

# GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution  
to Chapter 5: Caring**  
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways  
to urban and territorial equality*

**Public Space Trading**

**Innovations in Delhi, India**

**and Durban, South Africa**

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# Public Space Trading Innovations in Delhi, India and Durban, South Africa

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**ORGANISATION NAME**

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing  
& Asiye eTafuleni

**CITIES/COUNTRIES IT COVERS**

Delhi (India) and Durban (South Africa)

**CHAPTER**

5: Caring

## SUMMARY

Public space trading is a key source of livelihood for millions of people across the Global South but also in the Global North. It is a significant source of employment, especially for women and migrants and other marginalised groups. Street vendors and market traders provide affordable goods and services at convenient locations to often low-income urbanites. Research repeatedly confirms informal traders play a critical role in urban food security. Despite these contributions, local authorities seldom provide enough, appropriately located, space nor infrastructure and services to maximise livelihood opportunities and the contribution of public space traders to city life. We contend that if and how public space traders are incorporated within a city is a key indicator of how 'caring' it is.

## Introduction



Sanitation Station in Delhi  
Source: WIEGO / Social Design Collaborative, 2020: 9.

Public space trading is a key source of livelihood for millions of people across the Global South but also in the Global North. It is a significant source of employment, especially for women and migrants and other marginalised groups. Street vendors and market traders provide affordable goods and services at convenient locations to often low-income urbanites. Research repeatedly confirms informal traders play a critical role in urban food security.<sup>1</sup> Despite these contributions, local authorities seldom provide enough, appropriately located, space nor infrastructure and services to maximise livelihood opportunities and the contribution of public space traders to city life.<sup>2</sup> We contend that if and how public space traders are incorporated within a city is a key indicator of how 'caring' it is.

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020, minimizing the risk of spreading the virus became a critical challenge for public space traders. This built on, and amplified, previous challenges. This Case-Based Contribution to the UCLG GOLD VI Report draws on the

work of street trader organizations and their urban practitioners allies in Delhi, India and Durban, South Africa. In Delhi the Self Employed Women's Association<sup>3</sup> and Janpahal<sup>4</sup> worked with the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)<sup>5</sup> Delhi Focal City team and in Durban trader leaders were supported by the non-governmental organisation Asiye eTafuleni.<sup>6</sup> These teams provided basic infrastructure, especially wash stations, spatially redesigned trading areas, instituted social distancing measures, and engaged with local authorities. We outline the different approaches in both cities and conclude by highlighting what this suggests for how cities should be responding to public space trading to minimize health risks and maximize livelihood opportunities.



Spray painting information dissemination signs in Delhi  
Source: WIEGO / Social Design Collaborative, 2020: 9.

1. See Consuming Urban Poverty: Food systems planning & governance in Africa's Secondary Cities; The Partnership - Hungry Cities, <https://consumingurbanpoverty.wordpress.com/>; and AFSUN – The African Food Security Network, <https://afsun.org/>.

2. Roever and Skinner, 2016; Skinner, Harvey and Reed, 2018.

3. See: <https://www.sewa.org/>.

4. See: <https://www.janpahal.org/>.

5. See: <http://www.wiego.org>.

6. See: <http://www.aet.org>.

## Contributions of street vendors and market traders<sup>7</sup>

Labour force survey data show there is a significant overlap between working informally and being poor, with many informal workers living and working on the periphery of cities constantly navigating infrastructure and service deficits.<sup>8</sup>

**Interventions that make informal worker livelihoods more secure and lucrative are a key pathway to addressing inequalities, including urban and territorial ones.**

Estimates generated from the 2017-18 Period Force Labour Survey found that 80% of Delhi's employment is informal.<sup>9</sup> A slightly higher percentage of men workers than women workers are informally employed (82 per cent for men and 76 per cent for women). They found that street vendors account for 2.7% of total employment in Delhi or 167 000 people.<sup>10</sup> The Self Employment Women's Union calculations suggest this may be an undercount – they estimate there are close to 300 000 street vendors in the city.<sup>11</sup> Durban's informal economy is smaller. Informal employment makes up just over one-quarter of total employment (26%) in the city.<sup>12</sup> In the Durban case a slightly higher percentage of women workers than men workers are informally employed (27% for women and 25% for men). These data find just over 37 000 street vendors and market traders in the city contributing 3% to total employment.<sup>13</sup> Again, other assessments suggest likely undercounting. Reform Development Consulting for example, in one of their counts, found just under 90 000 vendors in Durban.<sup>14</sup> Labour force survey data do suggest that women tend to be found in less lucrative trade.<sup>15</sup> Given the dynamism of public space trading, exact street vendor numbers are inherently difficult to secure.<sup>16</sup>

