



Women in Informal Employment  
Globalizing and Organizing

## INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND GENDER

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UN EXPERT GROUP MEETING

MAY 4, 2016



# REMARKS

## □ **Informal Employment**

- official definition
- national data

## □ **Informal Employment, Poverty and Gender**

- national data
- stylized model
- key facts & policy implications

## □ **Decent Work for Informal Workers, especially women**

- four ILO normative frameworks
- promising national examples

## □ **Concluding Thoughts: Post-2015 Agenda**

- multiple normative frameworks
- key pathway to implementation: recognition, validation and inclusion of informal workers and their livelihoods

# INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT

**Informal Employment** = *jobs or work without employment-based social protection* in informal enterprises, formal firms and/or households (2003 ICLS) - including:

- ▣ *self-employed*: employers + own account workers + contributing family workers
- ▣ *wage workers*: employees + casual day laborers
- ▣ *contracted & sub-contracted workers*: including those who work from their own homes (called homeworkers)

ICLS = International Conference of Labour Statisticians

# INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF AGRICULTURE



**More than half of non-agricultural employment  
in most developing countries is informal.**

**South Asia: 82%**

range: 62% in Sri Lanka to 84% in India

**Sub-Saharan Africa: 66%**

range: 52 % in Zimbabwe to 82% in Mali

**East and Southeast Asia: 65%**

range: 42% in Thailand to 73% in Indonesia

**Latin America: 51%**

range: 40% in Uruguay to 75% in Bolivia

**Middle East and North Africa: 45%**

range: 31% in Turkey to 57% in West Bank & Gaza

# **INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT: DIFFERENCES BY SEX**

**In 3 (out of 5) regions informal employment is a greater source of employment (non-agric.) for women than for men.**

## **South Asia**

**83% women, 82% men**

## **Sub-Saharan Africa**

**74% women, 61% men**

## **Latin America and the Caribbean**

**54% women, 48% men**

- ❑ **In South East Asia, around two-thirds of both women and men workers are informally employed.**
- ❑ **In the Middle East and North Africa, a higher percentage of men workers, than of women workers, are informally employed.**
- ❑ **In all regions, men comprise a greater share of informal employment due to relatively low female labour force participation rates.**

# **SELF-EMPLOYMENT: DIFFERENCES BY SEX**



**Half to two-thirds of all informal workers outside of agriculture are self-employed: more so women than men except in LAC.**

## **Latin America and the Caribbean**

51% of women, 52% of men

## **South Asia**

58% of women, 51% of men

## **East and Southeast Asia**

61% of women, 44% of men

## **Sub-Saharan Africa**

76% of women, 58% of men

# INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY & GENDER: TWO PAIRS OF KEY FACTS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

