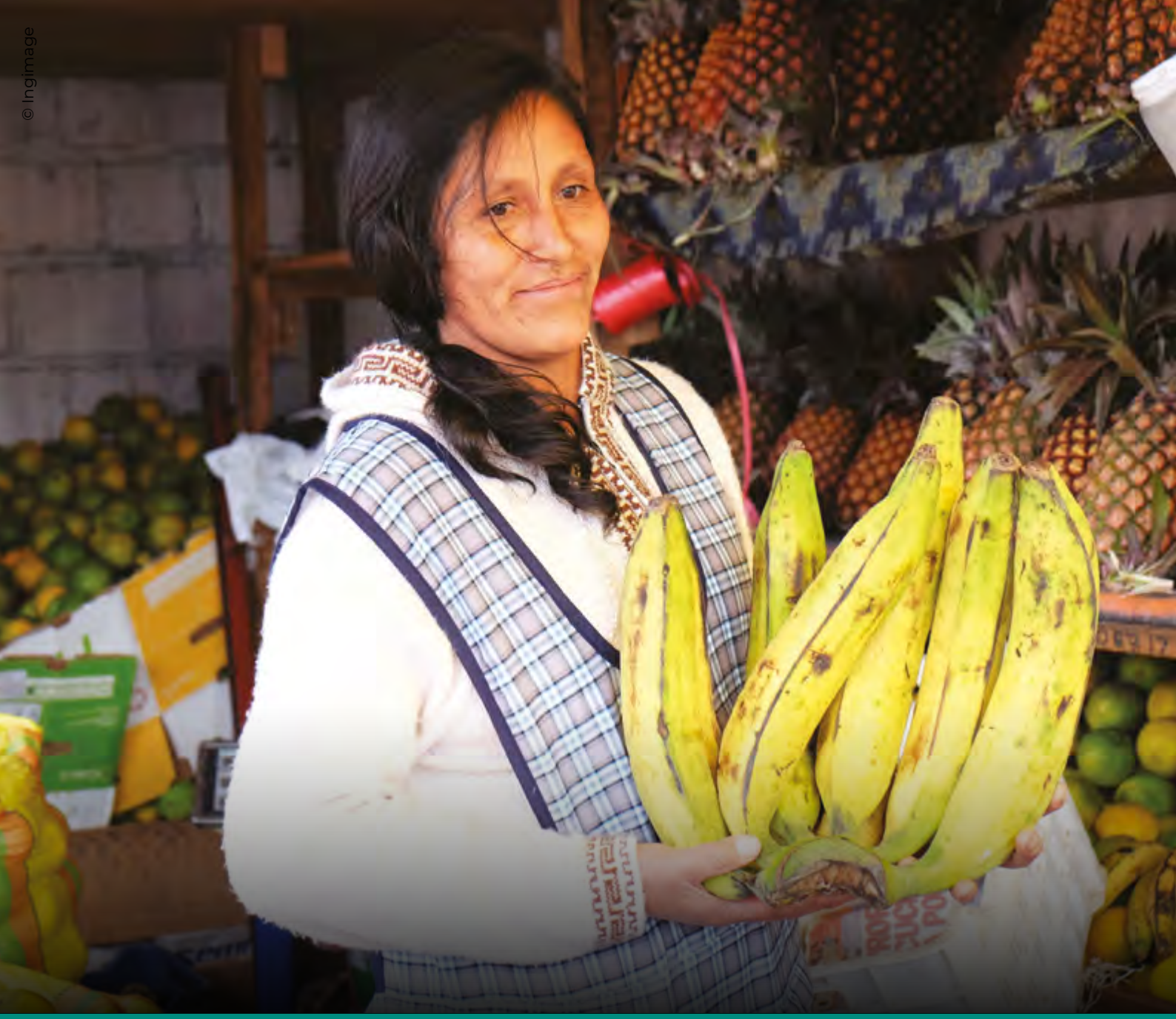

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10 YEARS AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE ILO RECOMMENDATION 204 :

TRADE UNIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN ACTIONS TO TRANSFORM INFORMAL WORK

MAY 2025

WSM
We Social Movements

INSPIR

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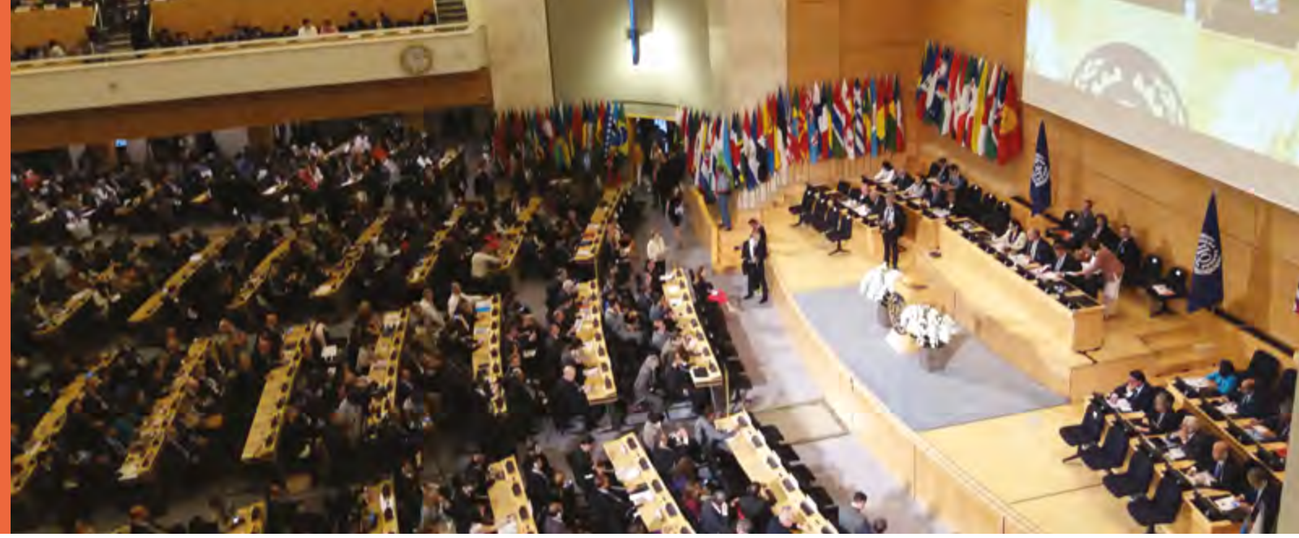
INTRODUCTION



For two years, ACV-CSC (a trade union) and WSM (an NGO), both rooted in the Christian labour movement in Belgium, collaborated with dozens of trade unions, social movements, and international civil society networks representing informal workers and had participated in discussions held in Geneva during two International Labour Conferences of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in June 2014 and June 2015. After two years of debates and negotiations between States, employers' federations, and workers' organisations from around the world, this tripartite commission resulted in the adoption of Recommendation 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy. This instrument represents the first international regulation exclusively dedicated to stakeholders in the informal economy.

Although Recommendation 204 is not legally binding, it nonetheless provides guidelines for formalising millions of workers and economic units worldwide.[1] To that end, it highlights the need to design and implement legislation, policies, and other measures that facilitate the transition to the formal economy. This integrated policy framework must be based on an approach through rights, thereby recognising that informal economy stakeholders must enjoy the same fundamental rights as formal economy workers: Freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced labour, non-discrimination in employment and occupation, and safe and healthy workplaces.

Recommendation 204 is clear: This integrated policy framework must be built upon the **four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda**, which are essential to facilitating this transition. Furthermore, this framework must be designed and implemented taking due account of the voices of stakeholders of the informal economy, particularly organisations representing these workers.

Ten years on: What progress has been made?

A decade later, a General Discussion on the same topic is on the agenda at the ILO International Labour Conference in June 2025.

ACV-CSC, WSM, the Alliance of Christian Mutual Insurance Organisations [2] (ANMC-LCM), and the INSP!R network ("International Network on Social Protection Rights") have taken this opportunity to assess progress alongside trade unions and social movements from Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Their goal is to examine the attainments and the remaining steps needed to ensure that the transition from the informal to the formal economy becomes a reality for all workers and economic units concerned.

Certainly, there is still much work to be done! In fact, more than 2 billion workers remain in informal employment today, i.e. 58% of the global workforce.[3] As a result, informality continues to hinder social justice and efforts to reduce inequalities.

But together, we can make a difference! This publication presents an overview of grassroots initiatives aimed at accelerating the formalisation of the economy in the highlighted countries. These initiatives originate from trade union and social movements endeavouring to bring about tangible progress in terms of access to employment, more stable incomes, safer and healthier workplaces, social protection, etc.

Organising and innovating

The first step for these social movements is to organise the men and women working in the informal economy. This is not an easy task, but it is essential, as these individuals are best placed to transform their own daily lives. They are driving social transformation through their collective action, creativity, and innovation!

In most cases, informality is not a choice—quite the opposite! State-led initiatives are often lacking, meaning that grassroots stakeholders such as trade unions, health mutual insurance organisations, cooperatives, and other social and solidarity economy organisations, along with their respective networks, are the ones pushing for change.

In alignment with the United Nations 2030 Agenda, and more specifically Sustainable Development Goal 8 on Decent Work, the ILO underscores:[4] *"Accelerating progress on the transition to formality, in line with Recommendation No. 204, is fundamental to addressing some of the root causes of decent work deficits. Ensuring that no one is left behind..."*

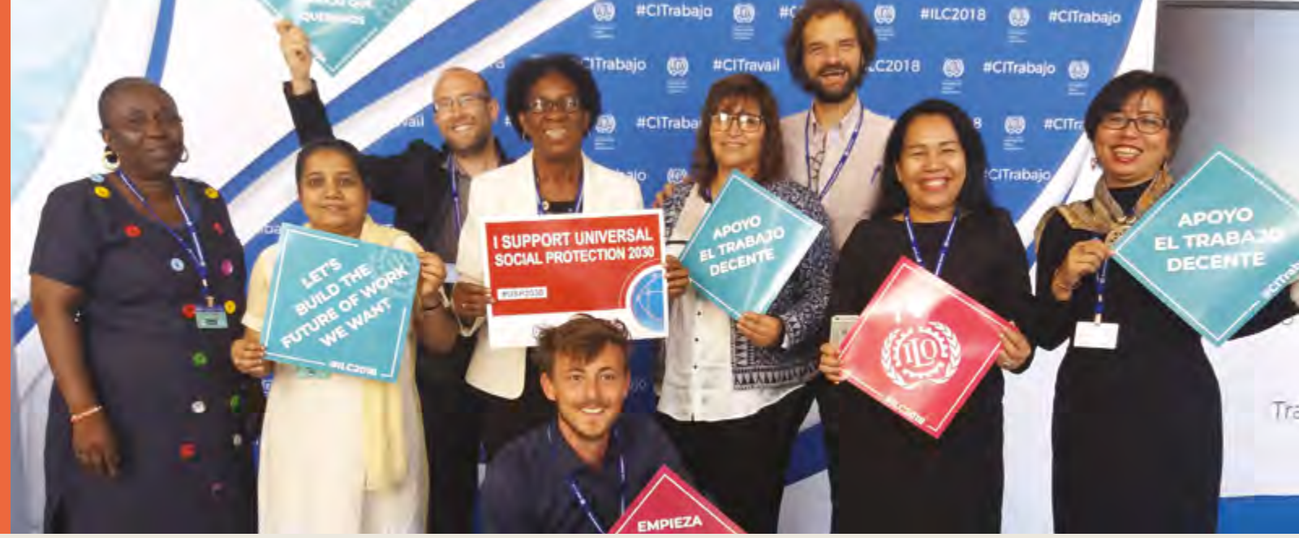
Tailored to the local reality, the innovative initiatives featured in this publication demonstrate that it is entirely possible to improve the working and living conditions of stakeholders in the informal economy. Moreover, organised within international networks such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)—which has over 340 affiliated organisations representing 191 million workers—or the INSP!R thematic network on social protection rights, trade unions and social movements are building and exchanging knowledge, learning from experiences, and collectively advocating for change. Because together, we can go further!

This publication aims to inspire other trade unions, social movements, employers' organisations, and state authorities to work together towards this shared goal: the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

Let's get inspired!

1- According to the ILO, more than 6 out of 10 workers and 4 out of 5 businesses worldwide operate in the informal economy. The workers most affected are vulnerable people such as women, young people, the elderly, young people, migrants.
2- Mutualist stakeholder from the Christian labour movement in Belgium
3- "Innovative approaches to addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work". ILC.113/Report VI, 2025.
4- Ibid.

PARTICIPATION OF INFORMAL WORKERS IN DECISION-MAKING REGARDING THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS



A NECESSITY RECOGNISED BY RECOMMENDATION 204 OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Recommendation 204 states very clearly that Member States of the International Labour Organization (ILO) must strive to establish an integrated policy framework, including a set of laws, policies, and other measures, so as to ensure the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

This integrated policy framework should be designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated with the active participation of informal economy actors. While this may seem obvious in theory, it is much more challenging in practice.

ACV-CSC and WSM have therefore developed a specific "modus operandi" to guarantee this participation, given the fact that certain groups of workers are more difficult for unions to reach and organise, and that their voices are not always heard in the social dialogue.[1]

Dialogue is the essence of democracy

There are at least two other stakeholders with whom civil society has to engage structurally and effectively in the democratic space for discussions about the choices we must make as a society: the State and the private sector.

The dialogue between these three key stakeholders is essential for a healthy democracy. The State, the private sector, and civil society each have a role to play and, together, share a collective responsibility in transforming our society. By seeking solutions together, they build connections between different (and often contradictory) interests, create consensus on social issues, and ensure broad support for political decisions. This is the best way to achieve lasting and systemic change.

1- In guidelines drafted by ACV-CSC and WSM, which were unanimously approved by ACV-CSC Federal Congress in 2015, ACV-CSC acknowledges that cooperation by and between trade unions and other social movements is necessary because in some cases these other social movements possess expertise that the union does not, or because they reach groups of workers whom the union does not reach (or at least not easily any longer).

Unique cooperation within the International Labour Organisation

An international organisation has been operating in this manner since 1919. As the only tripartite organisation in the United Nations system, the ILO brings together governments, employer organisations, and worker organisations from its 187 Member States to negotiate and adopt (international) labour standards, monitor compliance, and develop policies and programmes aimed at promoting decent work for all human beings.

The purpose of this social dialogue between states and the two "social partners" is to reach consensus and involve these stakeholders, who have vital interests in the world of work, democratically in the decision-making process. All three parties participate on equal footing, with each voice carrying equal weight.

Since 2008, ACV-CSC and WSM have developed a unique form of cooperation within the framework of the annual International Labour Conference organised by the ILO. Their shared goal is to contribute to the discussions held in Geneva by amplifying the voices of other social movements with expertise in the issues on the agenda. This process has led to the establishment of a modus operandi that is beneficial to both organisations.

WSM recognises that the social dialogue is the exclusive domain of social partners and states, and other social movements there do not intend to interfere.

ACV-CSC and WSM nonetheless aim to gather the broadest possible range of expertise. To that end, these organisations involve other social movements that have relevant experience and expertise throughout the process leading up to the International Labour Conference. During preparations, ACV-CSC and WSM facilitate discussions by and between ACV-CSC, other trade unions, and social movements from around the world. Through these exchanges, participants get to know each other better, understand each other's experiences more deeply, and collectively identify key issues they wish to defend in the tripartite negotiations of the International Labour Conference.

Furthermore, ACV-CSC, in recognition of its expertise, has already entrusted WSM with negotiation mandates or several occasion. The latter has led these negotiations as a delegate of ACV-CSC.

This was the case, for instance, in the negotiation of Recommendation 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy (in 2014 and 2015).

These opportunities have strengthened cooperation with other trade unions, social movements, and international networks with which WSM has long been engaged in addressing the challenges faced by informal economy workers (such as the INSP!R, WIEGO, RIPESS, and JOC).

Organising and ensuring the participation of informal workers

The tripartite committee that negotiated the adoption of Recommendation 204 discussed the participation of informal economy actors in decision-making that affects them. Today, 10 years later, these workers are still not adequately represented by employer organisations or trade unions. The social partners acknowledge this shortcoming, and Recommendation 204 encourages them to continue addressing the matter actively.

The value of Recommendation 204 lies in its recognition that informal economy workers are full-fledged workers and that, consequently, ILO conventions and recommendations, particularly fundamental labour standards, fully apply to them. One crucial task is to extend and implement the freedom of association (Convention 87) and the right to the social dialogue (and to collective bargaining, under Convention 98) for informal workers.

This is a fundamental responsibility for trade unions, which can only succeed in organising these workers through cooperation with other social movements that provide relevant services, such as health mutual insurance organisations and cooperatives in the social and solidarity economy.

Trade unions must take on this essential role of organising informal workers. Otherwise, there is a risk that ILO regulations will not be relevant to a significant portion of the global population working in an informal situation, potentially undermining the universality of ILO conventions.

After lengthy and intense discussions, a consensus was finally reached on how to facilitate such participation. Recommendation 204 underscores in several instances that governments should use tripartite mechanisms to ensure full participation of the most representative employer and worker organisations, including, in accordance with national practices, representatives of organisations whose members are economy workers and economic units in the formal economy.[2]

This means that employers and trade unions are indeed encouraged to include representatives from organisations that represent stakeholders of the informal economy in their delegations to social dialogue. This does not present a significant challenge for employer and worker organisations. Nevertheless, it remains the exception rather than the norm.

The real challenge therefore consists of organising workers and economic units of the informal economy. For ACV-CSC and WSM, getting "organised" remains the key to genuine participation in decision-making processes. More and more trade unions are in fact actively organising informal economy workers and taking actions alongside them. This must be encouraged and supported.

It is also important to acknowledge that many of these workers organise themselves in other ways—through health funds, cooperatives, youth and women's movements, and various other social and solidarity economy initiatives. This should be encouraged as well, given the magnitude of needs, as 6 out of 10 workers and 4 out of 5 businesses still operate in the informal economy today.[3]

Getting the voice of informal workers heard

ACV-CSC and WSM firmly believe that all these organisations play a crucial role in making the much-needed transition from the informal to the formal economy a reality. It is consequently essential to provide them with the necessary space to get their voices heard. At the international level, within the framework of the ILO, this is done as follows: The trade union takes the lead, but special attention is paid to incorporating diverse perspectives from these organisations so as to develop common positions that the trade union can defend actively in the social dialogue.