There is a substantial body of evidence that highlights the role played by informal traders in food security. For example, the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) found that 70% of the low-income households they surveyed across 11 sub-Saharan African cities sourced food from informal outlets, with 59% of the households reporting that they patronize informal food outlets once a week or more.<sup>17</sup> Further, the more food insecure the household, the more likely it is to rely on informal food sources.<sup>18</sup> Another study of cities in mostly sub-Saharan African found that the daily energy intake from street foods by adults ranged from 13 to 50 percent, and that street foods contributed around half of daily protein intake in several cities.<sup>19</sup> These findings are echoed in similar studies in Kitwe (Zambia), Kisumu (Kenya) and Epworth (Zimbabwe) and in cities beyond Africa – Nanjing (China), Bangalore (India),<sup>20</sup> Kingston (Jamaica) and Mexico City (Mexico).<sup>21</sup> This evidence suggests that **vendors provide accessible and affordable food that in some contexts is fresher and better quality than that found in supermarkets.**

7. For a full discussion on the contributions of traders to urban systems see Skinner et al., 2018, 6-10.

8. Chen and Skinner, 2021.

9. Raveendran and Vanek, 2020, 1.

10. Ibid, 4.

11. See SEWA Delhi.

12. Rogan, 2019, 2; using the 2018 Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

13. Ibid, 4.

14. Reform Development Consulting, 2010.

15. Chen and Skinner, 2021, 5.

16. Roever, 2011.

17. Crush and Frayne, 2011, 799.

18. Ibid, 801.

19. Steyn et al., 2013, 1363-74.

20. For additional evidence from India see Mukherjee, 2020; and Patel, 2014.

21. See findings of the Consuming Urban Poverty and Hungry Cities projects cited in footnote 1.

Prototyping social distancing through role play in Delhi  
Source: WIEGO / Social Design Collaborative, 2020: 9.



## Local authority responses to street vending in Delhi and Durban

Across India and **Delhi**, street vending is ubiquitous. India's 2014 Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending Act is widely viewed as progressive. The Act identifies street vending as a legitimate vocation that needs to be protected and promoted and protects 'natural markets': places where sellers and buyers tend to congregate. It requires urban authorities conduct surveys, and issue vending certificates, suggesting these are provided for up to 2.5% of the population. It requires the establishment of Town Vending Committees (TVC). Chaired by the Municipal Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer of the Municipality, the TVC is intended to be a committee of all stakeholders: government officials from a range of relevant departments, street vendors and civil society representatives. The Act stipulates that street vendor representatives must constitute 40% of the TVC members with an additional 10 per cent coming from NGOs.

**Implementation of India's street vending law however has been slow or non-existent.**<sup>22</sup> In Delhi, street vendor and market trader evictions are routine: between January 2017 and September 2018 alone, vendor petitioners challenged evictions 22 times, of which the High Court of Delhi ruled against vendors in 14 cases.<sup>23</sup> Vendors are often moved to spaces under flyovers, back streets without any footfall or relocated and confined within designated 'zones'. **These cycles of eviction and relocation take no note of 'natural markets' in violation of the Act.**

India however has a rich history of street vendor organising and advocacy, which led to the adoption of the Street Vending Act. Street



Demarcating spaces for customers in Delhi  
Source: WIEGO / Social Design Collaborative, 2020: 9.

vendors are affiliated with many different organisations and have self-formed unions at the market level. The Self-Employed Women's Association movement in Delhi began working with women vegetable vendors in urban slums of North Delhi. Now, there are around 6,000 street vendors in the SEWA Delhi union from across four of Delhi's most deprived areas – Raghubhir Nagar, Sundarnagari, Seelampur and Jahangirpuri. SEWA Delhi is also responsible for helping organize Delhi's one and only all-women's market. Janpahal is a community and labour-based organisation that works with low-income families and informal workers. They help organize street vendors in the city as part of the Hawkers Joint Action Committee and work with vendors in East Delhi.

