

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



Newsletter Research, Network and Support Facility

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Special Focus on

Research, Network and Support Facility: Project's achievements

By Paolo Carlini, RNSF Team Leader

Researching on the Informal Economy

The RNSF research component was guided by a research matrix built on main research questions drawn from the analysis of existing literature, including studies and impact evaluations of development projects related with the Informal Economy:

- **Enabling Environment:** What are the key ways to successfully support the enabling environment (including policy and legal frameworks) at national and sub-national level for enhancing the livelihoods and social inclusion of those dependent on the informal economy?
- **Decent Work and Enterprise Growth:** What key elements have been proven to contribute to successful formalisation of growth oriented informal economy enterprises and that help ensure informal economy decent work conditions?
- **Direct Actions:** What are the key proven direct actions at local level that contribute to the successful enhancement of livelihoods and working conditions for those working in informal economy enterprises with special attention to social inclusion?
- **Innovative approaches to enhance livelihoods, equity, and inclusion:** What innovative approaches do national and international entities use to enhance livelihoods, equity and inclusion of people dependent on the informal economy? What are the new strategies adopted by people relying on informal economy activities themselves?

Our research findings and materials are available in a Series of 9 Volumes:

Volume 1, Reference Guide to the Outputs of a Research on the Informal Economy, is a summary of main concepts and a map to guide the reader through all the research materials produced.

Volume 2, Defining the Informal Economy, is dedicated to significant and practical definitions of the Informal Economy and its dimensions and phenomenology. It presents the most recent overview of key concepts related to the Informal Economy as long with the most available statistical figures for more than 90 countries.



RNSF Research Areas

Volume 3, Policies on the Informal Economy: A Global Review, is an analysis of the main policies and approaches adopted to tackle the informal economy in a development context, with special reference to main actors and players in this field.

Volumes 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4, Learning from Experience, are a series of volumes dedicated to the analysis of Good Practices and Lessons Learnt from a range of EC and non-EC funded implemented Projects:

- **Volume 4.1** analyses the 33 completed EC funded projects that include informal economy and social inclusion actions, selected under the 2009 EC call for Proposals *Investing in People. Promoting social cohesion, employment and decent work. Support for social inclusion and social protection of workers in the informal economy and of vulnerable groups at community level.*
- **Volume 4.2** concerns non-EC funded projects, which presents good practices and lessons learnt extracted from 202 documents, including 171 mid-term, final, and impact evaluations as well as meta evaluations of large numbers of projects.
- **Volume 4.3** contains an analysis of additional 15 EC Projects related to the support of people whose livelihoods depend on informal economy. These projects, although not primarily or explicitly focused on the informal economy per se, provide valuable insights and linkages to the informal economy and the topics identified in the RNSF Research Matrix.



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- **Volume 4.4** contains Good Practices and Lessons Learnt from 14 EC projects financed in 2014 by the EU Thematic Programme Investing in People. Over the course of four years, the RNSF team had the opportunity to follow-up, interact, and support the Implementing Partners (IPs) while analysing project impact in an effort to learn from their experience.

Volume 5 and 6 contain the Regional Workshops' outputs on two crucial topics related to the Informal Economy: *Social Protection* and *Organizing informal workers*.

- **Volume 5** presents the results of the Regional Workshop held in Kenya, presenting recommendations, innovative ideas and approaches on Social Protection from the perspective of the Informal Economy, addressing the question: “How to promote social inclusion for informal workers?” The book is entitled *Extending coverage: Social protection and the informal economy. Experiences and ideas from researchers and practitioners* and is available on the [IESF Group](#).



RNSF book on Social Protection

- **Volume 6** presents the results of the second Regional Workshop held in Peru from 4 to 8 December 2017 on the issue of Organising and Mobilizing Workers in the Informal Economy. This book, titled *Organizar a los trabajadores de la economía informal: estrategias de fortalecimiento y acción colectiva*, will be published on the [IESF Group](#) on Capacity4Dev.

Learning from Experience

Support to Implementing Partners was an irreplaceable opportunity for learning from direct field experience. It was a mutual exchange where RNSF team provided support at different levels both directly, on specific project needs, and in line with the main topics of the Research Matrix disseminating knowledge and tools on the Informal Economy.

On the other hand, IPs' experiences in the field fed the results of our research, especially the identification of Good Practices and Lessons Learnt, and were presented and shared on the occasion of the two thematic Regional Workshops. During the workshops, IPs highlighted relevant experiences and cases and got feedback from researchers, public authorities, ILO specialists, and development experts who attended the events. An important added value of the workshops was the utilization of the *writeshop* methodology, which allows strong and proactive interaction among participants while ensuring ownership of the final findings.

THE WRITESHOP METHODOLOGY



A methodology developed by the Royal Tropical Institute Amsterdam, Netherlands

In a Writeshop, a group of researchers, policy makers and/or practitioners sharing a common expertise and interest, come together to present their experiences to their peers, receive feedback, write up their main results and conclusions and shape them in a written form with the assistance of facilitators and one editor.

