

WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment:
Globalizing and Organizing

Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers

Issue 1: June 2013

“Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers” is a multifaceted project supported by a Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) grant from the Government of the Netherlands. The project seeks to strengthen the organizing and leadership capacity of women working in informal employment so that they gain economic self-reliance and increase their participation in politics, governance and management.

Implemented with WIEGO’s partner networks and organizations, it has six distinct elements:

1. Economic and Employment Rights, Advancing Domestic Workers’ Leadership
2. Developing Leadership and Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade
3. Strengthening Voice and Leadership of Informal Women Workers Around Social Policy Issues (Peru)
4. Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers
5. Women’s Leadership Assembly 2014
6. Strengthening the Global Movement of Street and Market Vendors

This newsletter provides updates for 2012 on the first two project elements. Other elements will be featured in future newsletters.

Feature Element Economic and Employment Rights - Advancing Domestic Workers’ Leadership

Building the International Network

In June 2012, domestic workers and their organizations celebrated the first anniversary of the adoption of the international Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers—C189—in conjunction with the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva. June 16 was declared International Domestic Workers Day. The International Domestic Workers’ Network (IDWN), together with the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) organized a global event at the



ILC in Geneva on this day. More than 80 participants from over 30 countries participated in this event. Activities were also held around the globe to advocate for domestic workers’ rights (see www.idwn.info - NEWS section on 10 July 2012).

Awareness of C189 among domestic workers themselves—a crucial first step in achieving the goals of this workers’ rights movement—was bolstered by targeting workers through various activities.

By the end of 2012, seven national legislatures had ratified C189 (and by May 2013 all had completed the ratification process): Uruguay, Philippines, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Italy, Bolivia and Paraguay. At least six more were moving toward ratification. In Guinea, Jamaica, Philippines, Tanzania, Benin and South Africa, domestic worker organizations discussed the question of ratification with their governments.

Seven domestic worker leaders, all members of the IDWN Steering Committee, attended the IUF 26th Congress and the World Women Conference. The Congress adopted a resolution to support the ratification of C189 and organizing of domestic workers.

The IDWN is building and formalizing its democratic structures by recruiting MBOs. By December 31, 22 organizations had become affiliates of the IDWN. Together, they represent over 123,000 members.



Top: C189 at the ILC, Geneva 2011. Photo: D. Tsoutouras

Bottom: In June 2012, International Domestic Workers’ Day was celebrated at the ILC in Geneva and around the world. Photo: IDWN

Communication globally improved with the launch of the IDWN website (www.idwn.info), distribution of a newsletter in September 2012, and monthly e-newsletters to keep over 6,000 subscribers up to date. Information was also disseminated on Facebook and Twitter.

The IDWN is preparing to host its Founding Congress in Uruguay in October 2013. As 2013 opened, IDWN affiliates began consulting on the creation of a draft Constitution for the network, to be adopted at the Founding Congress.

Improving Legal Protection for Domestic Workers

Throughout 2012, domestic workers campaigned to pressure governments to adopt or enforce laws that protect the rights of domestic workers. Domestic worker laws were passed in the Philippines and Thailand. In Singapore, domestic workers won the right to time off for rest, and in Malaysia and Taiwan, overtime pay for working on a day off was achieved.

Concrete plans and programs to achieve legal protection were also developed by organizations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. In India the campaign for state-level (Maharashtra) law and an enforcement mechanism began. In Bangladesh, the Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy was pursued.

In Africa and Latin America, the focus has been more on enforcement of existing laws. For example, in Tanzania, gaps between current labour laws and the requirements of C189 relating to domestic workers' rights have been tabled to a tripartite committee on domestic work for discussion, and action is expected within a year.

Organizing and Networking ...in Asia

Workshops in China, in late November, and Indonesia, in early December, trained 30 domestic workers on trade unions, organizational management and organizing techniques.