Needless to say, the work does not end there. Once a new labour standard is adopted (as Recommendation 204 was in 2015), the focus shifts to the national and sometimes even the continental level.[4] For the ratification, transposition, and implementation of international labour standards into national regulations require further negotiations.

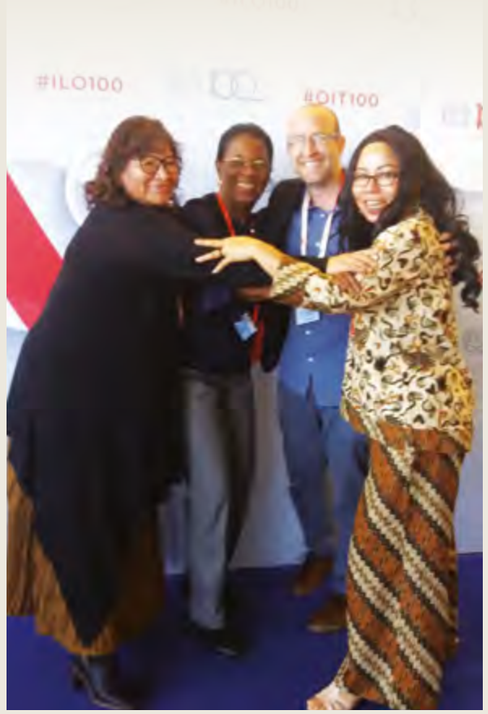
On the social dialogue front, the social partners take the lead—whether at the company, sectoral, or inter-professional level. This dialogue may take the form of negotiations, consultations, or simply an exchange of views and information. "Collective bargaining" is a process through which employers and trade unions negotiate directly with one another to establish collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) that set wages, working hours, and other conditions of employment.

These CBAs, particularly at the interprofessional level, are powerful tools. They constitute a source of law, clarifying how existing labour rights can be enforced while also creating new ones. They also have a redistributive effect, ensuring that workers receive a share of the wealth they collectively create. Finally, they strengthen solidarity among all workers.

2- Articles 6, 34 and 38 of ILO Recommandation 204.
3- https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-organization/topics/formalization.
4- At this level, regional organisations (such as ASEAN, AU, EU, OAS, SAARC, etc.) also regularly take positions on how they and their Member States should strive to transpose new international labour standards into national regulations.

At the same time, it is important to advocate for other mechanisms of “institutionalised dialogue” through which social movements—sometimes alongside trade unions, sometimes independently—can make their voices heard by the state and the employers.

The “institutionalised dialogue” must take place in sufficiently accessible spaces where the parties can come together for discussions. The goal is high-quality dialogue: The parties meet regularly, engage in discussions based on a clear mandate, and work effectively toward building consensus. This dialogue can assume various forms, ranging from consultative exchanges to formal negotiations with binding outcomes. A well-known example of such binding agreements is the negotiations between health funds and healthcare providers.



Not silos, but cross-sector expertise

As part of its international cooperation, WSM strives to build bridges between different social movements. It does so by working together with ACV-CSC, the Christian Mutual Insurance Companies of Belgium, and numerous social movements that these organisations work with. This approach enables social movements to strengthen one another and create cross-sector expertise that adds value to all involved parties.

For the same reason, these actors actively seek to link different forms of dialogue, namely the social dialogue and the institutionalised dialogue. Although each has its own distinct structures, they should not be treated as completely separate silos.

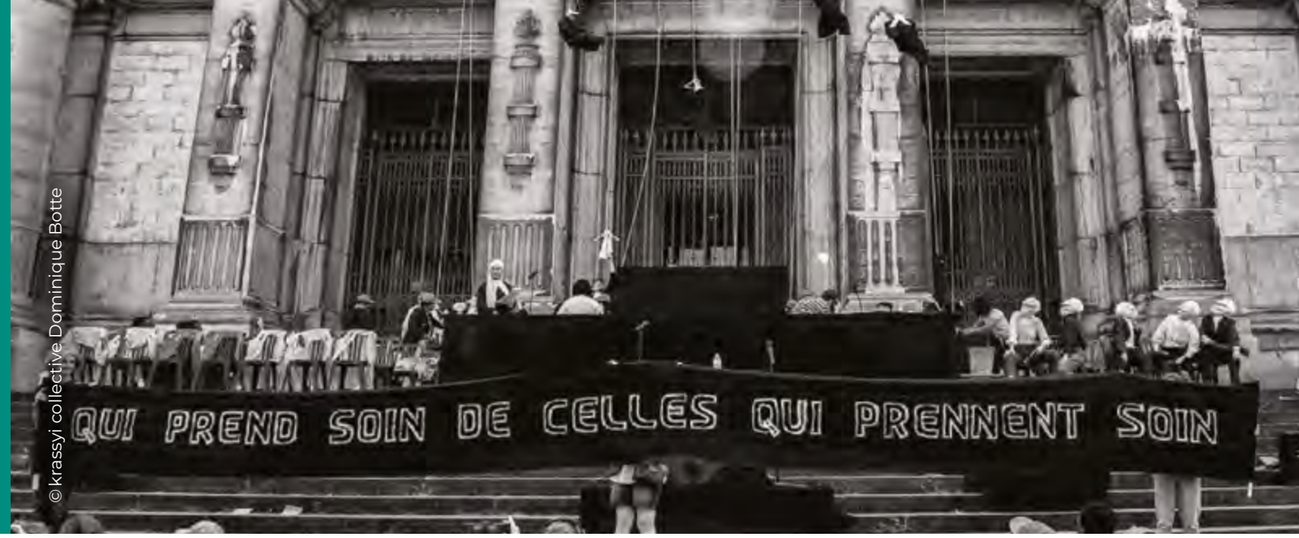
Experience has shown that trade unions can also advocate, within social dialogue, for positions they have developed alongside other social movements, such as through the INSP!R.

Similarly, shared positions can be promoted by other social movements (such as the INSP!R network) in other institutionalised dialogue forums to which they have access. In this way, the different social movements can complement one another, consistently reinforcing their collective message. This is the true added value of international cooperation led by WSM, ACV-CSC, and the Christian Mutual Insurance Organisations of Belgium.

FOCUS ON COUNTRIES

IN BELGIUM,

UNDOCUMENTED DOMESTIC WORKERS STEP INTO THE SPOTLIGHT TO SEEK FORMAL RECOGNITION



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In 2018, a small solidarity group of undocumented women workers emerged in Brussels, Belgium. Very soon, a clear pattern surfaced during their conversations and exchanges: the vast majority of them were employed in domestic work—often invisible, and always precarious. From this small core would arise the *Ligue des travailleuses domestiques* [League of Domestic Workers] under the Belgian trade union ACV-CSC, supported by the Christian Workers' Movement of Belgium (Brussels region), which has since spearheaded a bold, imaginative, and profoundly collective struggle.

These women, who are undocumented and stem from Latin America, Asia, or Africa, work in private homes, often for wealthy families. They clean houses, look after children, or care for the elderly. It is estimated that between 70,000 and 80,000 such women live in Belgium.

A movement born to fight against fear

The vast majority of them work in the domestic (also known as the care) sector, often without contracts and in precarious, informal conditions. The League of Domestic Workers of the CSC Brussels was founded in response to this reality so as to give a voice to those society prefers to ignore. Faced with isolation, fear, and the hardships of work within private households, the stakes are high: how can one organise people who are rendered invisible? The answer came through a renewed form of trade unionism, rooted in feminist popular education.

The main demands of the League of Domestic Workers:

- **Protection against abuse:** The workers demand legal protection so that they can file complaints against abusive employers safely and with dignity, in particular through the right to remain in Belgium during the legal proceedings.
- **Legal access to work:** They are also calling for formal, legal access to the job market, in order to end the precarity of their situation and be able to contribute to the social security system.
- **Access to training:** The domestic workers demand access to vocational training programmes, particularly in sectors facing labour shortages, delivered by state-run agencies such as "Actiris," the Brussels employment agency, so their skills can be officially recognised.

The League quickly established itself as an unprecedented space for action. What sets it apart is that it recognised early on that **traditional forms of trade union struggle would not be enough to rally and voice the demands.** Mobilising isolated, precarious women, many of them undocumented, required inventing new ways of doing politics. "We knew we'd never be 5,000 people out on the streets. We had to get creative," explains one activist. This is how hybrid forms of mobilisation came into being, blending theatre, performance, direct action, visual art, and life storytelling.

The League developed a powerful method of political and artistic action: starting with the women's lived experiences to build a demand, staging it, embodying it, and then confronting institutions with it. Each time, the women would symbolically occupy seats of power (such as the European Parliament or Brussels institution) to make their voices heard. This approach was seen in initiatives like the "**Parliament of Domestic Workers**," the "**Tribunal of Political Courage**," and the "**Government of Care**." In 2022, they organised Belgium's **first ever strike of undocumented domestic workers.** There were only 35 women taking part (most were tied to work obligations), but their act was powerful: to stop work in order to affirm their vital role in the care economy. As the women themselves put it, "*What's powerful is that we start from fiction, and then shift into reality.*" This strategy enabled them to bypass political deadlocks and force a public conversation on the invisibility of care workers.

A feminist, transnational, activist network

One of the League's greatest strengths in building visibility has been its ability to forge strong, diverse alliances.

In Belgium, the collective has built partnerships with artists, feminist groups, researchers, local trade unions, mutual aid societies, and organisations active in the social and solidarity economy. Strong ties have been forged beyond its borders with similar solidarity groups such as "Territorio Doméstico" in Madrid, as well as others in France and the Netherlands. These international connections have allowed the workers to learn from and share experiences of struggle.

They have also fuelled broader reflection: How can local experiences be linked to overarching demands around care, the right to rest, leisure time, housing, and mental health?

A struggle that is expanding: Towards a Ministry of Care

Over time, the workers' demands have expanded. Whereas legal access to work remains central, other priorities have emerged, still rooted in the application of ILO Convention 189 on domestic work. These include **access to housing, mental health, access to culture, paid leave, and the right to rest.** The women have even set up a solidarity fund among themselves so that they can go on holiday.

In 2023, these aspirations gave rise to a new collective: the "Femmes tout-terrain" [All-Terrain Women], which is now carrying forward the pro-

ject of a "**Ministry of Care**"—conceived as a political, symbolic, and advocacy tool.

Inspired by the experience of Barcelona Cuida,[1] this project aims to bring together lived experiences, map out needs and existing initiatives, imagine concrete political solutions, and create an inclusive and feminist framework to coordinate a collective response to the essential needs of precarious women who provide care for others. Self-managed, horizontal, and open to other women—migrant women, family carers, single mothers—the Ministry aims to create safe, empowering spaces for recognition and action, while also holding public authorities accountable for their responsibilities around care, including housing, health, cultural access, and rest. It seeks to address the blind spots of social policy.

This citizen-led ministry could become an advocacy tool targeting local councils and other levels of government in Belgium (regional and federal). It is structured into several departments (housing, health, culture, rest), each with its own 'minister.'

Visible progress but persistent challenges

Whereas the mobilisation has led to significant political and media visibility, tangible progress on the ground remains limited. The political climate is hardening, institutional support is lacking, and the women involved remain in situations of acute precarity.

These five years of mobilisation have brought a major breakthrough in terms of public and political awareness. The actions undertaken have reached the media, made parliamentarians aware, and mobilised civil society. Today, the League of Domestic Workers is recognised as a legitimate stakeholder. The workers have spoken at conferences, met with lawmakers, and addressed the general public—most notably through documentaries and artistic performances.

In December 2024, the Belgian branch of the League for Human Rights awarded the Régine Orfinger-Karlin Prize to ACV-CSC League of Domestic Workers in recognition of their perseverance and courage. However, despite this recognition, no major legislative or regulatory breakthroughs have seen the light of day yet.

Many obstacles persist, in fact:

- An unfavourable political context increasingly hostile to the dignified reception of migrants;
- A lack of support from public authorities at all levels;
- The extreme precarity and exhaustion of the women involved;
- The lack of financial resources.

Public authorities at all levels remain largely absent and unreceptive to the workers' demands. The private (for-profit and non-profit) sector is also insufficiently engaged. Although the trade union movement provided vital initial support and continues to show solidarity, it still struggles to adapt to the League's autonomous and horizontal modes of organisation. The struggle relies heavily on voluntary commitment, mutual aid, and the determination of those most directly affected.

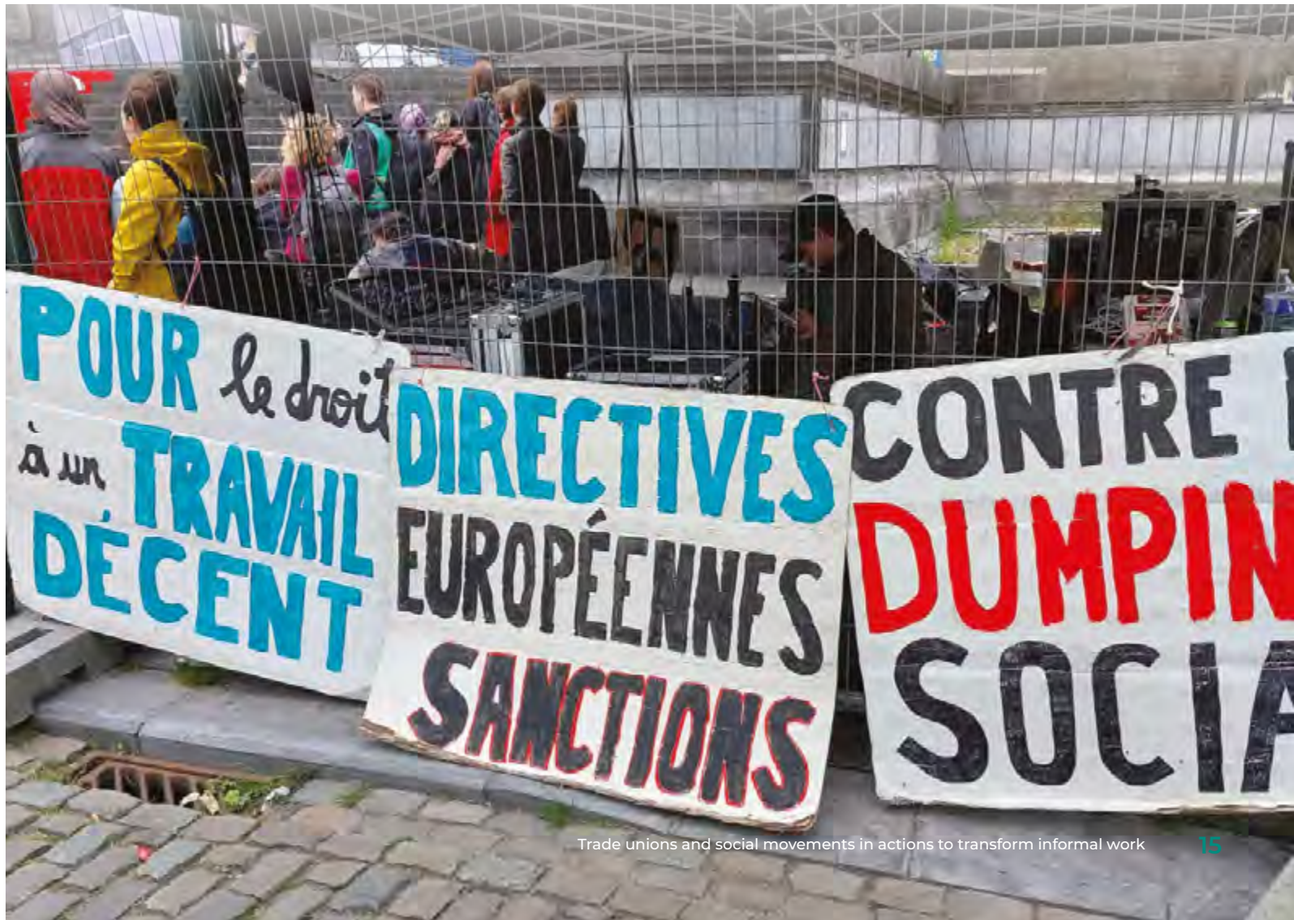
1- A centre based in Barcelona (Spain) intended as a tool for helping to recognise the social value of care work and to guarantee the right to care and to be cared for under decent and high-quality conditions.

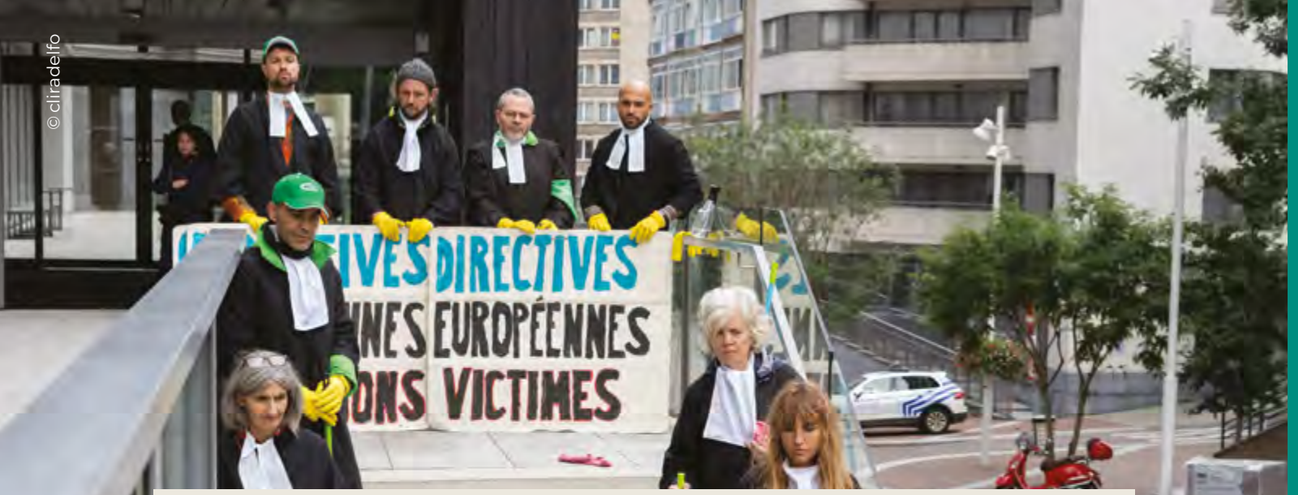
A care policy to be built collectively as a tool for social transformation

The strength of this movement lies in its ability to weave together political advocacy, collective practice, artistic creation, and individual empowerment. The road ahead is still long, but the seeds have been sown. The "Ministry of Care," now taking shape, could become a reference framework—one that brings together existing initiatives, strengthens solidarity, and inspires more inclusive public policies. The "Ministry of Care" is not limited to advocacy alone; it is also about creating collective spaces of militant joy, knowledge-sharing, and practical solidarity. The women involved are working to define their own priorities, supported by academics, healthcare professionals, mutual aid partners, and artists. Because activism, too, is a form of care.