The result of this exercise is a book of around 100/150 pages containing recommendations, ideas and approaches on the topic selected for the workshops. The added value of this methodology is the combination of a research perspective, typical of the academic world, with a perspective more based on practical experience in the field. It therefore combines a more theoretical approach (presenting key policy and conceptual frameworks) with a more practical component which practitioners from Implementing Partners contributed to.



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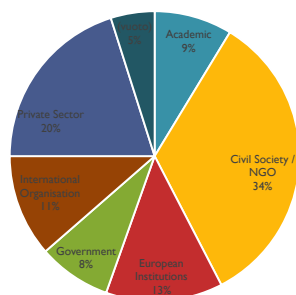
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Sharing Knowledge

RNSF created the [IESF Group](#) hosted on [Capacity4Dev](#) both as a knowledge-sharing platform and as a Community of Practice. On the group 505 resources and 311 discussions (as of December 2018) have generated 412 comments and served the IPs as inputs for their Projects implementation and as a tool to strengthen the quality of their work. Initially open only for the IPs with the aim to foster networking amongst the organizations working on the topic of the Informal Economy through the funds received by the Investing in People Call for Proposals (2014), the group became public in March 2016 and allowed the IPs to be in contact with other experts and organizations working worldwide on the same issue. This led to the development of a mature knowledge-sharing platform connected to a community of practice with 189 registered members.

The two charts here after show the composition of the IESF Group and of the Capacity4Dev platform:



Composition of the IESF Group



Composition of Capacity4Dev

The development of the community of practice was supported by the following activities:

- Elaboration, dissemination and promotion of specific contributions to [project implementation](#) and to the Informal Economy ([Thematic Briefs](#)).



IESF Group Community of Practice and social media

- Elaboration, dissemination and promotion on the [IESF Group blog](#) of best practices, lessons learnt and success stories from implementing partners and other development actors.
- Information sharing and promotion (including 2000 development experts working on the informal economy) of Capacity4Dev website for all events organized by the RNSF project (webinars, European Development Days, regional workshops, videos, social media, third-party events, etc.).
- Facilitation of the online exchange of experience on Informal Economy related topics and projects.

15 THEMATIC BRIEFS ON THE IESF GROUP

AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, FRENCH AND SPANISH

- Transition from the informal to the formal economy
- Micro-finance
- Social Inclusion of Youth
- Social Protection
- Apprenticeship
- Theory of change
- Advocacy and the informal sector
- Micro-credit
- Results-Based Management
- Monitoring
- Career guidance in the informal economy in Africa
- Traditional learning within informal economy in Africa
- Entrepreneurship Development
- Informal economy and gender
- Informal economy and migration



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In order to facilitate wider access to the complex set of RNSF Research Volumes, key contents were extracted and organized using user-friendly tools.



#InformalTalks Webinar series

[Five one-hour Webinars](#) are available on the key contents of the research volumes:

- Webinar 1 held on 22 June 2018: Definitions, key concepts, characteristics and trends related to the informal economy - The informal economy: What is it? Where does it come from? How big is it? Why is it growing?
- Webinar 2 held on 26 July 2018: Policies and approaches addressing the informal economy - How to tackle the informal economy? Key policies and approaches
- Webinar 3 held on 4 October 2018: Social protection and the informal economy - How to extend social protection to informal workers?
- Webinar 4 held on 30 October 2018: Organising the workers and actors of the informal economy - Organizing and mobilizing informal workers
- Webinar 5 held on 6 December 2018 - Good practices on the informal economy



An **E-learning Course** composed of 3 learning modules will be accessible on [DEVCO Academy](#). This e-learning course aims to provide EU staff at headquarters and in delegations with the necessary tools and knowledge to tackle the informal economy. It is composed of 3 learning modules starting with a brief overview of the concepts of informal sector, informal employment and informal economy, and going in depth to policies and approaches to address the Informal Economy, presenting the major orientations of policies designed to deal with the Informal Economy.

The [RNSF Management Information Tool](#) online group is available on Capacity4Dev and open to the public with direct access to all information and materials available. The group shares all the knowledge produced on the informal economy and the good practices and recommendations identified and it is organized in the following sections:

- Defining the Informal Economy illustrating key concepts, definitions, characteristics and trends of the Informal Economy and related topics.
- Recommendations elaborated on the basis of the analysis of 200 evaluations implemented by international development agencies working on the topic of the Informal Economy.
- Good practices and lessons learnt arising from the projects supervised by the RNSF team as well as from other projects on the informal economy funded by the European Commission and other funding institutions worldwide.
- Policies and Approaches addressing the Informal Economy, presenting a review of policies designed to tackle the informal economy with special reference to major actors in the field (governments, international organisations and donors).

Finally, the **digitalization of the RNSF research volumes** allows to make them available on [DEVCO Academy](#) where all the research materials will be available for further dissemination to DEVCO staff, EU Delegations, and other stakeholders.



Connecting the dots of the informal economy



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The different faces of the the informal economy

For any request related to the RNSF project starting from January 2019, please contact A.R.S. Progetti at:
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The RNSF Project supports the Informal Economy Support Facility (IESF) group on the platform Capacity4Dev connecting the EU Development Community.



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

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Informal Economy Support Facility (IESF) Group



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Credits