Also in Indonesia, a national workshop was held with a strong alliance – KAPPRT (or Domestic Workers Action Committee). Recently formed it brings together the national network and all the major trade union national centres to work toward ratification of C189.

In India, at least 10 domestic worker organizations were engaged in the process of transforming themselves into trade unions with domestic workers paying membership dues.



Domestic Workers Workshop in Peru, 2012. Photo: IDWN

...in Africa

From December 2-5, the African regional workshop in Cape Town was attended by 23 leaders from domestic worker unions in Benin, Guinea, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The workshop resulted in a plan to form a network of all domestic worker organizations in Africa and to launch this network in June 2013. An exchange was also planned between domestic worker organizations in Tanzania and a union in Belgium.

In Southern Africa, the Southern Trade Union Council-SATUC supported trade unions and domestic workers' organizations to develop common strategies on recruitment and organized a common platform to push governments in the region to ratify C189.

From October 16-19 an additional workshop was held in Senegal, while in South Africa, the domestic workers' union SADSAWU developed rules to oblige its members to pay dues.

...in Latin America

The Peru National Workshop in December brought 42 domestic workers from Peru and representatives from Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia together to discuss strategies that would strengthen the regional network, CONLACTRAHO, and facilitate more mutual support between the region and the IDWN. Participants also reviewed their advocacy strategies to achieve ratification of C189 and agreed to organize more joint campaigns and actions to maximize their impacts and to make better use of social media to reach into communities.

Developing Leadership and Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade

The project kicked off with an inception workshop in Kampala, Uganda in December 2012.

Fourteen representatives of Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative (Uganda), KEFAT (Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade), NAWOU (National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda), UGAFAT (Ugandan Federation for Alternative Trade) and WIEGO took part. The participants looked in depth at the project programme and design, considered the value of participatory methodologies, reviewed existing literature that might be of use in developing training materials, and shared experiences of economic empowerment of women and capacity building. A resource person attending from NAWOU made a presentation on NAWOU's approach to women's empowerment.

As well as confirming all partners' understanding of the overall FLOW project, the workshop provided an opportunity for all present to learn from each other and discuss how to increase women's leadership and business skills. Time was spent drawing up plans for structuring and implementing the project. Partners then began work on developing the concept of the project into firm operational work plans for their own network or cooperative.

A second introductory workshop was held in Kumasi, Ghana in January 2013.

Strengthening the Voice & Leadership of Informal Women Workers on Social Policy Issues

This project, focused in Peru, conducted advanced planning and made important connections with National Government authorities at key Ministries and at the Lima City Government. The project team was assembled and partner participation of workers, government, and NGO allies was secured.

Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers

Planning and budgeting activities were carried out in 2012, and several consultations across four regions took place with home-based worker organizers and leaders. Mapping of home-based worker organizations was also conducted in capital cities in Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Nicaragua. A report with solid information on organizations, a list of contacts, key issues, challenges and recommendations was completed. The report also



Improved clay stove, GUMUTINDO, Uganda 2012. Photo: C. Wills

included a short overview of the legislative situation pertaining to home-based workers in Argentina and Peru. More in-depth legal/policy analysis will be undertaken in 2013.

Plans for 2013 include capacity building workshops for women home-based workers leaders in India; exchange visits between home-based workers and organizers from India and South East Europe countries (Macedonia, Albania, Turkey); a regional meeting of HBWs and organizers in Lima, Peru; mapping of home-based worker organizations in 3 African countries.

Strengthening the Global Movement of Street and Market Vendors

This collaborative project aims to build the organizational strength and bargaining-negotiating-advocacy capacity of StreetNet affiliates and assist them in achieving their goals for supportive urban laws, regulations, and policies, as well as for adequate housing, infrastructure, and other essential services. It is supporting the development of StreetNet affiliates' abilities to foster the official recognition of street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers as workers.

Women' Leadership Assembly

The General Assembly will be held in Cambodia in 2014. Women leaders from around the world will gather to learn, share experiences and strengthen alliances.