Today, the Femmes tout-terrain [All-Terrain Women] continue this work, while widening their base to include a broader range of profiles—home carers, single mothers, migrant women with or without papers. Their goals: to strengthen alliances, support those in greatest need, build robust advocacy, and help bring about a fairer and more inclusive care policy.

What these women are ultimately proposing goes beyond traditional trade union demands. Their struggle raises a fundamental question for society as a whole: **who takes care of carers**? Because the issue of care is universal. In Brussels, women are already answering—with courage, imagination, and solidarity. They aspire to live lives of dignity, through formal employment.





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TO EXPLORE FURTHER:

Documentaries

- (2018) Vos toilettes propres, nos propres papiers [Your clean toilets, our own papers] (15 min): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxTwpvwIn-vE&list=PLWmwOuO49VNsnl1SDNpRjqcsBAj3V-9Tre
- (April 2019): Action Ligue collage d'auto-collants au parlement fédéral [Ligue action: affixing stickers at the federal parliament]: Ligue: action auto-collants toilettes parl fédéral
- (2020) Nous les domestiques modernes [We, the modern domestic workers] 40 min: Ligue: Nous les domestiques modernes
- (16 june 2021): Tapis rouge: action de sensibilisation le 16 juin 2021 à l'occasion de la journée internationale du travail domestique [Red Carpet: Awareness-raising action on 16 June 2021 on the occasion of the International Domestic Workers' Day]: Ligue: tapis rouge pour les travailleuses domestiques
- (16 june 2022) Parlement des Travailleuses domestiques le 16 juin dernier [Parliament of Domestic Workers on June 16 last year] (8 min): Ligue: grève, le parlement des travailleuses domestiques
- (25 November 2022) Action du 25 novembre du dépôt de la motion [Action of 25 November: Submission of the motion]: Ligue: dépôt motion au parl bruxellois (8 min)
- (17 December 2022): Colloque organisé par Ecolo le 17 décembre dernier auquel la Ligue a été invité pour ouvrier la journée [Colloquium organised by Ecolo (the Greens) on December 17 last year, to which the League was invited to open the day] (10 min): Ligue: Le parlement du courage politique
- 17 February 2023: signature de la Motion par les 7 partis [Motion signed by seven political parties]: Ligue: signature de la Motion
- 16 june 2023: deuxième grève, annonce du Tribunal du courage politique [Second strike, announcement of the Tribunal of Political Courage]: Ligue: annonce du Tribunal du courage poltique
- 16 June 2023: la tenue du Tribunal du courage politique 31 minutes (version définitive à ne pas encore diffuser) [Tribunal of Political Courage, 31 minutes (definitive version – not for distribution yet]: https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/885757282/fa939aabfb
- 16 June 2023: la tenue du Tribunal du courage politique [Tribunal of Political Courage]: 30 minutes: https://podcasts.domainepublic.net/@Colettes/episodes/grand-menage-au-tribunal
- 18 Semptember 2023 (6 min): action rentrée parlementaire [Back-to-Parliament action]: Ligue: action rentrée parlementaire
- 5 October 2023: action Conseil des Ministres [Action outside the Council of Ministers] (3 min): Ligue: action devant conseil des Ministres

IN POLAND,

SUPPORTING FORMALISATION WHILE PROVIDING CARE FOR OTHERS!

In Poland, the social mutual aid organisation "Flandria," a partner supported by Belgium's National Alliance of Christian Mutual Insurance Organisations, has launched a home care project in the municipality of Obrowo (located in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, in the centre of the country). This initiative connects people in need of various forms of care and support with qualified professionals who are unemployed or unable to work in the professions for which they trained.

The initiative, which was launched in 2018 and was set to run for six months, was co-financed by the Polish state and the European Social Fund as part of the broader initiative "Innovation on a human scale – support for the development of micro-innovations in the sector of care services for dependent persons." It also received backing from municipal authorities, who provided a team of social workers to link care professionals with dependent individuals in the area. A local social organisation, the "Trybik" Foundation, was also involved, bringing valuable knowledge of the local context and the key stakeholders—beneficiaries and local authorities.

Flandria, a social care movement filling gaps in Poland

The social organisation Flandria, the driving force behind this initiative, aims to deliver high-quality healthcare and accessible social services to vulnerable people. Established in 1996, it promotes mutual and solidarity-based aid in three regions of Poland[1] through the direct involvement of members, beneficiaries, and volunteers, supported by professional teams. It carries out its activities as a civic movement focused on addressing the gaps in care and services not covered by the state, while also fostering collective awareness that care is everyone's responsibility. Flandria has 20,000 members (beneficiaries and volunteers), who pay an annual membership fee (sometimes symbolic, to ensure that cost does not become a barrier) to affiliation.

By providing these services, the organisation engages in advocacy work with local and regional authorities to improve the provision of health and social care services vital to the well-being of communities. A number of collaborative projects have emerged, including a remote monitoring system for the elderly which was set up in Poznań (in western Poland) in 2015.

1- Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Pomorskie et Wielkopolskie.

Optimal care services

These social workers have an in-depth understanding of the local context and the needs of dependent persons, often confined to their homes due to illness, disability, or psychological conditions. They have built essential relationships of trust and help Flandria encourage beneficiaries, many of whom are in vulnerable situations, to accept the care and services being offered. The contact and cooperation with these social workers has been ongoing, enabling Flandria to provide the highest quality services tailored to the specific needs of dependent persons. Thanks to the insight and responsiveness of the social work teams of the municipality, personalised care plans could be offered so as to ensure the well-being of those most in need.

Municipality of Obrowo: A social laboratory

Obrowo is a rural municipality of 16,000 inhabitants. In 2018, more than 500 people were registered by the town's social services as requiring various forms of social and health care, due to long-term illnesses or disabilities. The village is relatively isolated, located 20 kilometres from the nearest city, Toruń. Most of these individuals had no means of transport and were therefore confined to their homes.

The social foundation "Trybik" identified a critical shortage of care providers. At the same time, the municipal social services recorded 662 unemployed individuals, nearly 250 of whom had completed studies or vocational training but were not working in their fields for a variety of reasons.

This project was born out of a proven need, namely, to provide such care while offering a rewarding experience for these professionals.

The professionals of care and services for these dependent individuals had qualifications in physiotherapy, osteopathy, psychology, nursing, as well as technical assistance (handyman services), hairdressing, massage, beauty therapy, and legal advice. The project brought together a team of seven individuals who were able to gain experience in the field they had trained for but had been unable to enter—largely due to a lack of job opportunities in the region. As a result, many had lost confidence in themselves and in their professional abilities.

Regaining self-confidence

Most of them were either unemployed and/or engaged in informal economic activities in unrelated sectors. They were thus able to maintain their professional skills, complete their practical training, and practise their trade, all while being paid. At the end of the project, these professionals had regained their confidence and all succeeded in finding employment in their respective fields. Some have maintained ties with the Flandria social organisation by remaining members or by continuing to support the home care activities, either as paid staff (such as a nurse and a masseur) or as volunteers alongside their new occupation.

Strong and genuine bonds were formed between the professionals and the beneficiaries. The latter expressed deep satisfaction with the services they received from this dedicated and compassionate team. Building trust with this group—unaccustomed to being treated with kindness and care—was essential. This trust was earned thanks to the high quality of the care and services delivered, as well as the reliability and consistency of the support offered. As a result, the quality of life and health of beneficiaries improved significantly. These regular visits also enabled the introduction of a very effective preventative healthcare system, helping to identify additional care needs and respond accordingly.

IN PERU,

JOURNALISTS GAIN FORMAL STATUS THANKS TO A GROUNDBREAKING COOPERATIVE

In Peru, despite a seemingly impressive economic growth rate averaging 3% annually, three-quarters of the working population are employed informally. These 14 million workers have no job security, do not earn decent wages, and have no access to social protection,[1] landing them in a highly vulnerable socio-economic situation. Although a social protection system does exist in Peru, access to it is hindered by two major obstacles. First, there is a financial barrier, whereby the cost of enrolling in the system is prohibitive for workers with a limited income. Second, the administrative complexity of the enrolment and contribution procedures is such as to discourage many potential applicants.

Against this background, the state is struggling to adapt its enrolment and contribution procedures to this category of workers. And when regulations are relaxed, they often prove difficult to implement effectively on the ground.

Journalism, a profession under pressure

Since 2019, the *National Association of Journalists of Peru* (ANP[2]), a partner of We Social Movements (WSM), has taken concrete action by establishing a service cooperative for journalists in the Ica region, in the south-west of the country. The aim is to make it easier for these workers to formalise their professional status.

Journalism and decent work do not rhyme in Peru. Working conditions are extremely precarious, and journalists often have to juggle several jobs just to survive. More often than not, they are self-employed entrepreneurs running their own self-financed media outlets. They frequently have to rent equipment and recording studios at steep prices. When they do create jobs within an editorial team, the positions are unstable — at best, under a formal employment contract, but more typically, as informal freelancers. These workers put in long hours, and their family life suffers as a result. Women are fleeing the profession, in a country that remains deeply patriarchal, where they are still expected to shoulder most domestic responsibilities — making it hard to commit to a career in journalism.

And yet, this profession is vital: freedom of expression and the right to information are key pillars of democracy. These professionals, who take enormous risks day in and day out, often exposing cases of corruption or wrongdoing by public figures, face constant harassment and threats.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a devastating impact on those working in the sector. Nearly 200 died — most often because they lacked adequate protection while doing their job, because they had no access to social protection.

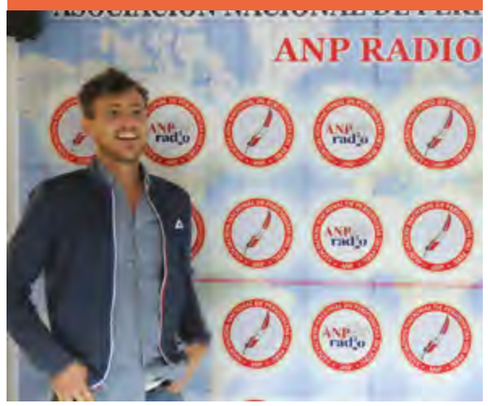
1- Arismendi Díaz Santana, "Afiliar a los trabajadores independientes a la Seguridad Social del Perú. Estudio de viabilidad sobre el tránsito de la informalidad a la formalidad en el Perú. Caso de Amusso, R. Dominicana" [Affiliating independent workers to Peru's Social Security system. Feasibility study on the transition from informality to formality in Peru. The case of Amusso, Dominican Republic], November 2024.

2- The ANP is a trade union organisation for people working in the printed press, radio, television, electronic press, and other related media. It has 12,000 members across the country, spread across 117 provincial branches. The ANP is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

In Peru, journalism is a high-risk profession

Information professionals in Peru take great risks day in and day out. They expose corruption and misconduct by public officials, and are constantly harassed and threatened as a result. *"It's very difficult to live with — you have to prepare your family for this harsh reality,"* says Matteo, after describing the cyberbullying campaign levelled at him for five years, ever since he reported on a local radio station on a corruption scandal involving an oil project. Like his colleagues, Alonso carries on with the struggle, despite being regularly targeted by slanderous accusations. *"They make grotesque claims about me all the time. I've learned to respond smartly — and above all, to protect myself physically."* Violence is never far away. In 2019, a Molotov cocktail exploded in front of the offices of the local newspaper Voces in Tarapoto, in the north-east of the country.

(Excerpts from the particle published on www.wsm.be : https://www.wsm.be/actu/journalisme-libertedelapresse-perou.html)



A service cooperative for journalists

The "Pedro Abraham Valdelomar Pinto"[3] Cooperative came into being on account of the precarious working conditions journalists face on a daily basis. It is intended to serve as a support tool for this professional community. The very nature of the social and solidarity economy is fully in line with the goals of its members, who seek to promote voluntary participation, solidarity, mutual support, and social transformation, with human beings at the heart of their concerns (all profits must benefit the community and the cooperative's object).

The members of the cooperative pay a contribution, in return for which they are granted access to technological equipment for their professional activities, such as cameras, camcorders, drones, smartphones, and microphones. This service is essential, as this category of workers cannot access standard bank credit services as they are outside the formal economy. They may also use this equipment to carry out other related professional activities that boost their income, such as creating content for family celebrations. Active since 2022, after three years of negotiations with the state to secure official registration for this unprecedented initiative, the cooperative is now looking to expand the range of useful services it can offer its members so that they can exercise their profession while limiting infrastructure and equipment costs. On the horizon: the creation of an advertising agency to increase revenue while maintaining independence from the pressures that may be exerted by governmental authorities and corporate interests. This agency would manage its own advertising space. Members are also considering the creation of a university chair to train future journalists, and a project to build a recording studio for use by all members is currently in the pipeline.

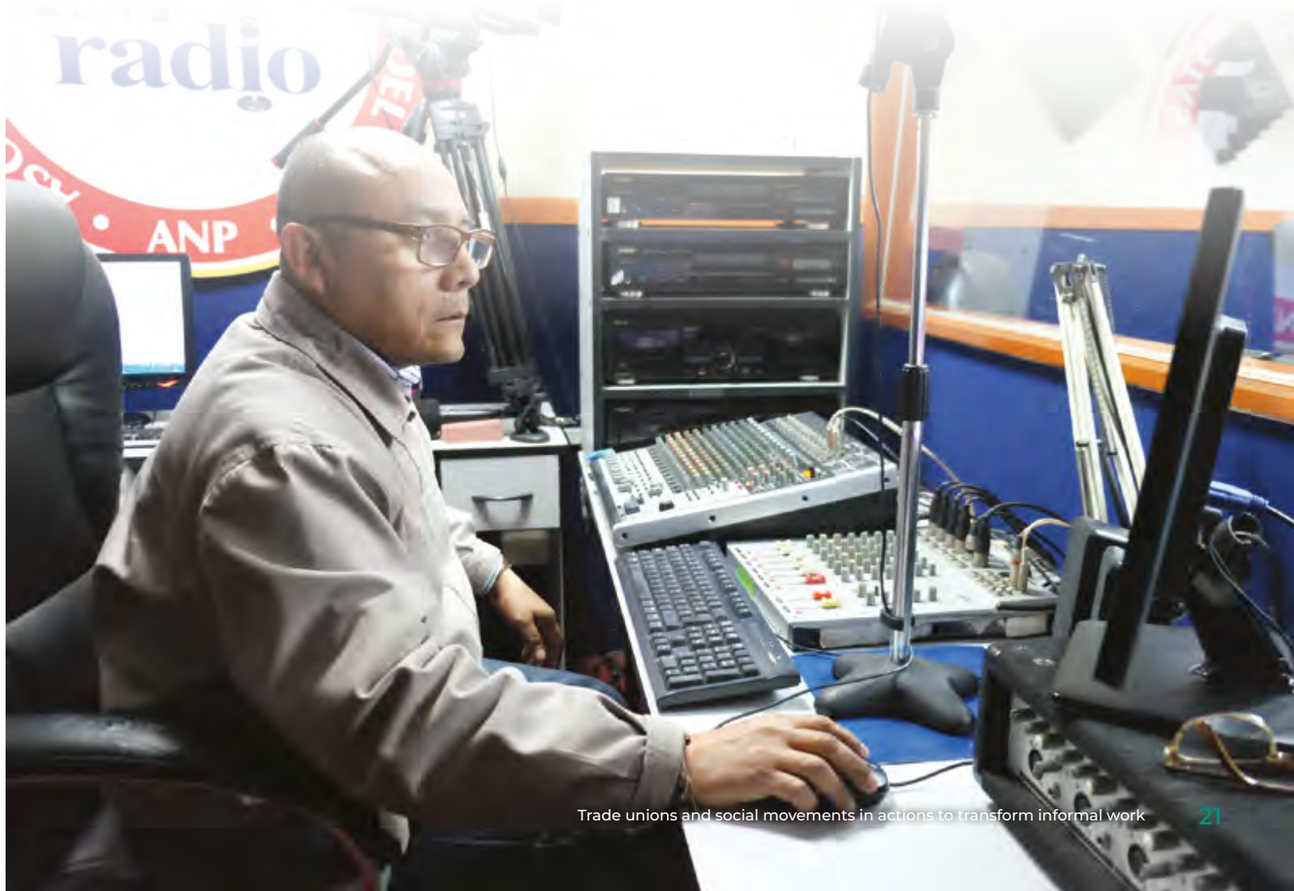
3 - A native of Ica, a prominent figure in Peruvian literature, who also worked as a journalist and press director."

ANP TV, first regional channel run by a cooperative

In July 2024, the "Abraham Valdelomar Pinto" press cooperative launched Peru's first regional television channel in Chincha, in the Ica region, in partnership with a local broadcaster and with support from the National Association of Journalists (ANP) and WSM. This initiative seeks to counter the growing insecurity within the profession by enabling journalists to create and broadcast informative, cultural, athletic and educational content at low cost — without having to rent expensive airtime from privately-owned media outlets. The cooperative rents a digital signal at a lower price so that journalists can retain their independence while generating income to fund the activities of the cooperative.

Chincha : Cooperativa de prensa Abraham Valdelomar inaugura ANP TV – ANP

This cooperative is a pilot project that aspires to expand across Peru, thanks to the nationwide network of the ANP. Such an expansion would make it possible to expand the range of services, including a dedicated social security fund for members, one of the founding goals of the initiative. Currently supported by international cooperation, the cooperative aims eventually to self-finance its operations. Training in journalism, but also in cooperative principles, will remain central to its activities so as to strengthen both professional skills and the appropriation of the cooperative and its solidarity principles by its members.



IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,

“AMUSSOL” WORKS TOWARDS THE FORMALISATION OF VULNERABLE WORKERS

Founded 20 years ago by the “Confederación Autónoma Sindical Clasista” (CASC) [Autonomous Classist Trade Union Confederation, the “Asociación Mutual de Servicios Solidarios” (AMUSSOL) [Mutual Association of Solidarity Services] has implemented a mutual aid model that has transformed the lives of over 100,000 informal economy workers by guaranteeing them access to essential rights such as social security, healthcare, and pensions. AMUSSOL has proven that it is possible to build inclusive solidarity and practical solutions for marginalised groups, such as young people, rural workers, and migrants, who face structural barriers to accessing fundamental rights.

