or deliver finished goods. As a result of the dialogues, bus services to the centre were improved.

Ideally, informal workers would have formally constituted and regularly convened negotiating forums enshrined in law. This would help ensure that negotiation platforms and agreements reached would not be constantly ignored or disrupted by political changes. This is particularly relevant for negotiations with local government. To date, there are few examples of such forums nationally or locally. There is some progress in India, where the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, was promulgated after a long struggle by SEWA and the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). This includes a provision for statutory Town Vending Committees where negotiations can take place. The Committee should ideally be made up of 40% street vendors (33% women) with clear terms of reference.

## What Works at the Negotiating Table

Good planning and preparation are key to successful negotiations. Issues for negotiation have to be identified and supported by the members, and objectives, demands, or proposals need to be clearly formulated. Before formulating detailed strategies and tactics, the MBOs need to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and the balance of power. They need to assess the context and history, as well as identifying opportunities and threats posed by the "other side". Detailed tactics, prepared with the negotiating team made up of MBO leaders, should include arguments, positional movement and bottom line, negotiating approach (adversarial / conciliatory), and negotiating team members' roles, among others.

The types of strategies available as part of or to support collective negotiations depend, in part, on the characteristics of the sector and the type of worker. University of Cape Town researcher Debbie Budlender identifies a variety of strategies



This project is funded by the European Union.

Research,  
Network and  
Support Facility

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme

include carrying out research, using litigation where there is a dispute, and ensuring that all agreements are produced in writing.

Framing issues so as to elicit support from decision-makers was a strategy used by waste pickers in Brazil through linking into a current political debate (sustainable development, including debates about inclusion and against incineration), and by SEWA in India, using the vulnerability of poor women homeworkers to argue the case. Similarly, domestic workers in their global campaign and negotiations for Convention C189 used emotional pressure and imaging backed by research that made it seem immoral to deny them their rights.

While the strike weapon is not always appropriate for informal workers, pressure tactics such as demonstrations, marches, and other forms of collective action are widely used to call attention to demands, gain public support, and demonstrate power. Often multiple strategies are used to achieve a favourable outcome, as in the struggle of waste pickers in Bogota, led by the Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB). Legal strategies played an important role and were combined with research to provide an evidence base in negotiations, advocacy, pressure tactics such as large demonstrations, publicity, and linking into current political causes (e.g. environmental).

## Works Being Accountable

Collective negotiations are based on principles of representativeness and accountability. The negotiating team, therefore, should be made up of informal worker leaders, including women with equal role and voice, who speak directly for the members based on their mandates. Making sure that members are consulted throughout the negotiating process, as regular report-back and mandating keeps negotiators in line and helps maintain the support of members throughout as well as mobilized and ready for action if needed. Obtaining original and new mandates is not always easy given various constraints in convening meetings or in communicating, but all efforts and creativity should be employed to do so. In WIEGO's booklet, *Collective Negotiation for Informal Workers*, some suggestions are made on how this might be done, including using ever-expanding technologies.

## Agreements and Disputes

Finally, the purpose of a collective negotiation is to reach an agreement that improves the situation of the informal workers involved. When agreement is reached, it should be

recorded in writing. The agreement should be correct, clear, and easily understood. Words can be manipulated or misinterpreted, sometimes deliberately. As workers themselves are best placed to monitor its implementation and take action to enforce it, they should be fully conversant with its provisions. And where there is no agreement, then an appropriate strategy is needed to resolve the dispute: for example, worker action, third party intervention, continued negotiations, or legal action.



## 11 Good Practices you should know on

### Organising informal economy groups

By RNSF Team

RNSF recommendations extracted from *Volume 4.2 – Recommendations Based on Analysis of a Range of Development Agencies on Support to People Dependent on the Informal Economy*. This volume of research findings is the latest work of the RNSF and is based on the analysis of 202 projects and documents financed and implemented by agencies other than the EC.

### Why organising informal economy groups?

1) Promoting the organisation of people dependent on the IE into business associations or cooperatives enables them to formalise and access possible government or other support and to increase sharing, exchanging and lending between community members of material goods, ideas and skills by working together.

2) In order to maximise the potential represented by these kind of organisations, it is necessary to strengthen the organisational capacities of cooperatives and informal enterprise groups for example through the implementation of capacity building initiatives in the field of economic development, marketing and organizational capacity; as only forming such groups is not sufficient for them to be effective and self-sustaining.

### Working with informal economy groups?

3) Determine flexible types of informal groups to be strengthened and/or established. Since different needs exist it is important to promote various approaches throughout all projects/activities implemented within capacity building programs.



# Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

Published by the EC-funded RNSF project based on the EU "Investing in People" Programme

4) Keep in mind that there may be different needs and do not promote a single approach. Various forms of collaboration can be entailed, from the full partnership to the cooperation on a single aspect such as marketing or transportation. Thus, consider promoting different types of models depending on context, needs and purpose of the groups. Test alternatives in parallel rather than in sequence.

5) Try to develop and implement cooperative approaches in small enterprise development. Organising cooperatives as an alternative to small enterprise associations may be useful in the context of formalising the informal economy.

6) In project design, consider differences between IE operators and workers and the eventual potential challenges to scaling up activities after project end. Such consideration may take the form of analysis of IE activities and possible contextual challenges. Subsequently, envisage, test and measure results, then integrate lessons learned back into new programming.

7) Keep supporting groups even after a project ceases to operate. Try to sustain technical support for their activities for (at least) another production period and/or to guide their transformation process in cooperatives. As for exit strategy a gradual phasing out of support is preferable to immediate end of technical support in order to ensure a smooth transition.

## *Which tools and strategies can be used?*

8) Consider when starting groups—including for women and other vulnerable groups—that a focus on building trust between group members is important. Use team building exercise methodologies to build trust, even in communities where people may know each other.

9) Promote inter-producer IE group learning as opposed to only training from formal entities. Such training modalities can be inspired by the "Producer Organization approach" and the "Farmer Field School (FFS)" methodology that are instrumental in enhancing stakeholder interventions by reaching households through groups that facilitate joint learning directly from each other. It is of crucial importance to create legal and regulatory frameworks for producer organizations and simple registration processes, as well as technical support, facilitation and business development support to establish strong and sustainable organizations.

10) Promote the creation of Common Interest Groups (CIGs) as a first step towards the creation of cooperatives to enable efficient and effective economic and practical support

11) Foster more participation of vulnerable groups' in informal groups by adapting the criteria to obtain membership and to stay a member.



RESEARCH, NETWORK  
& SUPPORT FACILITY

The Newsletter is supported by the project Research, Network & Support Facility (RNSF) funded by the European Union.

Paolo Carlini

Team Leader

[p.carlini@arsprogetti.com](mailto:p.carlini@arsprogetti.com)

Jacques Charmes

Research Expert

[j.charmes@arsprogetti.com](mailto:j.charmes@arsprogetti.com)

Alessio Lupi

Project Officer

[a.lupi@arsprogetti.com](mailto:a.lupi@arsprogetti.com)

Pierre Berman

Animation/Moderator Expert

[p.berman@arsprogetti.com](mailto:p.berman@arsprogetti.com)

The RNSF team is supported by a consortium of A.R.S. Progetti, LATTANZIO Advisory and AGRER.

Credits



The RNSF Project supports the Informal Economy Support Facility (IESF) group on the platform Capacity4Development connecting the EU Development Community.



<http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/iesf>

Follow us on:



Informal Economy  
Support Facility



@informal\_eco



This project is funded by the European Union.

Research,  
Network and  
Support Facility

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

