



Occupational Health & Safety and Informal
Workers:

Perspectives and Experiences from WIEGO

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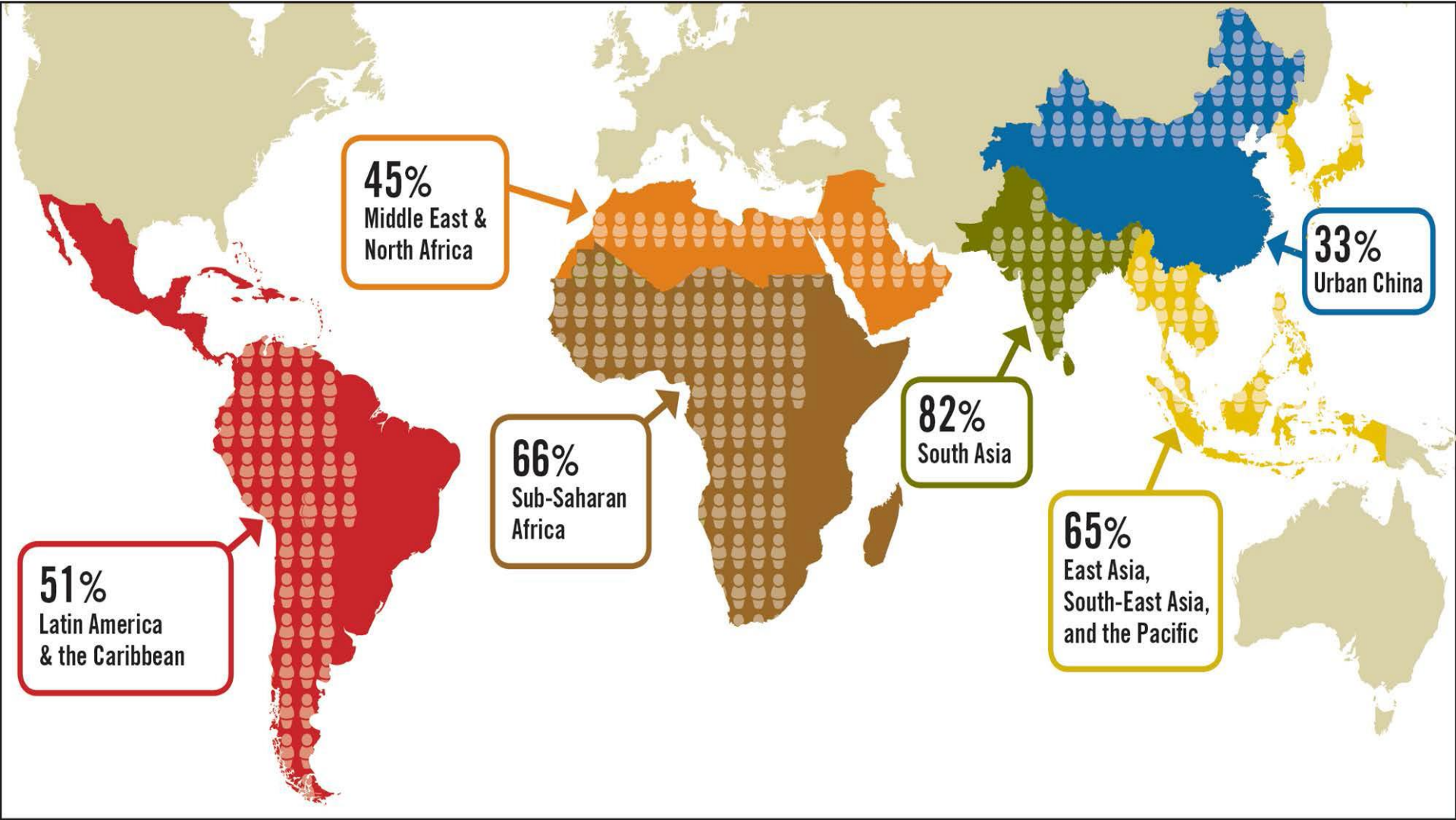
Market vendor Vida Ofori from Makola Market in downtown Accra, poses for Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images.

What is WIEGO?