In the Dominican Republic, 58% of the population works in informal conditions, and as a result lives in precarious circumstances, without access to social protection or decent working conditions. AMUSSOL’s model is built around a health mutual insurance organisation, a key tool in building collective solidarity and ensuring access to basic rights. This system enables workers—many of whom are active in informal sectors—to access social security benefits. It targets people working in sectors such as transport, street vending, hairdressing, agriculture, and domestic work, where vulnerable workers are heavily represented.

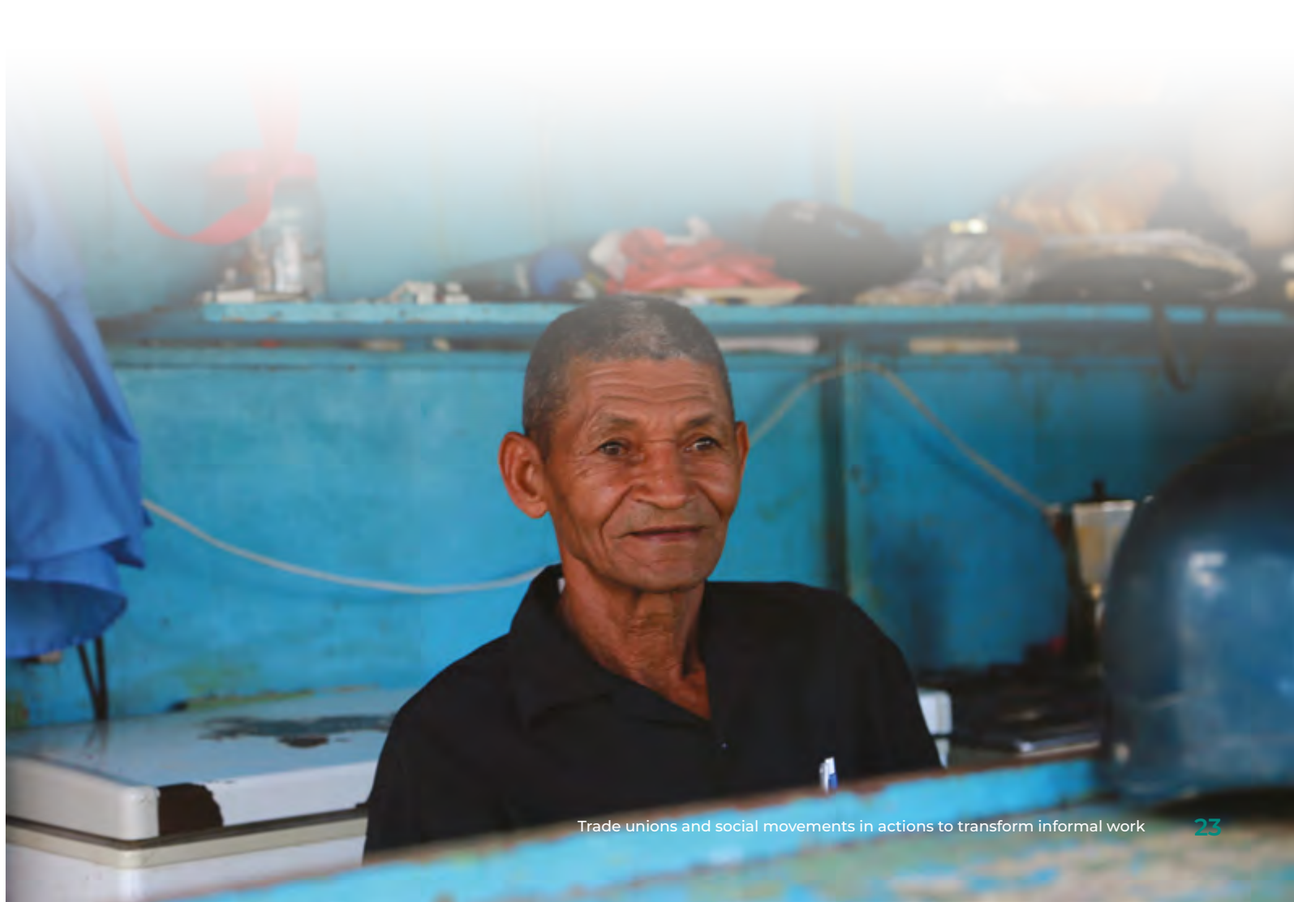
Raising awareness and supporting formalisation

Over the course of its 20 years of activity, AMUSSOL has achieved significant results, enabling more than 100,000 workers to gain access to social security services (healthcare, pensions, sickness insurance, unemployment benefits), thus improving their quality of life. A distinctive feature of the project is that AMUSSOL acts as a “virtual” employer, serving as an intermediary between the state and informal workers to facilitate the payment of social security contributions and the reimbursement of benefits to affiliates. AMUSSOL works in cooperation with the Dominican state, which plays a regulatory and supervisory role through the institutions responsible for monitoring social security. While AMUSSOL fills some of the gaps left by the state, it also incorporates the state into its efforts—demonstrating its capacity to coordinate relevant stakeholders based on need.

The integration of this mutual aid service with trade union work, through the support of the CASC, has made possible not only to impart training on labour rights but also to provide concrete services to the people involved. AMUSSOL has also proven to be a large-scale social movement that promotes a political agenda for job formalisation and the strengthening of national social protection systems. These demands have been taken up in the advocacy efforts of civil society networks, such as INSP!R Dominican Republic.

This offer of mutual and union services is accompanied by action aimed at helping these workers formalise their status. Although the Dominican state has simplified procedures and reduced costs since adopting ILO Recommendation 204—to enable individuals, micro- and small enterprises to formalise their economic activity—real barriers persist. The AMUSSOL therefore provides bespoke and personalised support, starting with raising awareness and providing information about the advantages of formalisation, without overlooking the associated administrative and tax obligations. Once a worker or a micro/small business decides to formalise, AMUSSOL supports them through the administrative and legal complexities of the process. This efficient and highly valued support has enabled the formalisation of over 1,300 micro-enterprises since 2005.

At the heart of AMUSSOL’s work is a strong commitment to gender equity: the active participation of women workers is a priority, promoting their economic and social empowerment.



Particular focus on the rights of migrant populations

The Dominican Republic has historically been a destination country for migrants. In recent years, large numbers of people have arrived from Venezuela and Haiti. These populations take on vital jobs that support the country's development—in agriculture, construction, and tourism.

Despite their key contributions, a significant proportion of them remain in informal employment, limiting their access to essential rights such as labour protections and social protection. Working conditions are often precarious: low pay, very long hours, and no oversight or protection from the state due to their informal status.

Access to essential services—such as healthcare and education—is also severely impacted. For both the CASC and the AMUSSOL, it is essential to recognise and value the contribution of migrant workers to the national economy.

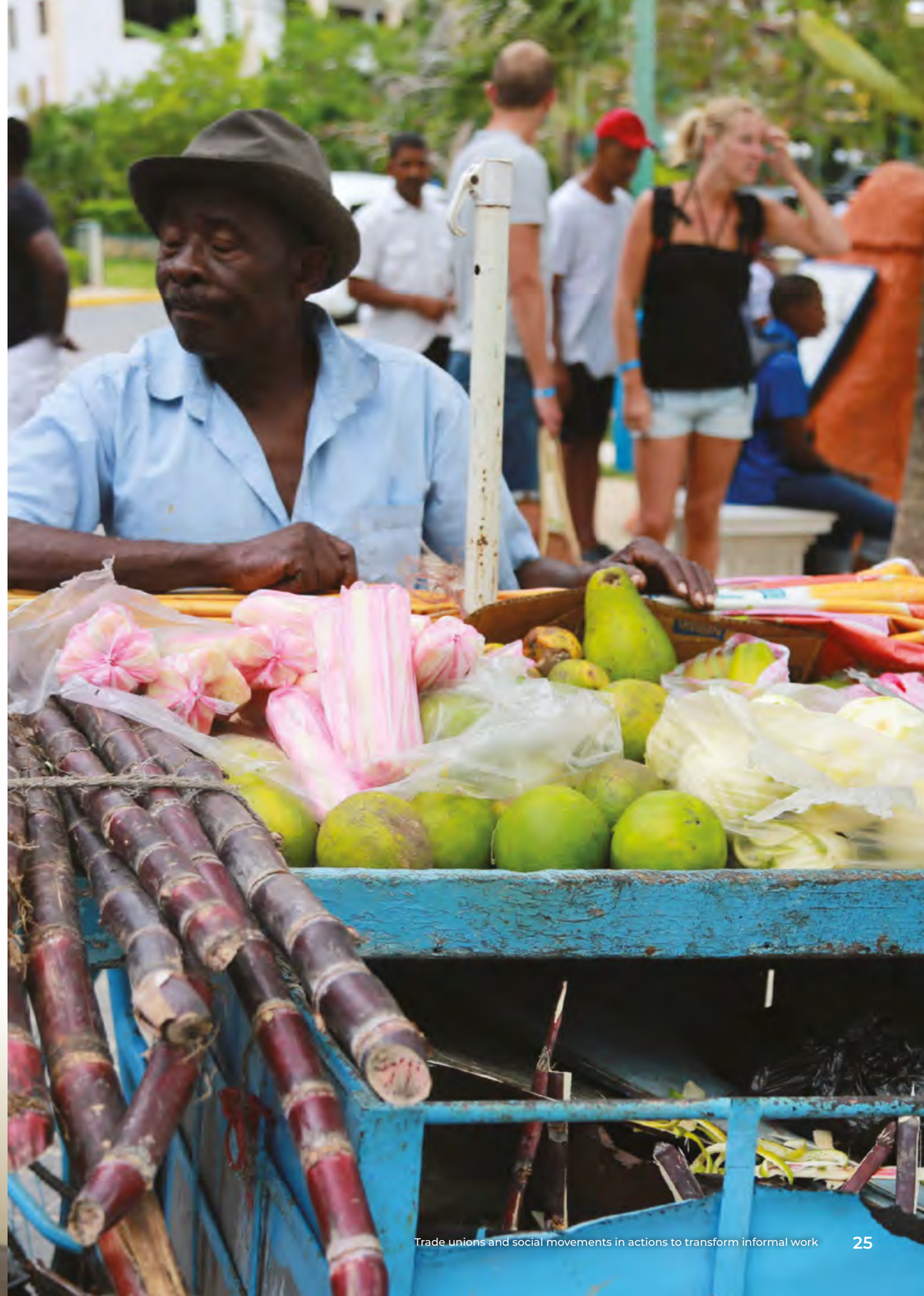
Their initiatives pay particular attention to this population, with the aim of offering them a dignified life. They believe this struggle requires close cooperation between civil society, the state, the private sector, and the international community.

Challenges and vision for the future

AMUSSOL's successes have motivated it to expand its reach. The organisation aims to extend its impact to even more vulnerable sectors, so that no one is left behind in the pursuit of access to social protection. It seeks to strengthen the sustainability of its model by consolidating the mutualist approach and adapting it to contemporary challenges such as digitalisation and new forms of work. Continuing to promote the active participation of women remains a key goal. It also intends to keep defending the universal right to social protection by building alliances with both national and international actors—particularly through networks such as INSP!R—to demand inclusive and integrated public policies from the authorities.

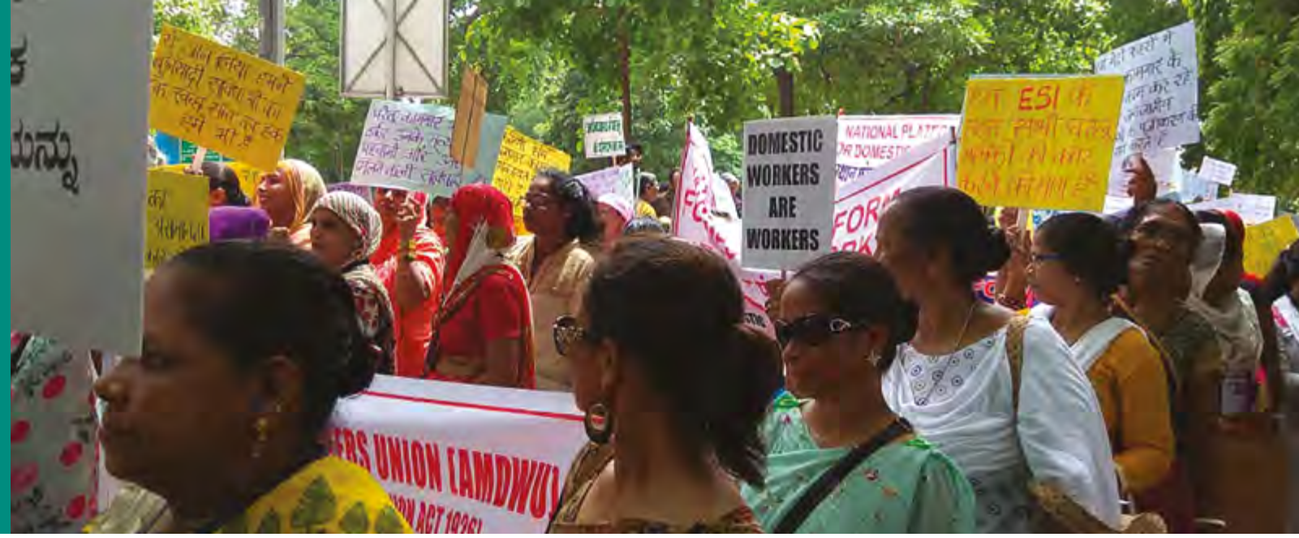
As a sign of its success, the FORLAC 2.0 programme (an International Labour Organisation initiative to renew the formalisation agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean from 2024 to 2030) has recognised AMUSSOL as a concrete and successful example of a worker-led initiative addressing gaps in social protection and formalisation.

AMUSSOL is also sharing its experience with civil society networks abroad. Most recently, it was invited to Peru by civil society organisations within INSP!R Peru, to explain how its model works—so that it can be replicated in the Andean country!



WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES:

A MODEL THAT ENSURES THE SECURITY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA



Informal work accounts for the vast majority of India's economy. In 2023, according to the ILO, 92% of the Indian labour force—around 450 million people—was employed in the informal sector. Often unregulated, this type of employment is synonymous with insecurity, lack of social protection, and limited, if any, labour rights. Yet this marginalised workforce plays a central role in the national economy. In 2022, informal workers contributed around 50% of India's GDP, with a heavy concentration in agriculture, small businesses, and undeclared services. Women are among those most affected by this informality: 80% of working women in India are employed in the informal sector, and 95% of those are domestic workers. There are over 4 million such workers, most of whom come from disadvantaged castes and classes.

Despite certain legislative initiatives aimed at formalising domestic work, progress has remained limited. A lack of political will and employer disinterest are major obstacles to the effective recognition of these workers. Moreover, the weak level of collective organisation presents an additional challenge to empowerment through formalisation. It is estimated that only 5% of informal workers are unionised or members of an organisation. This severely limits their ability to claim rights, negotiate decent working conditions, and access social protection mechanisms.

According to trade unions and grassroots organisations, the main barriers to collective organisation and formalisation of work are lack of access to information and, more crucially, the fear of economic retaliation. In a context where employment often depends on personal relationships with employers, the threat of losing one's income or suffering abuse is a real deterrent.

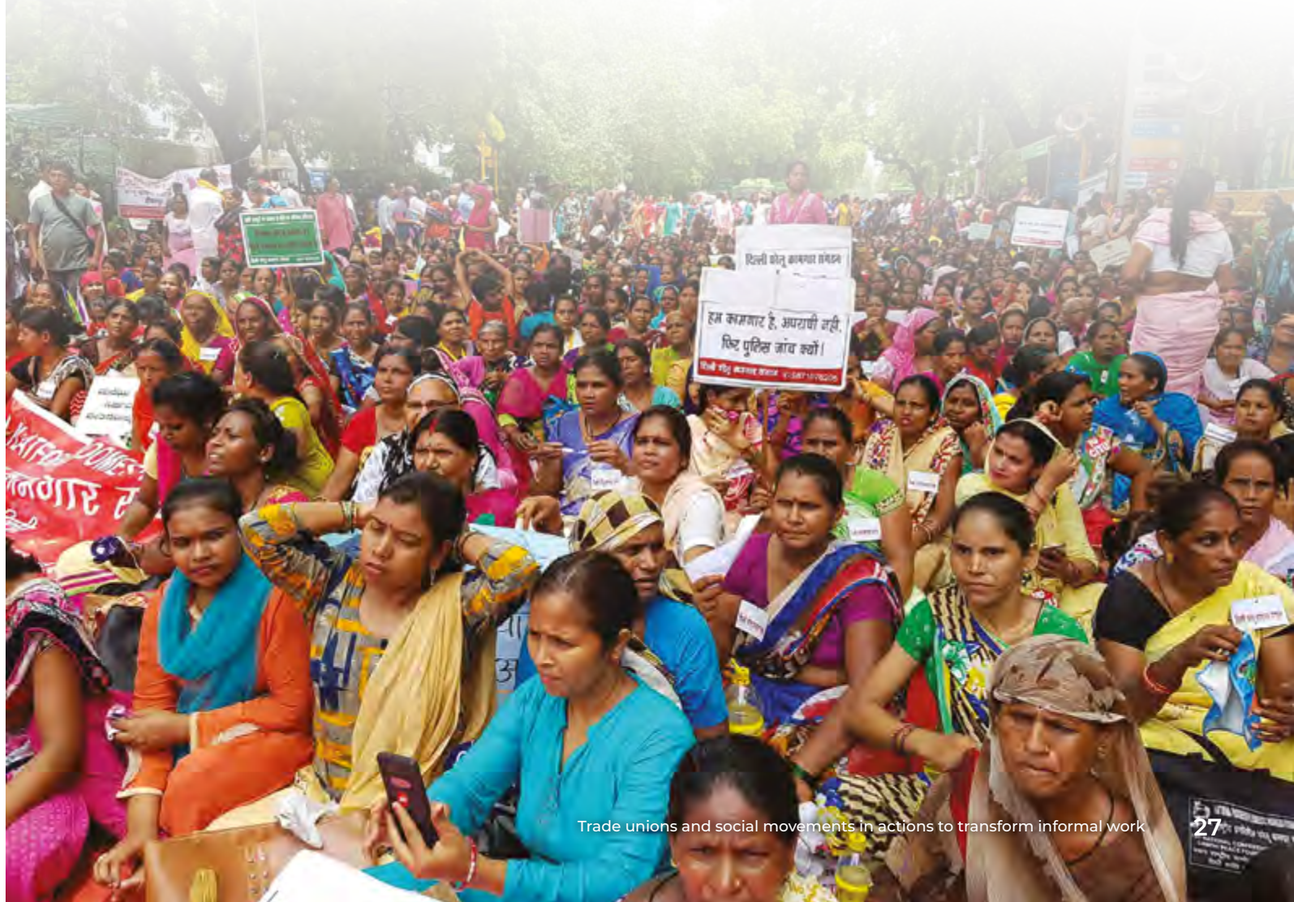
The challenge of formalisation therefore lies not only in legislative reform but also in the ability to create safe spaces for sharing information, solidarity, and collective organisation, where women workers can raise their voices without fear for their economic survival. It is in this context that domestic workers' cooperatives have gradually begun to emerge.