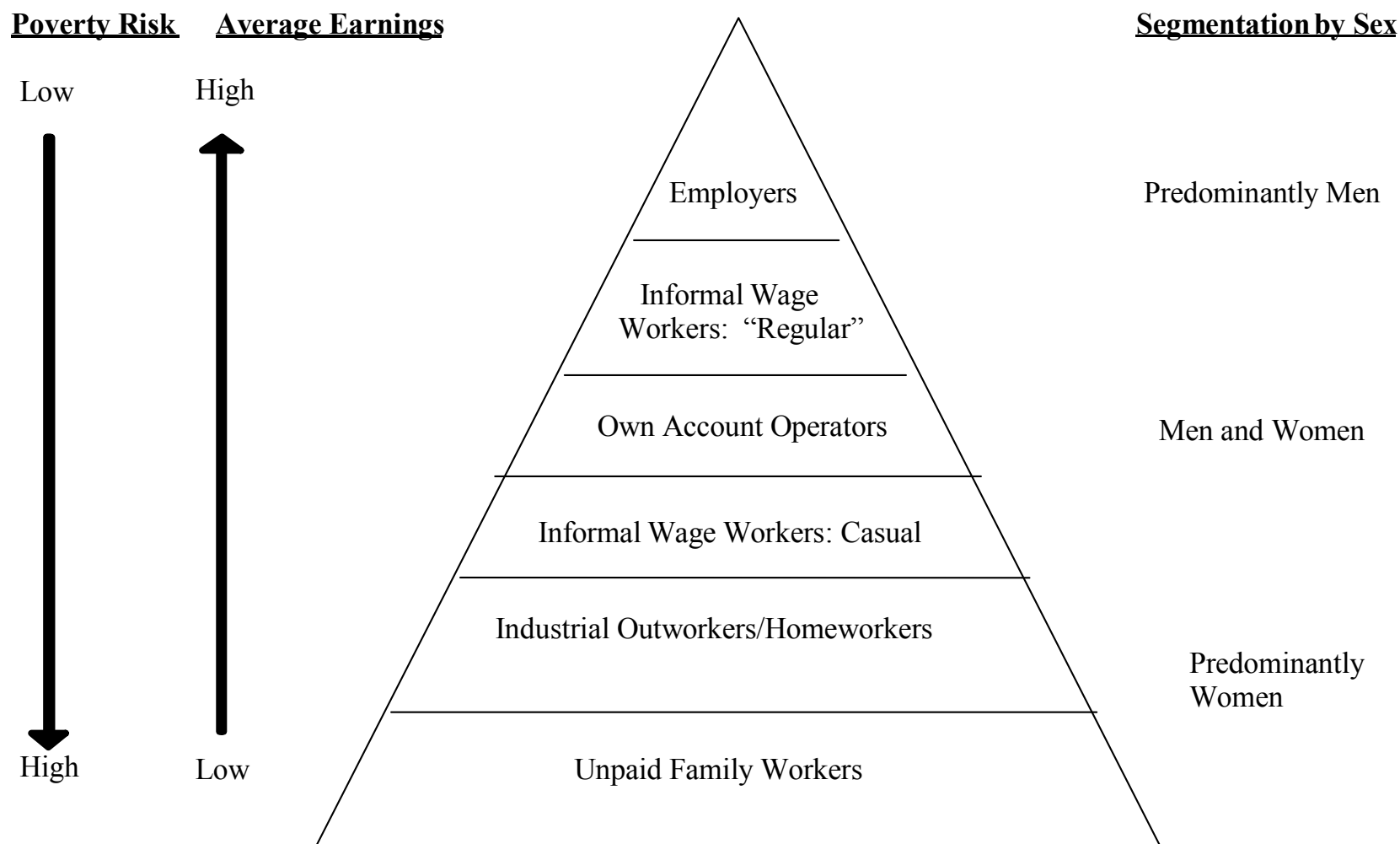
## □ Informality & Poverty

- ▣ Most informal workers are poor; most working poor are informally employed
- ▣ Earnings are low and costs-plus-risks are high, on average, in the informal economy

## Informality & Gender

- ▣ Higher percentage of women workers than men workers are informally employed in 3 (out of 5) developing regions; but *men comprise the majority of the informal workforce in all regions* due to relatively low female labour force participation rates.
- ▣ Women are concentrated in the lowest-earning segments of informal employment in all regions

# SEGMENTATION OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: BY AVERAGE EARNINGS, POVERTY RISK AND SEX





## REDUCING POVERTY AND GENDER INEQUALITY: IMPLICATIONS OF KEY FACTS

- ❑ Poverty cannot be reduced unless **earnings are increased and costs/risks are decreased in the informal economy**
- ❑ Increasing incomes and reducing costs/risks of the working poor **requires changing the legal and regulatory environment** as well as providing skills training, financial and business development services.
- ❑ Gender inequality cannot be reduced unless **gender segmentation and gender gaps in earnings within the informal economy are reduced.**
- ❑ Reducing gender segmentation and gender gaps in earnings within the informal economy requires **changing social norms but also changing the hiring practices of formal firms and the discriminatory practices of government**