During this period, Delhi has been preparing a new Master Plan setting out the vision for Delhi until 2041. Despite 80 percent of Delhi's employment being informal and less than quarter of the city living in 'planned colonies', the Master Plan envisages skyscrapers and high-end housing. **The master planning process elicited a response**

<sup>22</sup> CCS, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Centre for Civil Society, 2019.

from a diverse coalition of allies representing slum and informal workers' rights, environmental defenders and others including WIEGO's Delhi team. They launched the Main Bhi Dilli ("I, too, am Delhi") Campaign, which calls for the master plan to adequately address the issues of livelihood and habitat for the urban poor.<sup>24</sup>

Durban's recent responses to public space trading have also been exclusionary. This is despite the fact that for a 10-year period (1996 to 2006) the city was lauded as having an inclusionary approach. During this time, the city acknowledged the presence of street vendors and market traders. They provided appropriately designed infrastructure tailor made to different trades and predicated their work on community participation. The city developed and adopted an informal economy policy, widely recognized as an international best practice.<sup>25</sup> In the build up to hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup, the city decided to build a mall in the inner-city trade and transport hub: the Warwick Junction. **The plans would have destroyed a network of 9 markets and thousands of trader livelihoods.**<sup>26</sup> This period catalyzed the founding of Asiye eTafuleni, which stood alongside the traders who successfully resisted the mall plans. Since 2010 public space traders have been subject to periodic removals and those who are allowed to operate are not provided with appropriate infrastructure nor services.<sup>27</sup>

From its conception, **Asiye eTafuleni has employed a bottom-up process of empowering informal workers with urban development skills.** In 2015 Asiye eTafuleni initiated the Kanyenathi ("with us" in isiZulu) Project, thanks to which traders were trained to identify and prioritize their infrastructure needs. This then enabled a process for traders to engage with the city officials on an ongoing basis. Whilst the project ended in 2017 Asiye eTafu-

leni has continued to provide the secretariat for community meetings between the trader leaders and city officials. **Through the project traders have acquired the skills to interact constructively with the City, resist inappropriate infrastructure and advocate for their rights.**<sup>28</sup>



Trader signage on social distancing in Durban  
Source: Asiye eTafuleni

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, in March 2020, public space traders in both cities had at best experienced benign neglect and at worst been subject to violent removals. They however had organizations of traders with experience of navigating the city and a group of urban practitioner allies. India and South Africa went into hard lockdown in April 2020. Research conducted by WIEGO found 90% of vendor interviewees in Delhi and 96% in Durban did not work in April. By July while 53% of interviewees had returned to work in Delhi and 71% in Durban, the vast majority of interviewees reported substantially lower incomes in comparison to pre-Covid-19 levels. Most vendors used saved capital to feed themselves and their families. In this context, **restarting livelihood has become even more difficult.** Both groups have struggled to access state support in the form of cash grants and/or small business support.<sup>29</sup>

24. See Sinha, 2019 for further details.

25. See Dobson and Skinner, 2009 for details on this period.

26. Skinner, 2009.

27. Skinner, 2017.

28. See Kanyenathi Project – Asiye eTafuleni [aet.org.za] for more details, <https://aet.org.za/category/kanyenathi-project/>.

29. WIEGO, 2020a; WIEGO, 2020b.

## Public space trading innovations in Delhi in 2020

When India went into lockdown in March 2020 and the city came to a standstill, no public space traders were allowed to operate. It was only in June that the city slowly started reopening again. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority issued a notice to reopen only 24 weekly markets in the city, two per municipal zone, on a pilot basis. The decision was made without input from vendor organisations or other departments. The municipal authority in charge decided which markets would be allowed to operate. This meant that there were frequently contradictory orders – with permissions being granted and then rescinded.