Domestic workers' cooperatives

Following the adoption of ILO Convention No. 189 on domestic work, an initiative was launched in 2019 by the *National Domestic Workers Federation* (NDWF) to formalise domestic workers, with the support of local civil society organisations and the international network *Women in Informa Employment: Globalising and Organising* (WIEGO).

The initiative was initially launched with actions geared to mobilisation and campaigns to raise awareness about rights in marginalised neighbourhoods, targeting domestic workers from disadvantaged castes, migrant workers, and urban households. Campaigns such as *Respect Domestic Work* emerged as a result. Over time, this developed into a collective initiative that continues today: the creation of cooperatives for domestic workers.

Today, the *National Domestic Workers' Federation* (NDWF) has implemented this cooperative model in five states (Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu) with the goal of organising domestic workers to promote written contracts between employers and employees. These contracts can include fixed wages and defined working hours. They may also contain provisions facilitating access to government schemes (pensions, health insurance, and maternity benefits), raising awareness about labour rights, providing training to create and develop occupational skills and to support financial management. The NDWF also encourages the formation of collectives to advocate for their rights vis-à-vis employers and local authorities.



The story of Bihar: From 100 to 17,000 rupees

The process of formalising domestic work in the state of Bihar began well before the cooperative model of 2019. By way of example, around 1995–1996, Theresa Tudu, a young migrant domestic worker who had suffered abuse, sought help at a church in Patna. Alerted by the priest, the church's sisters intervened and resolved the situation, recognising the urgent need to protect and organise domestic workers, many of whom belonged to tribal and indigenous communities. The sisters began gathering migrant women in churches on Sundays, gradually forming support groups. At the time, domestic workers were earning just 100 rupees per month. With the official founding of the *National Domestic Workers' Movement* (NDWM) by Sister Jeanne De Vos in 1998, the local efforts in Patna became part of a broader national initiative. The NDWM-Bihar was established, setting up structured placement processes and engaging continuously with employers.

Today, almost three decades later, wages range from 14,000 to 17,000 rupees per month. Despite this significant wage increase, the struggle for dignity and rights for domestic workers is far from over. The proliferation of unregulated recruitment agencies and the persistence of discrimination based on caste and religion continue to hinder progress. Nevertheless, the NDWM has maintained a firm stance: zero tolerance for any violation of the dignity and equity of domestic workers. Through its cooperatives, the NDWM facilitates job placements with official employment contracts that guarantee fair wages and regular payments, set working hours with sufficient rest, workplace safety, and the right to sick leave and annual holidays. Thanks to the NDWM's efforts, wages have risen dramatically: from just 100 rupees per month in 1995–1996 to between 14,000 and 17,000 rupees today.

The *Bihar Domestic Workers' Welfare Trust* (BDWWT), another civil society organisation, also supervises job placements using written contracts signed by both parties and office staff. It requires identity verification for all parties involved and provides additional support in the form of child education, women's empowerment through vocational training, and community strengthening.

These initiatives are primarily geared to migrant domestic workers, mostly women and girls, 99% of whom stem from indigenous communities in Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, and West Bengal. They serve employers in Patna, the capital of the State of Bihar, and their children receive educational support through sponsorships, housing assistance, and aid for education.

Achievements and ongoing challenges

One of the most significant advances for the rights of domestic workers has been the introduction of written contracts that set out clearly the terms of employment between worker and employer. Vocational training has become the cornerstone of the programme, with regular classes in tailoring, beauty care, and self-defence for young women aged 18 to 25. These opportunities not only enhance vocational skills but also build confidence and a sense of security.

Moreover, a strong focus has been placed on supporting the education of the children of domestic workers through sponsorships and residential programmes. Awareness-raising efforts have started to shift employer perceptions, promoting greater understanding of both the rights and responsibilities in employment. As a result, a new generation of leaders has emerged within the community of migrant domestic workers: Women who now advocate for their own rights and the collective dignity of their peers through cooperatives or trade unions. These changes have led to tangible improvements in living standards. Some workers now own homes, land, and even vehicles, thereby transforming the future of their families in fundamental ways.

Challenges to take on

Despite these gains, several serious challenges remain. One major issue is the lack of legal protection. There is no national or regional legislation to date that safeguards specifically the work of organisations like the BDWWT or establishes enforceable labour standards for domestic workers. Government involvement is limited and typically reactive, intervening only in clear-cut cases like the non-payment of wages.

The private sector also presents challenges, as many placement agencies continue to operate without regulation, exploiting workers by withholding wages or refusing to offer contracts. Added to this is the persistent social stigma surrounding domestic work, which is still widely regarded as unskilled and subordinate. This perpetuates inequality and discrimination. Finally, the instability of migrant labour creates ongoing logistical and relational challenges: some workers leave their jobs abruptly, which can strain relationships with employers.

Making domestic work visible

The cooperative model and the determined efforts of trade unions demonstrate that once invisible workers can become visible agents in the fight for decent work. But this transformation is possible only with proper tools and support structures. Even though major obstacles remain—legal recognition, limited reform, and employer resistance—cooperatives and trade unions have worked to bring about genuine social and economic change.

This movement is more than just a local initiative: it sends a powerful message that domestic workers are not merely uncontracted labourers, but organised, trained, and united, mutually supportive citizens working toward a fairer future.

There is hope that this model can be replicated in other countries, such as Nepal and Bangladesh, and across other continents, by sharing experiences, successes, and challenges. Organising work within national and international networks is a real opportunity to learn from one another.

THE STRUGGLE TO FORMALISE WORK IN INDONESIA:

A CHALLENGE FOR TRADE UNIONS AND WORKERS

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, is a major player in the global economy, particularly in the agriculture, construction, and textile sectors. The Indonesian Constitution states that everyone has the right to social security and it requires the State to establish a social security system for all in order to bolster the autonomy of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, in line with the values of human dignity. Nevertheless, despite sustained economic growth, a significant portion of the workforce remains employed in the informal sector, with limited social protection and precarious working conditions.

According to data from STATISTA (2023), more than **59% of Indonesia's working population** is engaged in informal employment, with a notable concentration in agriculture (41.2% of informal workers) and construction (18.7%), followed by street trading and domestic services.[1] This phenomenon persists despite efforts by public authorities, in particular through legislative reforms geared to bringing more workers into the social protection system (deemed insufficient by trade unions), which reflects deeper structural gaps in labour rights and access to social protection.

By way example, although the national compulsory health insurance scheme for all Indonesians is funded by the government, and covers the contributions of low-income individuals, occupational accident insurance and death benefits—also mandatory for all workers—have yet to be implemented due to a lack of public funding for these programmes.

Similarly, informal, migrant, and construction workers currently have no access to pension schemes or unemployment benefits. Including vulnerable informal workers such as fishermen, labourers, and street vendors in accident and death insurance schemes would offer essential protection and could help formalise the informal sector, which currently includes over 843 million people.

The government-subsidised programme intended to provide access to these two schemes for precarious workers has not yet materialised, however. Despite a commitment made in 2021 and expectations of implementation in 2024, no budget has been allocated, leaving around 20 million identified precarious workers—including farmers, waste collectors, fishermen, and possibly migrant workers—excluded or rejected from the social security system.

Although this issue has been partially resolved, many challenges remain. Programmes such as the pension guarantee and unemployment benefit remain inaccessible to informal, migrant, and construction workers, who make up the majority of the labour force. Without pensions or adequate savings, these workers face a high risk of falling into poverty as soon as they stop working.

1 - OIT 2022, BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2023

This lack of formalisation constitutes a major challenge not only for Indonesia's economy and society but also for the civil society, trade unions, and grassroots networks, which are fighting day in and day out to improve working conditions and to extend social coverage for vulnerable workers.

Workers from fragile sectors formalised thanks to the KSBSI and the GARTEKS

Despite their limited resources, trade unions play a crucial role in the formalisation of work. The KSBSI (Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions) and the GARTEKS (federation of the textile and garment sector) are committed to combating informality and ensuring better social protection for workers. The first step in their action is to inform workers of their rights through seminars and direct engagement, and to raise awareness about the benefits of formal employment. More specifically, according to KSBSI, one of the major obstacles to formalisation stems from **the lack of information for workers** regarding existing social protection mechanisms—especially access to social security, employment-related benefits, and workers' rights more broadly.

The KSBSI therefore conducts awareness campaigns through workshops geared to specific sectors, training sessions, and partnerships with local NGOs. These activities are intended to inform workers of the advantages of enrolling in the social security system and to encourage registration, although coverage often remains partial (due to minimal contributions or limited protection) because of unstable incomes. Today, the KSBSI has nearly 800,000 members—a figure that reflects the reach and impact of its actions.

Formalisation in the construction and transport sectors

The construction sector is among the most affected by informality, particularly in regions such as West Java. The FKUI (Federation of Construction and Informal Workers), which is affiliated with the KSBSI, carries out targeted initiatives to raise awareness, provide training, and register day labourers and construction workers. These initiatives include training workshops on social rights, workplace safety, and the importance of registering with social protection schemes such as the BPJS (the Indonesian government's health insurance system). The programmes also include an inclusion strategy to integrate informal workers into trade union structures.

Similarly, in the mining transport sector, the KSBSI has mobilised the FTIA (Federation of Transportation and Informal Workers) to organise comparable campaigns in North Sumatra. These initiatives primarily target drivers and informal workers in the mining industry, offering workshops focused on worker registration and raising awareness about the benefits of joining the social security system.

Although a significant majority of participants in these training sessions are men (70–80%) due to the nature of the work, substantial efforts are being made to include women (20–25%).

Advocacy of “INSP!R Indonesia” for social protection

The KSBSI is a member of “INSP!R Indonesia,” a civil society network committed to promoting universal social protection and part of the global INSP!R (International Network for Social Protection Rights). The network brings together social movements, trade unions, civil society organisations, and social economy actors from around the world. In Indonesia, INSP!R is supported by organisations such as KSBSI and GARTEKS (the textile and garment federation), which work to improve working conditions and defend the rights of workers.

The INSP!R civil society network advocates for non-discrimination in all social security programmes and insists that vulnerable groups—representing more than 843 million informal workers—be included in accident, death, and pension insurance schemes. This would not only protect them during their working lives but also support their long-term well-being and contribute to the formalisation of the informal sector.

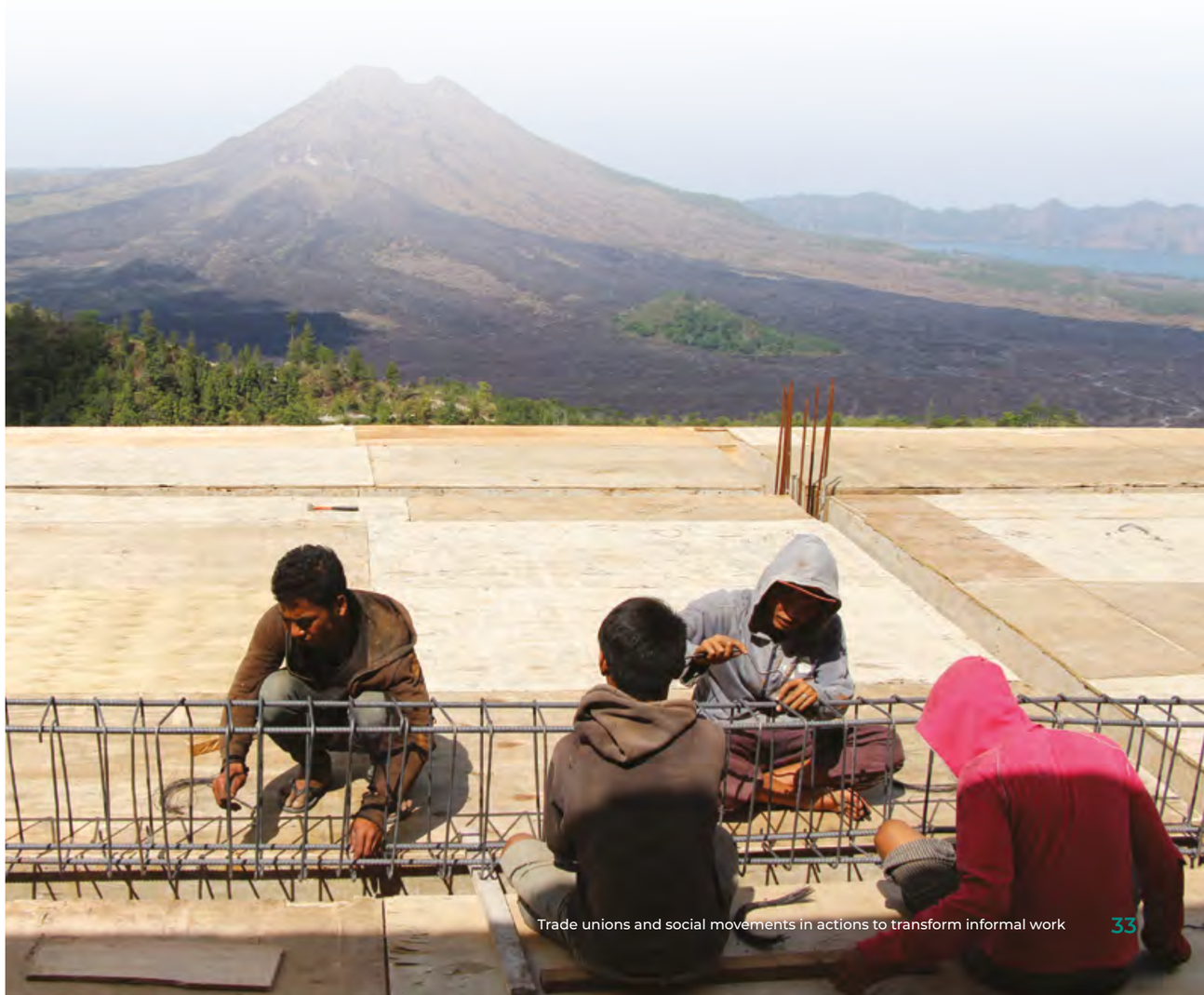
INSP!R Indonesia has been at the forefront of advocating for inclusive and comprehensive social protection for informal workers, digital platform workers, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities. Through strategic actions such as public hearings, press conferences, position papers, and direct dialogue with institutions like the national development planning agency and the social security administration for health and employment, INSP!R Indonesia has lobbied for practical solutions to the enduring shortcomings of Indonesia’s social security system. One of the key goals has been to ensure that the most precarious informal workers receive state-subsidised accident and death insurance—a promise delayed due to budgetary constraints. To address this, INSP!R has proposed innovative financing mechanisms, such as the use of corporate social responsibility funds, a concept the government has begun to explore, starting with vulnerable groups such as farmers affected by climate change and fishermen.

In parallel, INSP!R is advocating for the extension of pension coverage to the informal sector, in line with Indonesia’s “Vision 2045” and its ageing population. The organisation has also introduced the concept of long-term care for the elderly, which has attracted the interest of policymakers. A significant breakthrough has been the removal of discriminatory barriers that previously prevented persons with disabilities, many of whom work in informal micro-enterprises, from accessing social protection and benefits. These policy changes mark a crucial step towards greater inclusion, improved job security, and the formalisation of marginalised workers in Indonesia.

Persistent obstacles to formalisation

Despite these efforts, several significant challenges remain in achieving **widespread formalisation.** One of the major such obstacles is the **reluctance of employers,** who refuse to formalise their workers, in particularly out of fear of **increased costs** linked to implementing social security mechanisms or complying with collective bargaining agreements. **Administrative complexity** is another major barrier, as obtaining the necessary documents to register informal workers—particularly internal migrant workers—remains a daunting challenge. **Trade unions also face financial constraints**, as they rely largely on their own limited resources to fund their activities. Furthermore, **social protection remains incomplete**, for although the BPJS provides medical coverage, it does not yet encompass the full range of social rights. A key demand from trade unions is the extension of the Jaminan Kehilangan Pekerjaank (JKP) [Job Loss Insurance], an unemployment insurance scheme, to informal workers. Trade union actors are exerting maximum pressure to ensure this benefit will finally materialise.

To support these efforts, the trade unions must expand their influence. This involves strengthening local branches and harmonising union actions across various regions and cities to make their action more effective and better coordinated.



Textile industry: A key sector in the struggle for formalisation

Indonesia's textile sector, one of the country's most important industries, is another major priority for the GARTEKS and the KSBSI, which are working to improve labour conditions and promote the formalisation of jobs in this sector, which is particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Textile workers, often young women with limited knowledge of their rights, are among the most at risk of violations to labour rights, particularly regarding wages, overtime, and workplace safety. Another issue is gender discrimination remains in the industry, with a wage gap of 20% between men and women. This disparity is not due to differences in productivity, but rather to entrenched systemic discrimination. This can be explained, for example, by the fact that men are more easily promoted or hired.

Efforts in this sector focus on several key areas: (1) Raising awareness among women workers about their social rights and providing training on existing protection mechanisms; (2) Registering workers with social security schemes such as the BPJS; (3) Enrolling workers in trade unions to increase pressure on companies that are reluctant to formalise employment.

However, similar challenges to those faced in other informal sectors persist, e.g. a lack of political will on the part of local authorities to enforce labour reforms, employer resistance, especially among major textile companies who fear that formalisation will raise their production costs, and the economic vulnerability of workers, who often accept abusive conditions out of financial necessity.