# ILO RESOLUTION & RECOMMENDATION

- ILC 2002: **Conclusion & Resolution on Decent Work and Informal Workers** – recommend **reducing deficits** of informal workers in regard to the 4 pillars of decent work:
  - **opportunities**
  - **rights**
  - **protection**
  - **voice**
- ILC 2015: **Recommendation 204 on Gradual Transition from Informal to Formal Economy** - premised on **providing rights, protection and incentives** to the informal workforce and in **making the legal and policy environment more friendly** to informal workers. Specifically, the Recommendation calls for
  - **regulated access** of informal workers to **public space & natural resources**
  - **protection of informal livelihoods** during the transition

# TWO ILO CONVENTIONS

- ILC 1996: **Convention 177 on Home Workers** - i.e., those who work in their own home under a sub-contract for an employer or his intermediary
- ILC 2011: **Convention 189 on Domestic Workers** – i.e. those who work for pay in the homes of others
- Both Conventions mandate that homeworkers and domestic workers, respectively, be **treated equally** as other workers in regard to:
  - **right to organize**
  - **social protection, including occupational health and safety**
  - **fair remuneration**
  - **worker benefits**

# ADVOCATING FOR FOUR ILO STANDARDS: VOICE OF INFORMAL WORKERS

- ▣ Four ILO normative frameworks regarding the informal workforce came about because....
  - **informal workers were organized**
  - **informal workers were represented in the norm-setting tripartite process of the ILO**
  - **informal workers had allies who provided technical advice, including data and policy analysis**
- ▣ Each of these normative frameworks recognizes that....
  - **informal workers are legitimate workers**
  - **informal workers, especially women, face major disadvantages in the existing legal and regulatory environment**
- ▣ All of these normative frameworks need to be ratified by national governments and/or implemented through national policies

# NATIONAL VICTORIES FOR INFORMAL WORKERS: THAILAND

## **Universal Health Coverage**

- ❑ Formation of alliance, drafting a UHC legislation (people's version) (1997-2000)
- ❑ Collection of >50,000 signatures needed to submit a people's sector law (2001)
- ❑ Participation in the parliamentary committee discussion on the draft legislations (2001-2002)
- ❑ Passage of the UHC Law (2002)
- ❑ Participation in implementation of the legislation through membership on committees and subcommittees at local, district, and national levels (2002 to present)
- ❑ Representation on the National Health Security Board (2006 to present)

## **Occupational Health & Safety Project (2012-2015)**

**Home Workers Protection Act B.E.2553**  
(2011) – based on ILO Convention 177

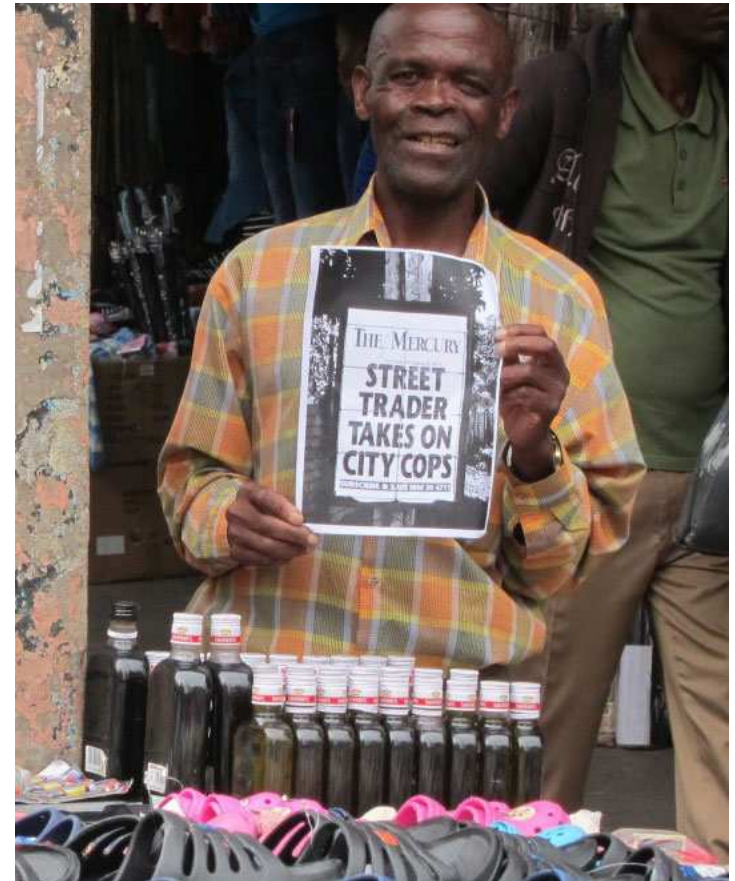
**Ministerial Regulation No. 14 on Domestic Work** (2012) – based on ILO Convention 189

