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**Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)**

**Session 2: Action for Change; Collaboration between Civil Society and the UN**

**Ensuring the Informal Sector has access to social protection**

**Outline of problem:**

* Globally 2 billion people - 60% of all working people - are working in the informal economy where they have no labour or social protection.
* Self-employment makes up 64% of global informal employment, posing a real challenge to systems and models for labour protections which are designed around waged employment.
* There is also a strong gendered component - with 58% of all working women, working in the informal economy.
* For workers in the IE the big problem with the way social contracts are currently set up is that they tend to be incorporated into state regulation when it is punitive; but excluded from the elements of protection.
* [Data from WIEGO-Covid-19 study]
* The need then is to increase the positives; and decrease the negatives.
* Access to social protection is one way to emphasize the positive elements of inclusion into a social contract.

**Actions that are needed:**

Action points which could bring together civil society and UN agencies:

1. **Extending the discussion on design and financing of social protection to cover contributory social protection schemes**.
   1. These have tended to focus largely on the financing of social assistance through general taxation, as well as through the growing call for the Global Social Protection Fund. These are very important,
   2. But the reality is that when it comes to covering informal workers with work-related social protection - i.e. covering worker contingencies; what we see at national level is the extension of contributory schemes.
      1. And yet discussions about both the design and financing to ensure that these types of schemes are actually accessible are relatively muted in the social protection and development space.
      2. In particular would want to single out financing - high levels of post-Covid debt; irregular incomes; women’s care responsibilities. Schemes that rely totally on the savings capacities of informal workers will be limited.
      3. *Obviously redistribution through the taxation system and social assistance is critical, but this shouldn’t be an excuse to eliminate collective insurance (and particularly redistribution within that). All tools are needed to reduce poverty and inequality.*
      4. What are the other mechanisms available - and how do we get the people who are profiting from the work of informal workers to contribute? Employers, those higher up or in more powerful positions in chains of production, distribution, supply? These are all issues which require further attention. Eg welfare boards in India…can we learn from these experiences?

**Links to publications:**

USP 2030. [Joint Statement: Principles for Financing Universal Social Protection](https://usp2030.org/wp-content/uploads/USP2030_Financing-WG_JS_Principles_FInal_Oct-13th.pdf)

1. **Ensuring that care responsibilities for women working in the IE are linked into income protection:**
   1. This is a discussion about the importance of more closely linking social protection public services more generally - looking more holistically at what a package of family friendly policies is for workers in the IE.
   2. Quite specifically it is also about the need for child care services. According to UN Women, only 4% of women globally have access to child care services - not having this access continues to download the costs of social reproduction onto individual women, even further eroding precarious incomes.
   3. Covid provided a very clear picture of the impacts of increased care responsibilities on women’s incomes in the informal economy.
   4. More work to ensure that the child care discussion is mainstreamed into any discussion about income protection; and within this to ensure that a holistic approach which centres both the needs of the child, but also their working mothes/parents.

**Links to publications:**

UNICEF/ILO/WIEGO: [Family Friendly Policies for Workers in the Informal Economy.](https://intranet.wiego.org/forms/entries/7711)

WIEGO. [The Triple Crisis: Impact of COVID-19 on Informal Workers’ Care Responsibilities, Paid Work and Earnings](https://www.wiego.org/resources/triple-crisis-impact-covid-19-informal-workers-care-responsibilities-paid-work-and)

1. **Enabling greater dialogue between organisations of workers in the informal economy and their governments.**
   1. The rules of the game are set against workers in the informal economy - and its informal workers themselves who need to be a part of re-writing those rules.
   2. The problem is those same rules of the game often exclude workers from direct representation in dialogue. It makes for top-down policy decisions and policy design.
   3. So important to ensure that representation is there - very clear role for UN agencies who have access to government, to work with organisations of workers in the IE to enable this.
   4. Social contract without participation is unlikely to be a truly inclusive one.

**Links to publications:**

Global Deal. [Social Dialogue for the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy.](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/publication/wcms_750495.pdf)