The struggle to formalise work in Indonesia remains fraught with obstacles, but the advocacy of INSP!R *Indonesia* and the initiatives led by organisations such as the KSBSI show that progress is possible. While challenges abound, advances in expanding social coverage and in sectors like construction and textiles underscore the importance of mobilising workers, unions, and NGOs to make the voices of the most vulnerable heard. With structural reforms, sustained pressure on public authorities and employers, and increased awareness among workers, a fairer future for Indonesia's workforce can be envisioned.

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IN BURUNDI,

TRADE UNIONS ARE STRONGLY COMMITTED TO FORMALISATION

In Burundi, 90.7% of active workers are employed in the informal sector[1]. These workers carry out their professional activities without authorisation, social protection, or physical safeguards, facing job insecurity and low incomes. They suffer from limited access to financing, to infrastructure and facilities for suitable work, and struggle to sell their products. They also face significant obstacles in accessing and responding to both public and private markets.

In light of this problematic situation, Burundian trade unions are placing unionisation and training of these workers at the core of their activities in order to help them access formal employment.

The implementation of ILO Recommendation No. 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy is an overriding priority for trade unions in Burundi, as it serves to promote decent work and social protection, as well as to improve working conditions for workers in the informal economy.

Accordingly, the *Confédération des Syndicats Libres du Burundi* (CSB) [Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Burundi][2], one of two national trade union confederations defending the rights of workers in Burundi, has specifically targeted certain categories of workers across the entire national territory who are most affected by informal employment and suffer the greatest harm from precarious working conditions. These include producers of food crops, workers in bars, hotels and restaurants, workers in the mining sector, street cleaners, hairdressers, street vendors, mechanics, and workers involved in transferring phone credits and electronic money through mobile phones.

Convincing and providing guidance and support for the formalisation process

For the CSB, formalisation begins with raising awareness and mobilising small groups of professionals. Workers must first be convinced that formalisation adds value and will improve their lives. To this end, the CSB relies on the local authorities, community leaders, and other local social organisations. These stakeholders work together to create a climate of trust that is conducive to dialogue on the issues and goals of formalisation. Agreements are concluded with local authorities to raise awareness and provide training for workers on labour rights, access to social protection, and relevant national and international legal instruments (such as ILO Convention No. 102 on Social Security and Recommendation No. 204). These training efforts are vital, as formalisation is not always viewed positively by the local populations, who can be wary and resistant, with longstanding habits leading many to see informal work as a kind of panacea— since it consists of an activity that provides quick income without any apparent constraints.

Next, the CSB provides advice and support first and foremost for the formation of professional groups which may later develop into trade unions, once the group is sufficiently mature to undertake more ambitious campaigns in terms of decent work and access to social protection. These workers then organise collectively and demand their rights from local, regional, and national authorities. The main struggle is currently focused on gaining recognition for and the registration of trade unions by governmental authorities, particularly the ministry responsible for labour. Many registration requests are rejected by the relevant ministry, which often cites a lack of representativeness or claims that there is no employer for such and such an activity. Resistance to unionisation may also stem from the workers themselves, who may fear losing their jobs because an employer is reluctant to grant them more rights. It is therefore crucial to raise awareness of the benefits of the collective struggle and trade union association as a means of asserting rights and understanding that the social dialogue is a powerful tool for securing positive agreements for workers. Despite these obstacles, many trade unions have managed to secure registration in the sectors targeted by the CSB.

Another major victory is the fact that, thanks to intense advocacy work on the part of trade unions in conjunction with civil society organisations, the Burundian Labour Code now legally recognises workers in informal employment as an integral part of the country's economic fabric. The trade unions and social movements continue to exert pressure on the authorities to ratify key ILO conventions that would enable workers to improve their living conditions.

Working in a network and building alliances

One of the key ways in which trade unions and civil society organisations collaborate is through the INSP!R network in Burundi. This network implements strategies to promote decent work and access to social protection for the population. In addition to advocacy efforts, the network makes it possible for trade unions to work in partnership with community-based mutual health insurance organisations and their networks, offering union members access to their services, so that they can obtain affordable and quality healthcare. Working in a network also makes it possible to diversify the training offered to workers. Training courses are accordingly provided on sustainable development, the circular economy, and technical skills (such as plumbing, masonry, welding, electricity, etc.).

1- National Institute of Statistics of Burundi.
2- Founded in 1991, the CSB represents workers from all professional sectors of the country's socio-economic life. It fights for the promotion and defence of rights for decent work through formalisation, structuring, capacity building, access to mutual insurance services, community health, as well as legal and judicial assistance.

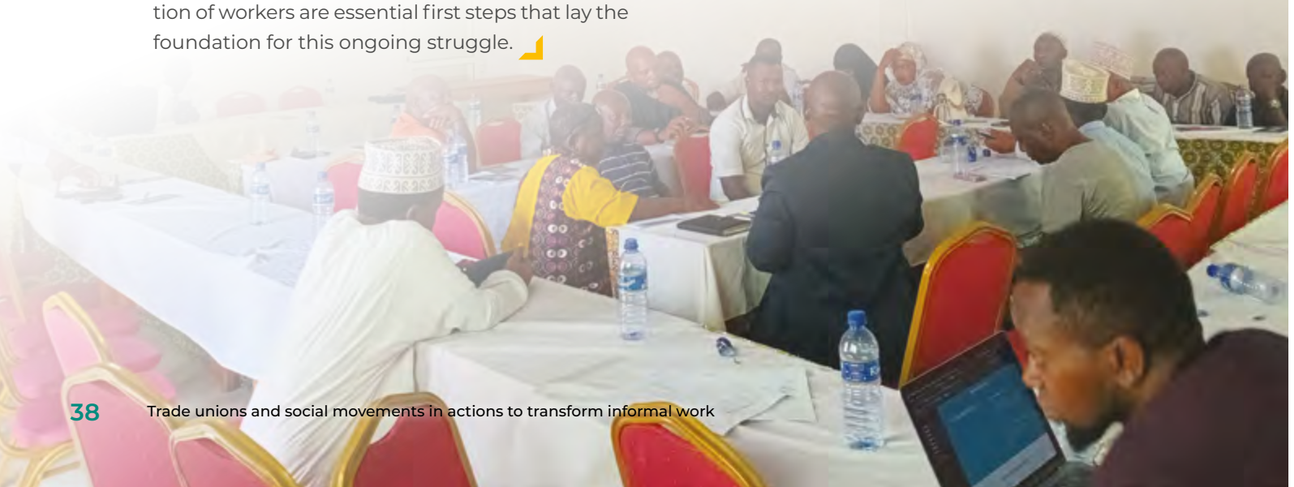
Formalising domestic workers in Burundi

The *Fédération Nationale des Travailleur.euses du Transport, du Social et de l'Informel* (FNTT-SI) [National Federation of Transport, Social and Informal Workers] is a member of INSP!R Burundi and works in that capacity cooperates with the CSB and other unions to implement ILO Recommendation No. 204 in the country. With 37 registered unions and 90,000 members nationwide, FNTT-SI provides tools and carries out awareness-raising activities to support the training, unionisation, and formalisation of workers in sectors such as transport, agri-food, manufacturing, and domestic work—areas in which informal workers make up the majority. Thanks to their efforts, their networking with INSP!R Burundi, and their collaboration with social movements and local authorities, four major unions have been formed and are officially recognised by the governmental authorities: the *Fédération Nationale des Travailleur.euses Domestiques* (FNTD) [National Federation of Domestic Workers], the *Fédération Nationale des Travailleur.euses de l'Agro-Alimentaire* (FNTAA) [National Federation of Agri-food Workers], the *Fédération Nationale des Travailleur.euses Manufacturiers de l'Informel* (FTMI) [National Federation of Informal Manufacturing Workers], and the *Fédération Nationale des Travailleur.euses des Transports* (FNTT) [National Federation of Transport Workers]. These federations are credible stakeholders in the social dialogue, in which they engage in order to improve access to decent work and social protection for their members.

For example, the FNTT and the FNTD (which together represent nearly 20,000 members) have engaged in the social dialogue with governmental authorities to secure legal recognition of domestic work as an occupation. This has resulted in the establishment of formal employment contracts, granting workers access to social protection and vocational training. These domestic workers were officially recognised under the revised Labour Code.

This advocacy work was successful thanks to the organisation of these workers into unions, the training they received about their rights, and a sustained effort to raise awareness among employers—despite considerable resistance from the latter, who frequently opposed the unionisation of domestic workers, often refusing to allow their employees to attend union or association meetings. It was necessary to build a relationship of trust despite the many instances of physical, psychological, and economic violence committed by some employers against domestic workers.

Formalisation in Burundi still faces many obstacles. Ongoing inflation, lack of access to bank credit for the vast majority of the population, and the low purchasing power of consumers are all significant barriers that prevent Burundians from entering formal employment. Nevertheless, awareness-raising, mobilisation, and the unionisation of workers are essential first steps that lay the foundation for this ongoing struggle.



BENIN:

FORMALISING COOPERATIVES IN THE CASSAVA SECTOR ENSURES THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF ITS STAKEHOLDERS

The "Mutuelle pour le Développement à la Base" (MDB) [Mutual Fund for Grassroots Development][1] is carrying out long-term work to support the formalisation and lasting integration of stakeholders from the cassava sector in the economic fabric of the Calavi region in Benin.

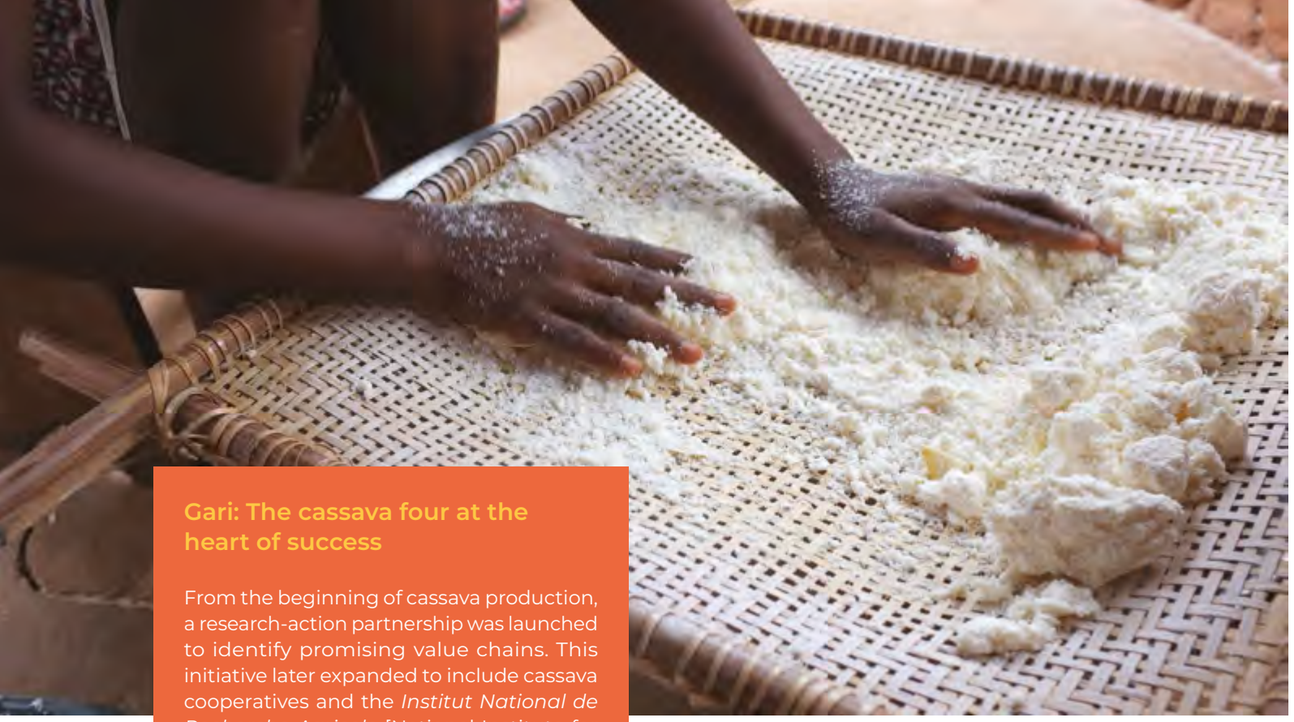
This local organisation operates as a savings and credit mutual fund to provide economic and social support to various communities, primarily through the structuring and support of cooperatives. It grants microcredits, offers technical expertise, and facilitates networking.

As of 2012, following the adoption of the *Acte uniforme relatif au droit des sociétés coopératives* (AUSCOOP) [Cooperative Company Law Uniform Act] the MDB began supporting the formalisation of groups and cooperatives rather than individuals. This initiative emerged in response to the **creation of a legal framework** by the OHADA,[2] which was signed on 15 December 2010 in Lomé (Togo) and entered into force on 16 May 2011. The goal was to harmonise and modernise the legal environment for cooperatives across the 17 French-speaking African member countries. Social and solidarity economy groups and organisations were thus encouraged to become formal entities by going through a process that proved demanding, for without proper support, achieving legal compliance would have been difficult. In fact, whereas recognition of cooperative companies in Benin was initially managed by decentralised support authorities (*Agence Territoriale de Développement Agricole* (ATDA)[Territorial Agricultural Development Agency]), today formalities must be processed through a court that verifies the initial information before referring the file back to the ATDA, thereby making the process lengthy and more complex, requiring specialised knowledge and, at times, substantial financial resources for certain segments of the population. The MDB has committed itself to supporting this formalisation drive by providing the necessary technical assistance.

Technical advice and support

In addition to legal recognition, technical advice and support have become a key component of the formalisation process. With the support of the NGO WSM, the MDB has managed to assist cassava-sector stakeholders in producing, processing, and marketing—significantly increasing yields and, ultimately, incomes for those segments of the population engaged in the formalisation process. Many families, especially women, have been able to acquire homes built with durable materials and to ensure their children's education (in some cases, up to university level). Integrating a gender perspective into this process has helped to overcome major barriers, particularly for women, such as lack of access to land. Advocacy work was undertaken to facilitate such access for women and for the local population in general. Land pressure in the region is high, in fact, notably due to the creation of industrial zones and the construction of the airport, which has also driven up the price of food staples.

1- https://mdbbenin.com/
2- Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires [Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa]



Gari: The cassava four at the heart of success

From the beginning of cassava production, a research-action partnership was launched to identify promising value chains. This initiative later expanded to include cassava cooperatives and the *Institut National de Recherche Agricole* [National Institute for Agricultural Research], in order to select the most suitable cassava cuttings for the region. After a year of cultivation and training, the harvest flourished to such an extent that this variety is now grown throughout the area. Support from the technical and financial partner was also key: the base cuttings were expensive, and the cooperatives would not have been able to afford them on their own. Yet it was precisely the quality of these cuttings that ultimately led to the success of the final product: The "*AHAYOUE*" gari, a cassava flour highly prized in Benin. Produced by these cooperatives, this is often out of stock, which attests to its popularity. It is now sold across various markets, and even stocked in major retail outlets in the region.

This economic and social success of the MDB derives also from the comprehensive process implemented and from the **mobilised networks.**

- **The initial partnership with the public authorities** greatly facilitated the sustainable integration of cooperatives into the local economic framework. For example, these cooperatives are systematically invited to local fairs, which indicates that they are recognised partners by the governmental authorities with whom there is ongoing dialogue, particularly regarding discussions around potential subsidies.
- **Social protection lies at the heart of this formalisation project**, thanks to a synergy with **partners providing healthcare services.** The MDB has in fact established a best practice in this area: access to microcredit is made conditional on membership in the health mutual insurance supported by the mutual organisation *APROSOC* (a local NGO and partner of WSM), to which MDB transfers members' contributions directly. Conversely, members of the health mutual insurance may benefit from access to specific MDB financial products, even if they are not part of the cooperatives. The partnership with health mutual insurance organisations produces a powerful multiplying effect in terms of social benefits.

Positive impact on cooperatives

The impact on formalisation is undeniable: Some ten cooperatives have been officially registered as social-purpose enterprises (*Sociétés Coopératives Simplifiées* – SCOOPS), giving them recognised business status. This status enables them to operate on both public and private markets while maintaining a social mission rooted in principles and values of solidarity. For instance, wages are regulated, and large pay disparities among cooperative workers are not permitted.

Other positive outcomes have also emerged, including the dissemination of the cassava cultivar adapted to the region, which supports local supply chains and food sovereignty, as well as the permanent establishment of the microcredit institution in the area. This economic momentum now allows other social and solidarity economy projects to be financed and supported, encouraging new pathways to formalisation among actors who are increasingly active in the local economy.

Looking ahead, it seems very likely that more cooperatives will benefit from this kind of technical and financial support to embark on the formalisation process. Given the persistent barriers these cooperatives still face, however, it would be advisable to continue efforts in networking and advocacy, including at the national level, in order to defend the interests and rights of cooperative members better.

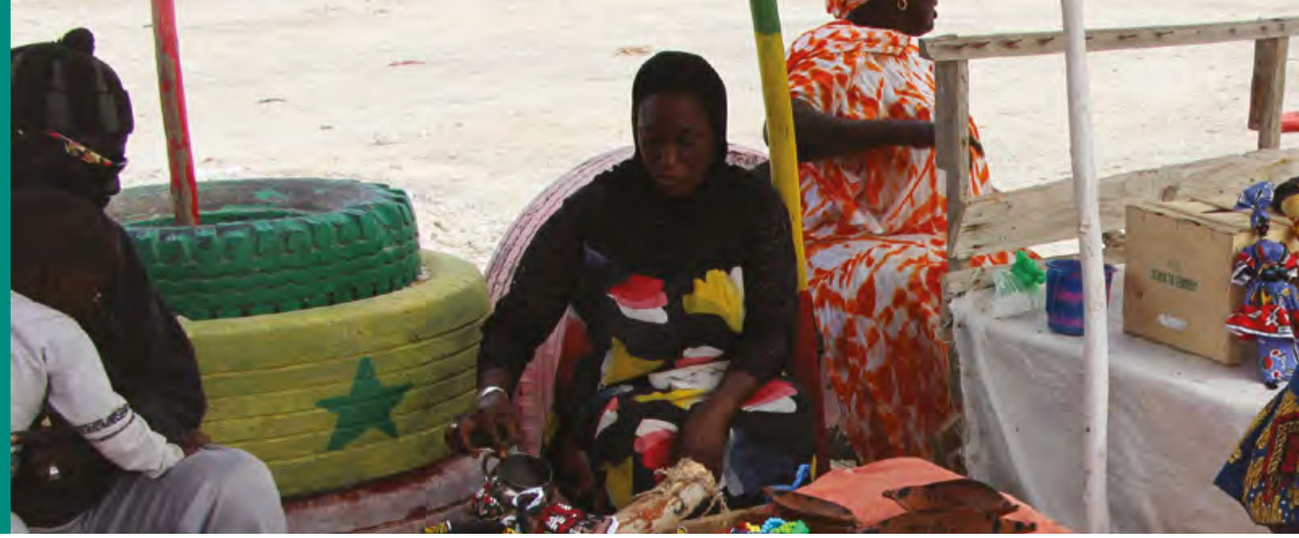
Positive impact on lives

The formalisation project led by the MDB has had a tangible positive impact on many lives, such as that of Véronique Ahouandjinou, a mother of four. Her life was changed in fact thanks to the quality of the gari (cassava flour) being produced, which in turn created new decent jobs.