A subgroup of the Main Bhi Dilli Campaign – comprising of vendor organisations (SEWA, Janpahal), urban planners and designers (Indian Institute Human Settlements, Social Design Collaborative, City Sabha) and WIEGO – worked together to advocate for the safe reopening of weekly markets across Delhi, following necessary social distancing norms. They started with pilots in three locations: two weekly markets selling fresh produce, household items and cooked food and one an all-women’s market selling second-hand clothes, footwear, and other household essentials. **They aimed to showcase that street vendors can trade in a way that minimizes health risks, perhaps more so than their formal counterparts.**

**The approach was multipronged and participatory. Information dissemination about COVID-19 and how it spreads was a critical first step.** Prior to commencing trade, information was disseminated via WhatsApp to those traders who had it. The next step was to redesign markets in line with social distancing imperatives. The team plotted layouts for 50% capacity for vendors

who then traded on a rotational basis. The teams experimented with a range of physical distancing layouts, measures and techniques for both vendors and their customers including using ropes and chalk and spray paint markings. Once the markets were opened, vendors led awareness efforts, making regular announcements of safety measures and requirements, and distributing free masks to both vendors and their customers. In addition, Social Design Collaborative worked with vendor leaders to design and develop a stand-alone sanitizer station, using PVC pipes. This was low cost, easy to install and hygienic. They extended their design to include making shelters also using PVC pipes.

During the pilot phase, these low-cost interventions were financed directly by the organizations involved. The urban designers gave their time freely and paid for the materials they used. The masks, ropes, chalk, and pamphlets were paid for by vendor organisations. An important part of the pilot was also taking the lessons to the municipal authorities to advocate for extending the trial reopening and allow all weekly markets to reopen. Additionally, this pilot also fed into the ongoing advocacy for inclusion of informal livelihood issues in the Delhi Master Plan.

**All of this learning and experimentation was systematised into a Manual for safe trading in times of COVID-19.**<sup>30</sup> The manual included health guidelines on how COVID-19 spreads verified by public health experts, strategies to arrange spatial layouts, tips for social distancing, details on how to make your own sanitation station and includes a section on rights with regard to eviction and harassment.

30. See: <https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/file/Street-Vending-in-times-of-COVID-19-%28English%29.pdf>.

## Public space trading innovations in Durban in 2020



Trader signage on social distancing in Durban  
Source: Asiye eTafuleni

As soon as COVID-19 was declared present in South Africa, Asiye eTafuleni commenced their work to minimize health risks for traders and their customers in inner city Durban. In March 2020 they got a local company to donate drums of sanitizer and distributed it to traders from their offices in the heart of Warwick Junction transport node. They also started to work on appropriately designed health messaging for traders.

Over this period together with trader leaders, local public health experts, WIEGO and Asiye eTafuleni developed health guidelines to inform traders about COVID-19 and how it spreads, including making suggestions about how best to minimize risks. **These were translated into isiZulu and Afrikaans and disseminated via WhatsApp to Asiye eTafuleni's databases of traders.** As knowledge about COVID-19 changed – for example the shift in emphasis from surface to air transmission – the guidelines were updated.<sup>31</sup>

Asiye eTafuleni worked alongside street traders in the Warwick area to inform/educate traders to ensure safe physical distancing for traders, their customers and passing

commuters. They developed graphic representations of physical distancing for street level dissemination in pamphlet and poster format. **This work later contributed to national policy guidelines for the South African Local Government Association.**

**Through the *Kanyenathi* project, traders had gained urban design skills and had experience of proactively engaging with the municipality.** Traders have met regularly to workshop solutions to minimize risk and then invite city officials to engage. The *Kanyenathi* committee became a vital platform, and played an influential role, in terms of initiating pandemic related interventions, such as health and spatial protocols and wash stations. The city's approach has largely been punitive. These meetings have provided the opportunity to discuss the immediate needs of informal workers during COVID-19 lockdown and post-lockdown and hold the city to account for commitments they have made. Asiye eTafuleni's role is technical advice and social facilitation services to provide a bridge between informal workers and local government.

31. See *COVID-19 Guidelines for Informal Traders in South Africa*, by WIEGO: <https://www.wiego.org/resources/resources-covid-19-guidelines-informal-traders-south-africa>.

Asiye eTafuleni’s response has included childcare. **For the past few years, Asiye eTafuleni has been part of a collaborative effort to research and design an intervention which will benefit informally working mothers and their children.** The intervention comes in the form of an affordably priced, micro-scale, pop-up childcare facility which is situated within Warwick Junction (so the children are near their mothers). The COVID-19 pandemic has made the need for this facility even greater. Many informally working mothers are in dire straits financially and are struggling to cope with the double burden of work and childcare even more so than they were before the pandemic. Furthermore, many childcare facilities have closed because of the lockdown.