- Global network of:
 - Researchers
 - Development practitioner
 - Membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers across 40 countries.
- Basic idea: Poverty reduction is not possible without addressing the poor working conditions and incomes of the majority of the world's workers in the informal economy.
- Informal Workers need **Visibility, Voice & Validity**.
 - Organization & Representation
 - Urban Policies
 - Statistics
 - Law
 - Social Protection



The Informal Economy: Some Facts & Figures



51%
Latin America
& the Caribbean

45%
Middle East &
North Africa

66%
Sub-Saharan
Africa

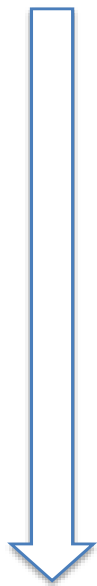
82%
South Asia

65%
East Asia,
South-East Asia,
and the Pacific

33%
Urban China

The Informal Economy... ...is heterogenous

Poverty Risk
Average Earnings



High



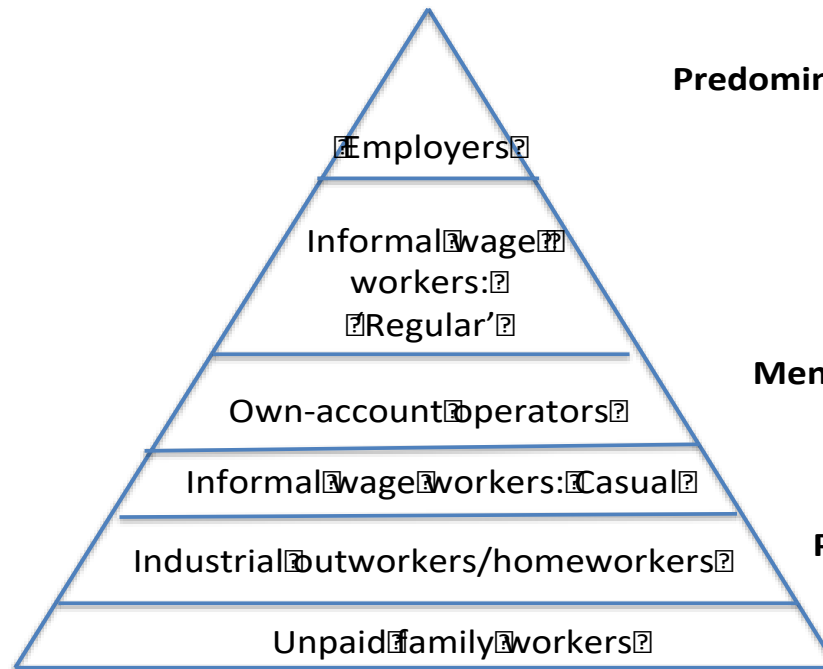
Low

Segmentation by Sex

Predominantly Men

Men and Women

Predominantly Women



South African Data

	% of TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	% of TOTAL FEMALE EMPLOYMENT	% of TOTAL MALE EMPLOYMENT
Informal Sector	35	29.7	39.2
Formal Sector	55.7	55.3	56.1
Households	9.2	15	4.8

Source: ILO, 2018.

Highlights from QLFS Data Analysis

- The gender composition of the IS has changed since 2009: **women no longer dominate.**
- Relative to men, **women are more likely to be own-account workers** and less likely to be employers.
- Women **earn 75 percent of male earnings**, even controlling for hours worked and occupation.
- Average earnings in the IS in 2011 **were R1733/month**, compared to R5000 in the formal sector.

Source: Rogan, M & Skinner, C. 2017.

Household Data

- Informal employment is a significant contributor to poverty reduction:
 - 9 % of income keeping households above the poverty line comes from social grants
 - 14% of income keeping households above the poverty line comes from informal employment
 - 38% of income keeping households above the poverty line comes from formal employment
- Supporting the income security of workers in the informal sector is important to poverty reduction.

Source: Rogan, M & Cichello, P. 2017

Informal Workers, OHS & the Law

- Informal workers are excluded from the provisions of the OHS Act (either de jure or de facto) because:
 - There is often no employment relationship
 - They work in unconventional workplaces such as urban public space
- South Africa has ratified the ICESCR, CEDAW and the ILO Occupational Health and Safety Convention, which require member states to extend OHS protection to informal workers.
- Bamu-Chipunza, P. 2018. Extending OHS Law to Informal Workers: The Case of Street Vendors in South Africa: <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/3-OHS-to-Informal-Workers.pdf>

Who are the Informal Sector?



Photo credit: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images: Waste picker Alice Lebitza searches for recyclables—plastic, metal, glass, and paper—in the waste the municipal and private trucks bring to the Boitshepi landfill in South Africa. A member of the Majakathatha Cooperative, she is proud of the work she does, earning an income while reducing what is buried in the landfill.