**Campaign for Transport for Bangkok Home-Based Workers** (current)



# LEGAL VICTORIES FOR STREET VENDORS: DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

- ❑ City policy and scheme in support of informal workers, including street vendors in Warwick Junction (1999-2007)
- ❑ Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) founded by two ex-city employees to **provide design, legal and other support** to 6-7,000 street vendors in Warwick Junction (2008)
- ❑ Legal Resources Center, at request of AeT, filed 2 successful cases **against city plans to build a mall in the middle of Warwick Junction** (2009)
- ❑ Legal Resources Center, again at request of AeT, filed successful case **to challenge power of municipality to confiscate and impound street vendor goods** (2014-2015)





# CITY CONTRACTS FOR WASTE PICKERS: BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

**Asociacion Recicladores Bogota (ARB)** (founded in 1990)  
co-founded by Nohra Padilla and Silvio Ruiz



**Legal Campaign** (20 years)  
technical support from pro bono lawyers and NGOs led by  
Nohra Padilla who wrote many legal briefs



**First Global Waste Picker Conference**, Bogota (2008)  
hosted by ARB, organized by international planning committee



**Constitutional Court Victory** (2011)  
right of waste pickers to bid for solid waste management contracts



**Successful Bid for Solid Waste Management Contract** (2012)  
technical analysis of appropriate costs for waste services  
research on conditions and trends in the waste picking sector  
policy dialogues with mayor and city officials



**Waste Picker Integration Model Launched in Bogota** (2013)  
**Goldman Environmental Award to Nohra Padilla** (2013)  
**National Ruling to Replicate Bogota Model throughout  
Colombia** (2014)



# COMMON SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- **Common strategies** included mix of **organizing + awareness building + advocacy + legal struggles** including test cases: with action on these different fronts feeding into each other in a circular, interactive, reinforcing manner.
- **Common sources of technical and political support** included **pro-bono lawyers + activist academics + specialized non-governmental organizations** - and, most importantly, **alliances of organizations of informal workers**.

Team members of WIEGO, including activist academics, played an important role in these struggles: conducting research and policy analysis, providing technical and political support as well as legal evidence



# **WAY FORWARD: INFORMAL WORKERS IN POST-2015 AGENDA**



- **Post-2015 Global Agenda – multiple frameworks**
  - ▣ Global Social Floor
  - ▣ ILO Norms & Standards
  - ▣ SDGs
  - ▣ New Urban Agenda
- **Key Pathway to Realizing the Post-2015 Global Agenda**
  - ▣ Recognizing and validating informal workers & their livelihoods activities
  - ▣ Including informal workers and their organizations in implementation processes

# **WAY FORWARD: VOICE + VISIBILITY ► VALIDITY FOR INFORMAL WORKERS**

**Increased Organization  
& Representation**



**Increased Voice**

**Improved Statistics,  
Research & Policy  
Analysis**



**Increased Visibility**



**Increased Validity or  
Legitimacy**



**Ability to Influence  
Wider Environment**



**Thank You!**

**and thanks again to the  
Division for Social Policy and  
Development (DSPD) of the  
United Nations Department of  
Economic and Social Affairs  
for inviting me to speak**