"*My husband works as a docker at the autonomous port of Cotonou, but his salary wasn't enough to support our family. I was recruited by the Aïdoté cooperative in Glo-centre in March 2019, where I've since been responsible for selling water to the community. This job has helped improve our income. For nearly four years now, this work has enabled me to contribute financially to our household's everyday needs—food, rent, healthcare, school fees, and more. Thanks to my membership in the Sèdovikon health mutual insurance, I can also cover healthcare costs for two of my children and myself at a much lower cost. I use my earnings to buy cassava and firewood for making gari, which I then sell.*"

SENEGAL

ARTISAN TAILORS AND DRESSMAKERS ON THE PATH TO FORMALISATION



Senegal is a country with a dynamic demographic profile, where half the population is under the age of 18,[1] but where young people face major challenges. In addition to high youth unemployment, the effects of climate change on agriculture, overfishing by foreign countries, and widespread poverty make Senegal a country of emigration. The government has resolutely undertaken to accelerate efforts to create large-scale employment opportunities, particularly for young people. Unfortunately, despite numerous governmental initiatives, the vast majority of young people working in the informal sector struggle to access these funds due to issues of accessibility, eligibility requirements, and lack of qualifications.

Senegal has charted a *Stratégie Nationale Intégrée de Formalisation de l'économie Informelle* (SNIFEI) [National Integrated Strategy for the Formalisation of the Informal Economy] and a *Plan d'Actions Opérationnel de Transformation du Secteur Informel* (PAOTSI) [Operational Action Plan for the Transformation of the Informal Sector]. These initiatives are part of the country's implementation of ILO conventions and recommendations—particularly Recommendation No. 204 and the Decent Work Agenda—as well as its broader goals of structurally transforming the economy to promote sustainable, inclusive growth and decent employment.

Senegal has also begun revising its Social Security Code, with the aim of extending coverage to workers in the informal sector, including those in rural areas. The reform seeks to harmonise and improve the effectiveness of social protection schemes.

Bespoke advice and support for formalisation

"Action Jeunesse Environnement" (AJE) [Youth Environment Action] is a non-profit organisation founded in 1998. It runs programmes focused on poverty reduction, environmental education, health, and capacity-building. It actively supports youth training and employment, and promotes the socio-economic empowerment of women by backing local development initiatives. AJE supports young artisan tailors and dressmakers as they progress towards formalisation.

The story of Mr Gora Ndiaye is a powerful example of such support. Thanks to AJE, this 37-year-old Senegalese artisan tailor was able to move out of informality and achieve sustainable social and economic integration. Gora had to drop out of school at the age of 11 due to his family's financial difficulties. Having no formal training, he began learning tailoring at the central market in Thiès. After completing his apprenticeship in 2015, he opened his own sewing workshop, "KEUR KHADIM COUTURE." Despite his dedication, his income remained low, as it depended on a limited number of orders. When ill, he would typically resort to self-medication. In 2019, he approached AJE, which helped him through a cooperative entrepreneurship programme. He then joined the *Société Coopérative des Couturiers* ("COOPECOUTURE") [Tailors' and Dressmakers' Cooperative Society] in Thiès.

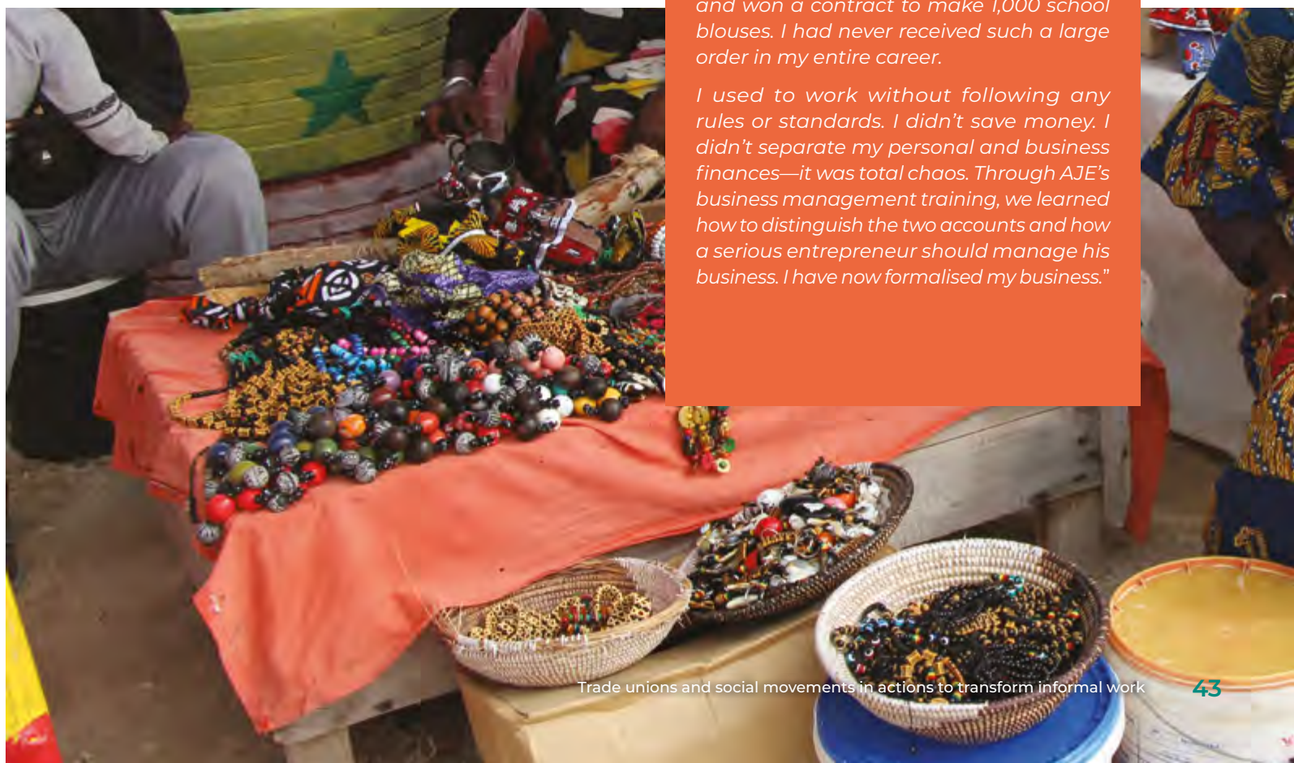
Through AJE and his membership in COOPECOUTURE, Gora Ndiaye received vocational training. Thanks to modern tailoring and sewing techniques, he now imports and sells garments made by other artisans. He has also received training in accounting, management, and entrepreneurship, and has attended awareness sessions on health insurance schemes, social security, literacy, workplace health and safety, and hygiene. Like other members of COOPECOUTURE, Gora received direct support from AJE in formalising his business.

Training and support that paid off!

Gora Ndiaye, an artisan tailor, speaks about the advice and support by AJE that has helped him formalise his professional life:

"My business is now registered with the commercial registry, and I've even submitted my application to obtain the professional Artisan's Card (which certifies the holder as a qualified artisan). Thanks to AJE's support, I've modernised my working methods. Before, I only worked on custom orders, and when I had no orders, everything slowed down. Recently, I responded to a call for tenders and won a contract to make 1,000 school blouses. I had never received such a large order in my entire career.

I used to work without following any rules or standards. I didn't save money. I didn't separate my personal and business finances—it was total chaos. Through AJE's business management training, we learned how to distinguish the two accounts and how a serious entrepreneur should manage his business. I have now formalised my business."



1- Données Banque Mondiale 2023

KEUR KHADIM COUTURE is now a thriving enterprise. It generates a decent income, with profits ranging from XOF 500,000 to XOF 700,000 (€760 to €1,060) during major religious celebrations. The money is reinvested into the business, particularly in purchasing sewing machines, while the rest is saved. Gora Ndiaye now employs five apprentices, two of whom have already obtained vocational training certificates.

A “Maison des Métiers” [House of Trades] to advise and support young people

This support is provided through “La Maison des Métiers” run by AJE in the municipality of Thiès. It has become a professional training centre that responds to a long-standing demand from young people and beneficiaries for structured training, business incubation, and the sharing of good practices.

The advice and support provided by AJE approach draw on existing local knowledge while introducing innovations in training, such as digital learning methods and modules on hygiene, health, safety, environmental awareness, agroecology, etc.

Each year, AJE trains around sixty new artisans in fields such as metal carpentry, tailoring, and social entrepreneurship. These artisans are then supported in developing their business plans, formalising their activities, and organising themselves into cooperatives. Thanks to this support, they gain access to more decent employment, earn incomes above the minimum wage, and benefit from health coverage.

Connecting beneficiaries with microfinance institutions that prioritise youth and women has also been a key success factor of its approach. Integrating women into trades traditionally reserved for men has helped expand employment opportunities and break down gender stereotypes. Furthermore, recognising the skills and expertise of certain cooperative members by training them to become trainers themselves has created a multiplier effect.

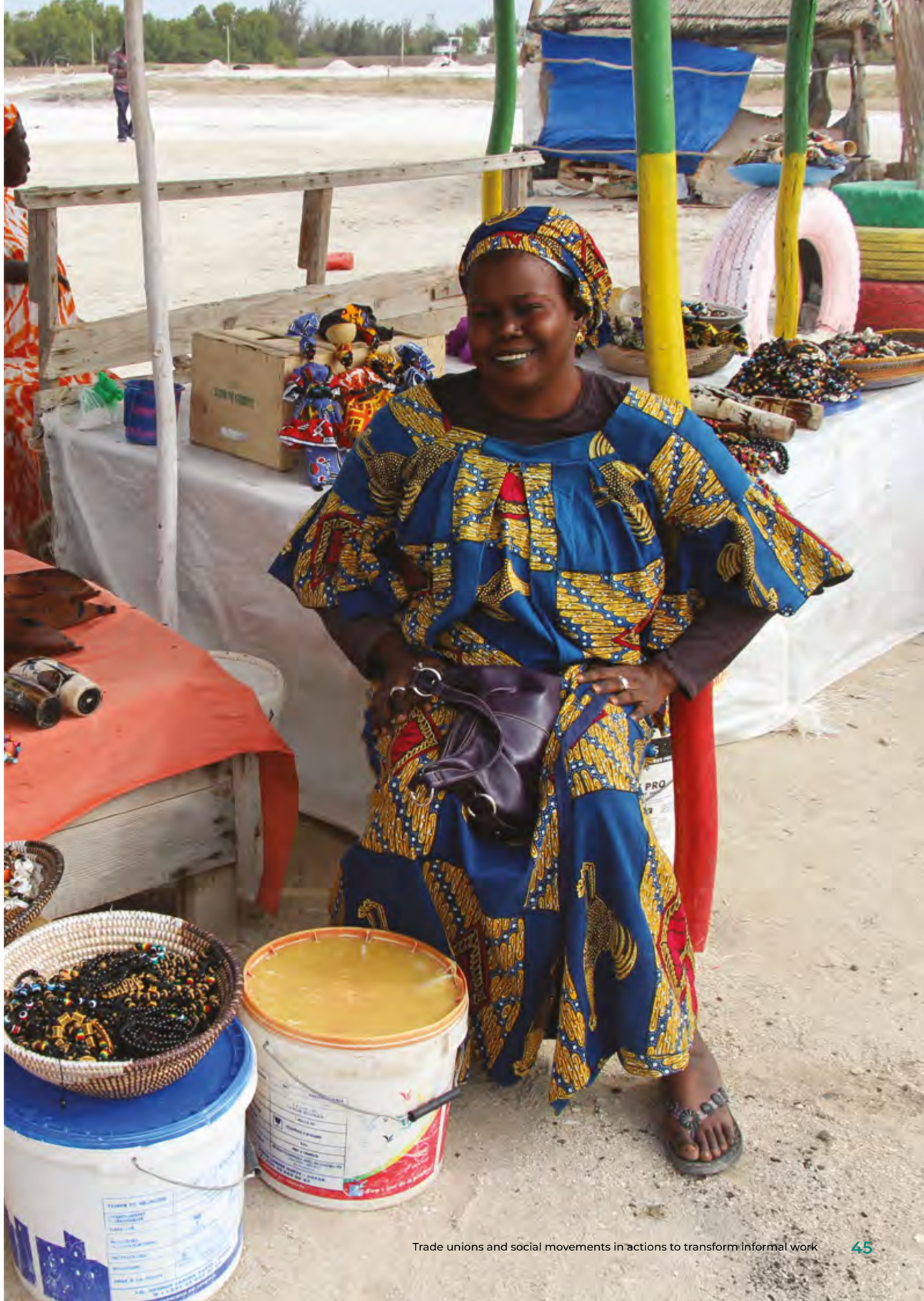
The action of AJE shows that there is indeed a link between the social and solidarity economy and social protection. For its vision is that the future of health insurance—anchored in solidarity, equality, and fairness—depends on the ability to mobilise contributions from self-employed professionals and workers in both the formal and informal economies. This highlights the crucial role of civil society in building a legitimate, widely supported system. Strong solidarity within a social group encourages members to accept that their contributions may serve others. These are economic activities with a human-centred approach and a social or environmental purpose.

Challenges to formalisation

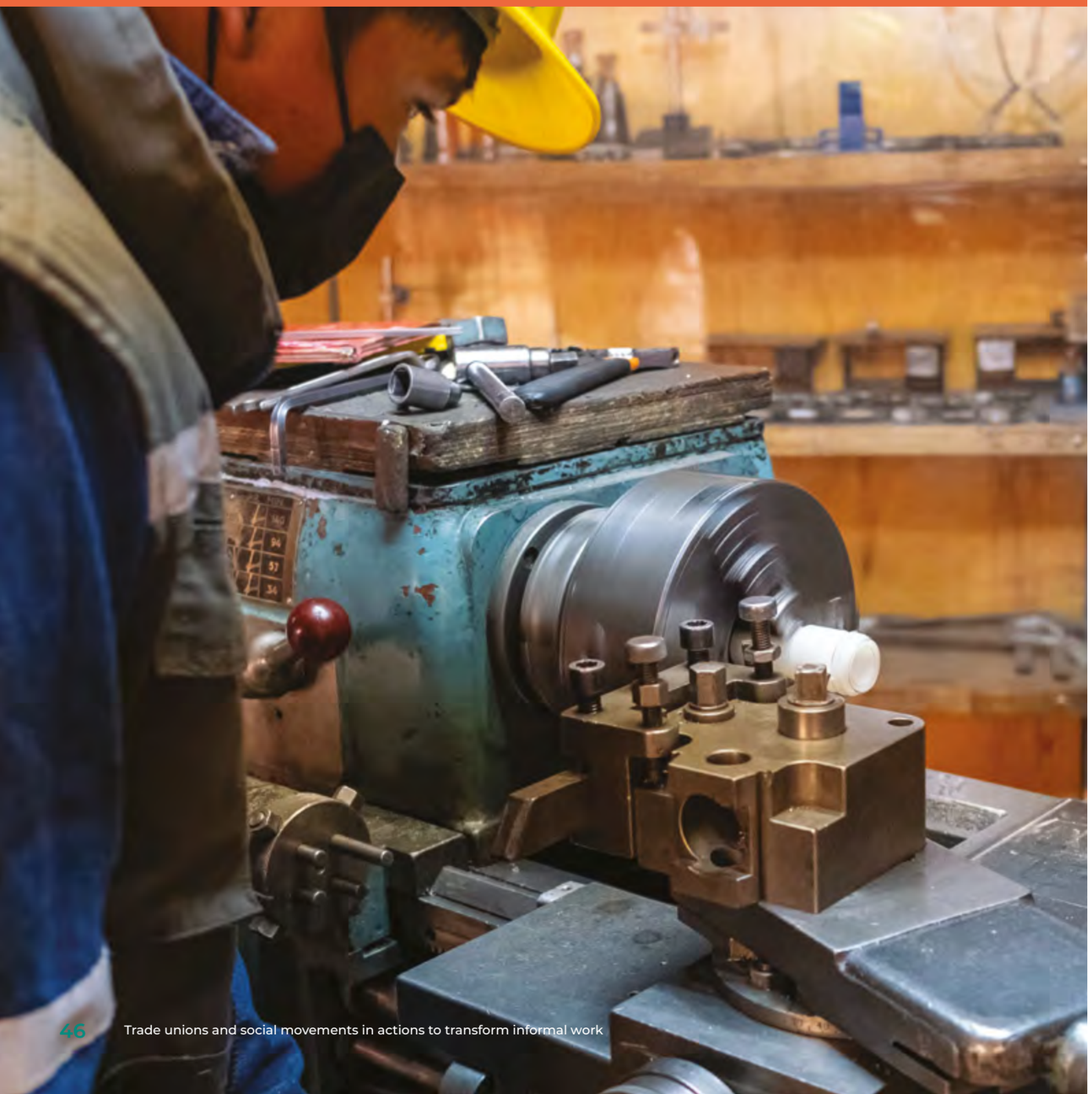
In order to continue facilitating the transition from informal to formal employment, it would be beneficial for the state to support and fund the self-employment of young artisans through appropriate public structures.

Networking, particularly through INSP!R Senegal, is also a powerful advocacy tool for promoting youth self-employment. It can help push for measures that simplify the registration of social and solidarity economy enterprises in official state registries, which remains an administrative hurdle.

A persisting challenge lies in developing a healthcare service that truly meets the specific needs of artisans. Cooperation with mutual health insurance organisations must be further strengthened to achieve this goal.



CONCLUSIONS



The purpose of the innovative initiatives presented in this publication is to transform the daily lives of those involved in the informal economy. They demonstrate the agility of trade unions and social movements, as well as their ability to adapt to real-world conditions. These organisations understand the needs of local populations living with multiple forms of discrimination because they are embedded in the communities and are in contact with and composed of workers themselves.