Photo credit:
Angela
Buckland,
Xolisile Mhlongo
is a Bovine Head
Cook, selling this
traditional
delicacy in the
Warwick
Junction precinct
of Central
Durban.

Informal Workers and Risk

Informal Workers Face Different Risks According to:

- Gender
- Stage in the Life Cycle
- Occupation
- Status in Employment
- Place of Work
- The Terms of Incorporation into Regulatory Regimes

OHS Solutions Must

- Take account of this diversity.
- Understand that informal workers do not operate “outside of the state” although they operate outside of labour regulation. They are included into others systems on adverse, risk-creating terms (e.g. urban systems).
- Assume that self-reliance is the only option for OHS in the informal economy because there is no employer.

Structural & infrastructural constraints to health & safety

“The OHS training helped me to understand that it doesn’t pay to neglect one’s health...The problem is that as traders we have to run our businesses in overcrowded spaces...The drains become blocked regularly, the bins overflow and we are forced to do business without water, toilets or lighting. How do you put OHS training into practice in such an environment?”

- Xolisile Mhlongo, Street Trader, Durban

What this means for OHS interventions

- OHS interventions must allow informal workers to identify the institutions within and outside of the state who could support in overcoming structural and infrastructural deficits:
 - Can the DoL extend its mandate?
 - The municipality (or agricultural extension officer?)
 - A private company relying on the work of informal workers?
 - Other state entities?
 - Trade Unions?

The Importance of Working with Organizations of Informal Workers

- One of the strongest assets held by informal workers are their own membership-based organizations (MBOs).
- If interventions are to provide sustainable benefits, MBOs must be engaged from the start of the process in:
 - ▣ Conceptualizing the work (training & interventions)
 - ▣ Designing the training materials
 - ▣ Delivering the training
 - ▣ Following up on the outcomes



The Phephanathi Project (Be Safe With Us)

A Joint Workplace Hazard Mapping with local municipal officials and traders in Warwick Junction, Durban, South Africa.

The Phephanathi Project

- Collaboration between WIEGO, Asiye eTafuleni and MBOs in Warwick Junction trading area in central Durban: 8000 traders.
- Many OHS concerns:
 - Fire
 - Flooding
 - Respiratory Issues
 - Poor Sanitation
 - Work leading to severe physical fatigue
 - Harassment by local government officials
 - Violence in the workplace
- Phephanathi aimed to build a Health and Safety platform for informal workers which would allow them to access support to address their OHS issues.

Gathering Interest for H&S Committees



Phephanathi Process

- **Engaged with organizations of informal workers in Warwick:**
 - ▣ Formation of local Health and Safety Committees.

- **Provided basic training on OHS & First Aid:**
 - ▣ Training not only to promote behaviour change, but also to:
 - conscientize informal workers to the idea that they are workers and have a right to healthy and safe working conditions.
 - Create an interest in the project from service providers who were used to run the trainings (the fire services within the municipality, the local university medical school).
 - Motivate the trader-led health and safety committees. This was particularly the case with First Aid training which was particularly valued.

Phephanathi Process

- Supported Health & Safety Reps to engage local actors to provide further support and to develop a relationship with these actors:
 - UKZN medical school provided basic diagnostic health screenings inside the market and onward referrals to the health system
 - Findings used to block the development of an unhealthy market roof.
 - Joint Workplace Hazard Assessments with Local Environmental Health Officers as a form of trader-led research
 - Trader-led infrastructure audits, later presented to the municipality
- Implemented small interventions co-designed by workers to support the sense of a health and safety culture

First Aid Stands



Continuing the Work

- Mainstreamed OHS into Asiye eTafuleni's general workplan so that traders have ongoing support, including
 - upgrading of toilet infrastructure through negotiations with the municipality;
 - extending into new areas of work: e.g collaboration with Rhodes University on ergonomic design of waste picker carts, rest time and productivity.

Key Lessons

- OHS interventions should be integrated into a wider programme of work on OHS which:
 - ▣ Strengthens capacity of organizations of informal workers to work on OHS.
 - ▣ Strengthens the capacity of these organizations to derive support from other institutions.
 - ▣ Is ongoing and sustainable – once off interventions of limited use.
- OHS programmes should themselves be integrated into a bigger piece of work. This can also help to promote sustainability, for eg:
 - ▣ micro-enterprise support,
 - ▣ a wider programme of work on urban infrastructure upgrading,
 - ▣ organization building work through trade unions.



THANK YOU!

More Information on Informal Workers:

www.wiego.org