The health interventions, with the help of the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal’s Occupational Health and Safety Department, have been systematised into health training for street trader leaders using a train-the-trainer approach. The aim is for trainees to become health champions, equipped with resources (such as wash stations) and knowledge (including a manual, developed with a panel of occupational medicine specialists). The training first focused on prevention of the transmission of COVID-19, but now includes information on vaccines. It aims to catalyse adoption of healthier workplace practices with onsite assistance from Asiye eTafuleni staff to help with implementation.

An example of wash station guidelines  
Source: Asiye eTafuleni

## Build a wash station: Street corner



**You will need:**

Pallet wood



5ℓ plastic jerry can



Bucket and small basin with hole



Soap in plastic netting



Remember to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds



**Build & assemble:**

**1** Build a wooden frame as indicated with two uprights to hold bottle of water and platform to support bucket



**2** Create support on each upright -one u-shaped indent to one side, one hole opposite, both to pivot the yoke of the bottle



**5** Place bucket in stand, attach soap and fill the bottle with water



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**3** Create yoke to sit between two uprights and attach an arm to hold soap and a lever to connect the yoke to the forearm lever



**4** Place yoke between supports and connect the yoke to the forearm lever with a nylon cord





## Conclusion

Vibrant, inclusive public spaces are the heart and soul of cities – and informal workers like street vendors and market traders are a key component. Moreover, given public space traders' contribution to employment and the provision of affordable goods and services, their inclusion into urban plans is a key pathway to urban equality. But **the smooth, equitable functioning of these spaces needs to be better facilitated by city officials working alongside local membership-based organizations and civic organizations.**

In both cases presented in this paper, local authorities played a negligible role in minimizing health risks, devolving responsibility to street vendors and market traders. Armed with health guidelines verified by public health experts and supported by urban practitioners, public space traders in both cities were able to show local authorities how trading could safely continue. **What the cases show is the importance of strong trader organisations but also the value of participatory approaches. Interlocutors – a cohort of urban practitioners skilled at social facilitation – played an important role.**

**These two initiatives suggest pathways of how local authorities should be responding to public space trading. Key issues include:**

- **Legal recognition:** public space traders need tenure security either through a vending certificate or a permit to trade. Despite its lack of implementation in Delhi, India's 2014 Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending Act provides a benchmark of good street vendor governance.
- **More space to trade:** most informal traders operate in the open air, giving them a distinct advantage in minimizing the spread of COVID-19.
- **Allocate space where there are 'natural markets':** too often traders are relocated to areas where there are few commuters. Any intervention should be mindful of the viability of trading opportunities.
- **Basic infrastructure:** traders have long needed water and sanitation facilities. This is more critical than ever given the COVID-19 imperative to wash hands regularly. Local authorities need to provide these as well as sanitizers.
- **Trader infrastructure:** in addition, to maximise livelihood opportunities, traders need access to shelter and storage. Access to electricity would allow for value adding activities.
- **Nothing for us without us:** including informal traders as co-creators of solutions to urban space design and management is the best route to securing functional and vibrant spaces.

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## CARING

This paper has been produced as a Case-Based Contribution to the sixth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VI): the flagship publication of the organized constituency of local and regional governments represented in United Cities and Local Governments. The GOLD VI report has been produced in partnership with the Development Planning Unit (University College London), through the programme Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). GOLD VI focuses on how local and regional governments can address the local manifestations of growing inequalities and contribute to create “Pathways to urban and territorial equality”. The GOLD VI report has been produced through a large-scale international co-production process, bringing together over a hundred representatives of local and regional governments, academics and civil society organizations. This paper is an outcome of this process and is part of the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*, which collects the over 60 Case-Based Contributions produced as part of the GOLD VI report.

In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 5 on “Caring”, which focuses on the multiple actions that promote the care of diverse groups within society through safety nets and solidarity bonds, and the ways in which local and regional governments can promote caring practices that support structurally discriminated and/or vulnerable groups, as well as those that have historically “taken care” of others.

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