The adoption of Recommendation 204 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015 called on the various stakeholders to take responsibility so as to work collectively towards transitioning the informal economy into the formal economy.

In this regard, the R204 has on emphasised on several occasions that the State "should make use of tripartite mechanisms with the full participation of the most representative employers' and workers' organisations, which should include in their rank, according to national practice, representatives of membership-based representative organisations of workers and economic units in the informal economy" (Articles 6, 34, and 38).

Globally, however, progress remains slow ten years on: the number of informal workers continues to rise and now exceeds two billion.[1] Advancements are unevenly distributed across different regions of the world—Asia, the Pacific, and Europe have recorded the most significant progress, whereas other regions lag behind. In these latter regions, States struggle to implement coherent, comprehensive, and coordinated frameworks to combat this scourge.

Trade unions and social movements recognise that those most affected by informality are individuals who face multiple forms of discrimination and are therefore vulnerable—women, young people, the elderly, migrants, temporary workers, people with disabilities, and indigenous populations, among others. Certain sectors are more affected than others, including agriculture, construction, textiles, domestic work, and care services. As a result, trade unions and social movements naturally gear their efforts to these groups, demonstrating to State authorities the urgent need to establish integrated policy frameworks tailored to the specific populations concerned. The successes achieved prove that, availing themselves of their diversity and wealth of experience, trade unions and civil society organisations are capable of raising awareness, providing support, and strengthening the States in the development of these frameworks.

For the trade unions and social movements whose actions are featured in this publication, it is clear that formalisation cannot be achieved in the short term. Frequently confronted with structural obstacles and a lack of coordination (or even political will from States), these organisations implement initiatives aimed at making decent work a reality for informal workers.

Trade unions remain active, continuously raising awareness, training, organising, and supporting informal workers so that they can participate in the social dialogue and thus assert their rights to decent work.

Social movements are not lagging behind. Health mutual insurance companies organise individuals to ensure access to quality and affordable healthcare. Cooperatives help increase and stabilise the incomes of their members. Some social and solidarity economy initiatives invest in continuous training to enhance young people's opportunities in the labour market. Finally, certain organisations facilitate access to social security for workers.

Social movements also advocate for the voice of these workers to be heard by means of an institutionalised dialogue, so that that integrated policy frameworks are designed to meet their needs in optimal fashion.

The organisations ACV-CSC, WSM, and LCM-ANMC (Alliance of Christian Mutual Insurance Organisations of Belgium) are aware of the specific role they have to play. Given their cooperation with trade unions and social movements worldwide, they endeavour to ensure that these various stakeholders continue to cooperate, including through networks such as the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) and INSP!R, which bring together a diverse range of stakeholders.

The challenges ahead are numerous and substantial, so it is essential to unite efforts in implementing R204.

1- "Innovative approaches to addressing informality and promoting the transition to formality for decent work." ILC.113/Report VI, 2025.

Several recommendations can be drawn from the wealth of concrete actions highlighted in the preceding chapters to fuel discussions set to take place in Geneva in June 2025, during the General Discussion on "Promoting Transitions to Formality".

1. More States must, as a matter of urgency, establish **integrated, coherent, and coordinated frameworks and policies at all levels of government and in cooperation with the various stakeholders involved**, in order to ensure the formalisation of economies. This is a matter of social justice and a key lever in combating inequality and precariousness. These frameworks must, without fail, be consulted upon, discussed, negotiated, monitored, and evaluated in a tripartite mechanism, through effective **social dialogue** bringing together social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and the State. Where informal workers are not organised in trade unions, it is essential that their voices be heard through an **institutionalised dialogue** that takes their point of view into account, so as to ensure a human rights-based approach. To monitor the proper implementation of policy frameworks, labour inspection mechanisms must be strengthened to enhance their effectiveness.

2. The initiatives and **stakeholders in the social and solidarity economy** must be recognised as innovative forces driving formalisation. They offer alternatives (to the traditional market economy) rooted in local communities, prioritising human well-being, fair profit redistribution, solidarity, and democratic governance. They generate decent work and extend universal social protection to workers in the informal economy. The social and solidarity economy—including access to financing—should be promoted and recognised within integrated policy frameworks.

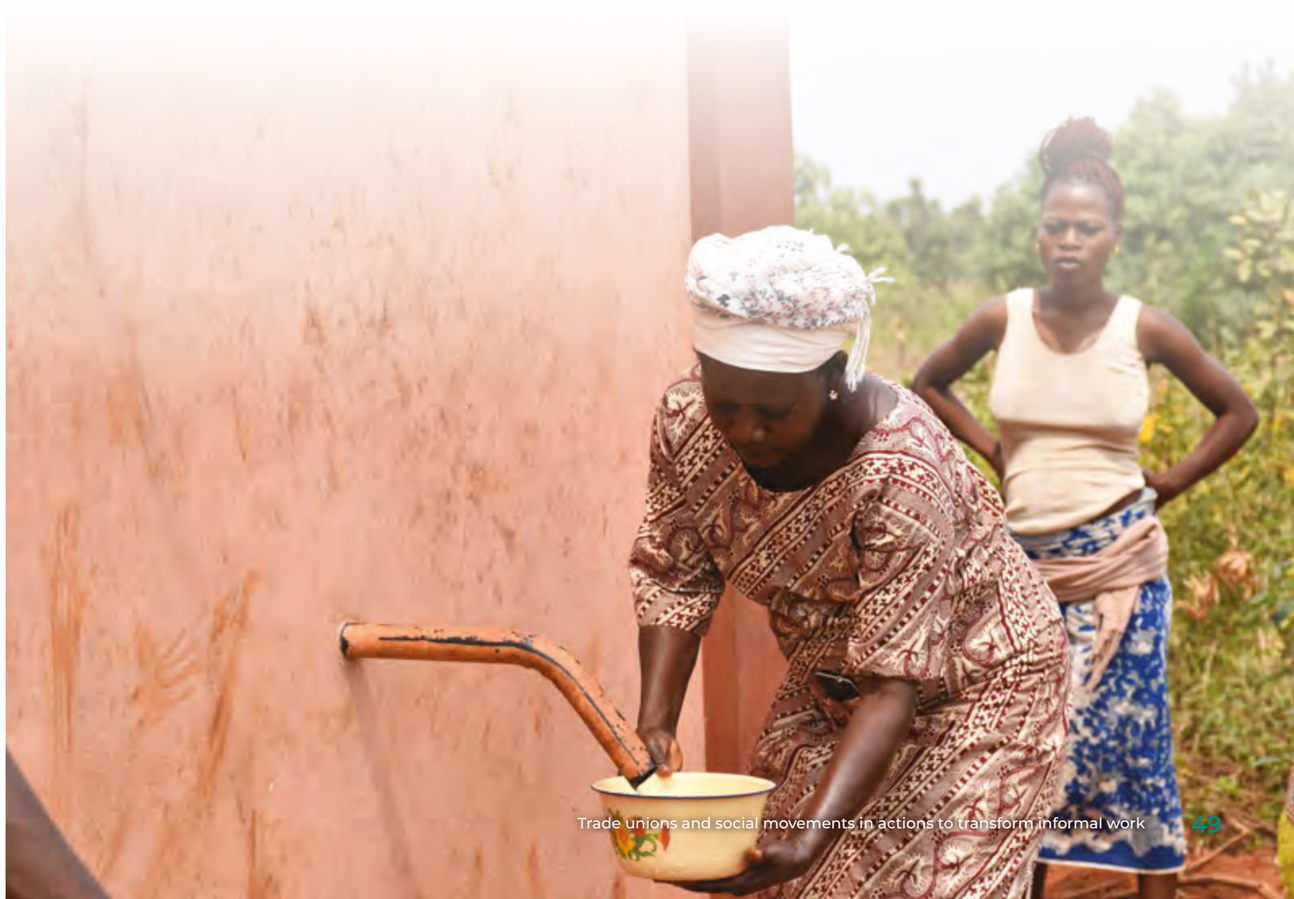
3. **Particular attention must be given to individuals facing multiple forms of discrimination**, including women, young people, the elderly, the LGBTQI+ community, people with disabilities, migrant populations, and indigenous peoples. These groups are overrepresented in the informal economy, more exposed than others to its negative impacts, and must therefore benefit from a systematic and tailored approach. To that end, State authorities must cooperate with trade unions and social movements, which are in direct contact with these populations and have experience working alongside them.

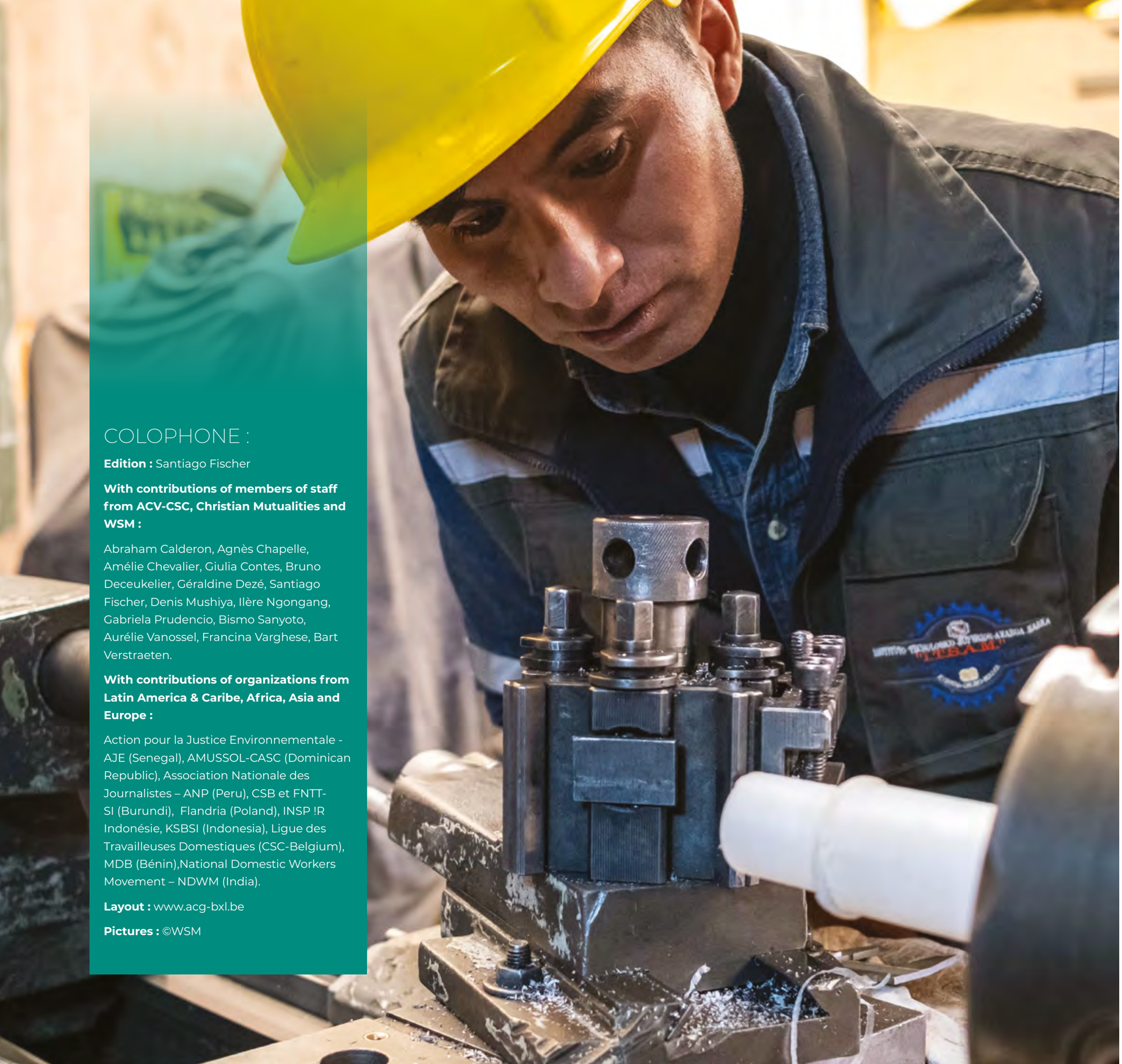
4. The integrated policy frameworks must prioritise the development of comprehensive **social protection** policies designed to guide and support workers for the risks they face across their life cycle. These policies must be aligned with ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202, while making sure that trade unions (through social dialogue) and other social movements (through an institutionalised dialogue) are actively involved in their design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

5. State authorities must recognise, value, and provide organisational, institutional, and financial support to health **mutual insurance organisations** and other civil society organisations delivering healthcare services. These stakeholders contribute to the formalisation of workers by helping them assert their right to universal social protection.

6. **The shrinking of civic space** is now a serious and growing threat to freedom of association and democracy itself. Organising workers is a fundamental right, so that they can build collective power (against the State and economic players) and to secure and defend other rights. This shrinking space is manifested in various forms—the criminalisation of trade union and social movement leaders, increased surveillance, restrictions on the right to strike, repressive laws against peaceful assemblies, and smear campaigns targeting trade unions and social movements—all of which have a devastating impact on workers, their collective organisations, and democracy! Often fuelled by economic interests and/or authoritarian regimes, this climate of repression endangers not only fundamental rights but also the collective efforts essential to achieving social and climate justice. States and international institutions have a responsibility to take concrete measures to ensure that trade unions and social movements can continue to organise themselves and act freely, without intimidation or violence, within an open and protected civic space.

7. **Climate change** is a global phenomenon that creates inequalities within and between countries. It disproportionately affects the most marginalized, threatening the fight against poverty, with a high risk for women, who are particularly vulnerable. In implementing a just transition, it is essential to recognize and value the expertise and contribution of informal workers to reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change, as they are exposed to specific occupational health and safety risks and must therefore be included in the creation of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. Solidarity mechanisms should be set up between States, specifically aimed at informal workers, to implement just transition.





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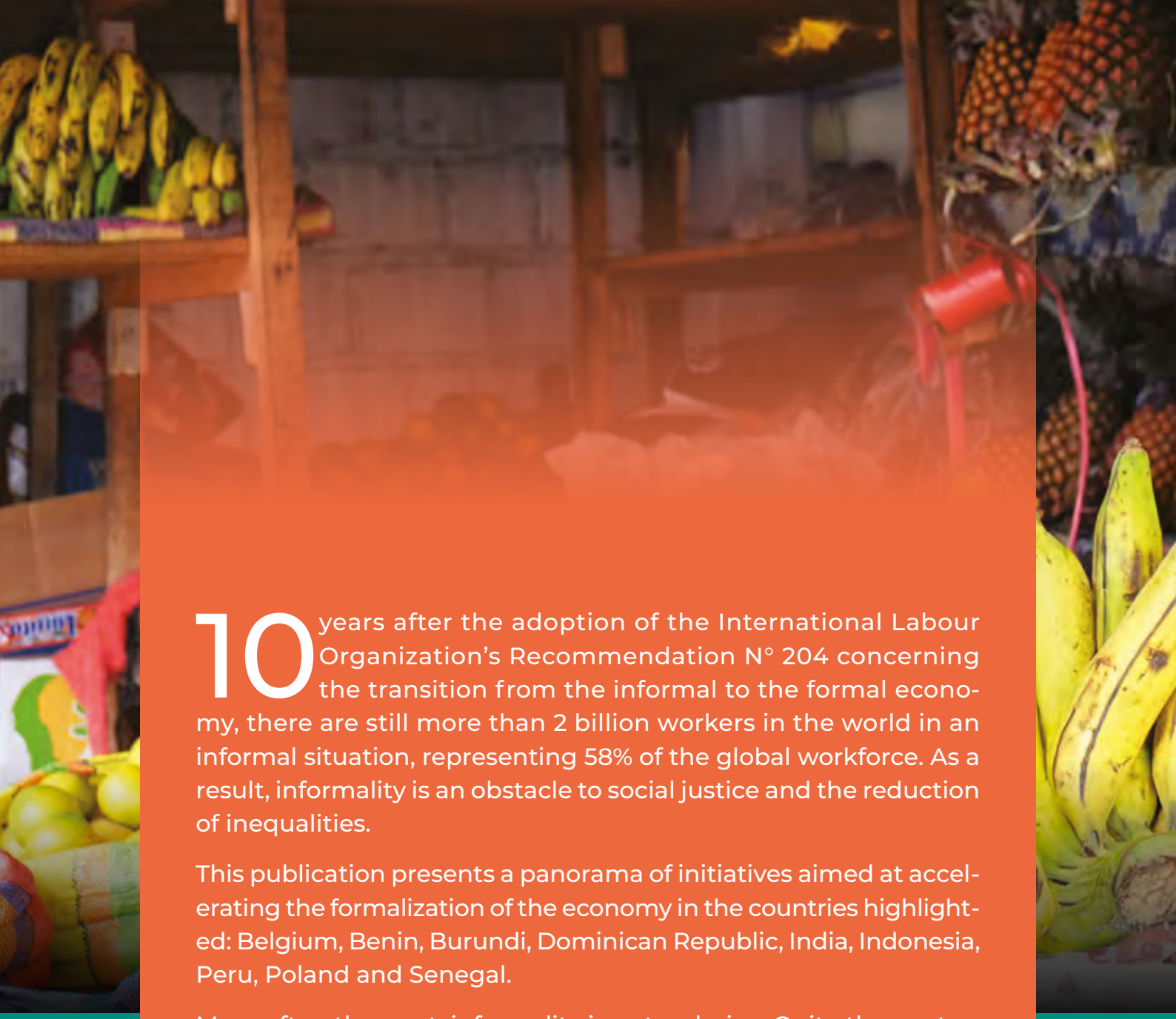

10 years after the adoption of the International Labour Organization's Recommendation N° 204 concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy, there are still more than 2 billion workers in the world in an informal situation, representing 58% of the global workforce. As a result, informality is an obstacle to social justice and the reduction of inequalities.

This publication presents a panorama of initiatives aimed at accelerating the formalization of the economy in the countries highlighted: Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Dominican Republic, India, Indonesia, Peru, Poland and Senegal.

More often than not, informality is not a choice. Quite the contrary! State initiative is often lacking. As a result, trade unions, mutual health organisations, cooperatives, actors in the social and solidairty economy and other social movements, including their respective networks, are getting the ball rolling. Through their creativity and perseverance, they are generating concrete progress in terms of access to quality employment, stable incomes, safer and healthier wokrplaces and adequate social protection. That is how we seek to transform the informal economy.

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