

GOLD VI

***Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 8: Prospering***
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Inclusive Economy

and Food Security

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Global Platform for the Right to the City
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CITIES/COUNTRIES IT COVERS

Brazil, Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, India, Nicaragua, South Africa

CHAPTER

8: Prospering

SUMMARY

One of the central components of the right to the city is the guarantee of inclusive economies. Global Platform for the Right to the City members and partners have been working with that matter through advocating for equal working opportunities to urban citizens and decent work conditions, especially to informal workers and women. Championing the right to the city also implies for sustainable cities, and for the accomplishment of social functions of the land, in an equal distribution of the urban economy. In that way, circular and solidarity economies are highlighted as relevant inclusive economic alternatives, allowing for more egalitarian and sustainable urban production, strengthening local producers and guaranteeing local food security.

Urban labour and productive sectors are still deeply organized through an unjust structure that reproduces social inequalities, resulting in a major proportion of urban workers subjected to unstable, unsafe, and unequal work conditions and opportunities. Guaranteeing the right to the city means that a city has an inclusive economy that provides sufficient means for citizens to have adequate urban life. It presupposes that everyone should have equal opportunities to economically thrive, through decent and just work conditions – whether in formal or informal sectors – in a sustainable productive practice. Informality is a predominant reality in most urban centres. Two billion people are informally employed, which corresponds to 61% of the world's workers.¹ The challenge is that informality usually comes with insufficient economic income and wages and the lack of access to social protection which is not compatible with the important role informal workers play in local economies.

In that sense, social organizations are playing a key role, providing instruments to empower and inform workers about their economic, social, and human rights, strengthening their mobilization towards local authorities. This is also strengthened by the organizations' knowledge production and advocacy efforts in calling public and governmental attention to the economic and labour conditions of the most vulnerable urban groups, which can produce direct impacts in local public policies, laws, and regulations. **Street Net**² and **WIEGO**, for instance, focus their work on informal workers' rights and international mobilization, through a wide network of organizations. Street Net is, more specifically, an international membership-based alliance of organizations of informal traders, street and market vendors and hawkers, producing and disseminating relevant information



for policymakers and advocacy practices. Its work in **Phnom Penh**, in Cambodia,³ for instance, focuses on formation and leadership empowerment of street vendors, strengthening local partner activities that are already engaged in workers' rights. This is the case of the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)⁴ that offers training in negotiation and advocacy so that informal workers know and claim for their rights.

Besides street vendors, waste pickers are also vulnerable informal workers in urban contexts. Waste pickers are still underrecognized, underpaid and exposed to health risks – including the current Covid-19 pandemics–, even though they perform an impressive role in urban waste recycling. **WIEGO** has relevant work in championing waste pickers rights by supporting and coordinating the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers,⁵ a network of waste pickers organizations.⁶ In South Africa, for instance, waste pickers – around 90,000 people earn a living by this work – recycle 90% of the country's plastic and packaging, without service compensation and support.⁷ **WIEGO**⁸ established the Waste Integration in South Africa

Dy Thona, a street vendor that integrates the IDEA organization, member of StreetNet, is now a community leader. Source: STREETNET; IDEA. "We Have Hope:" Learning and Leadership for Street Vendors in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, p.08.

1. Percentage of employed population aged 15 and over. Source: ILO, 2018.

2. More information available in: <https://streetnet.org.za/impact/>.

3. More information available in: <http://streetnet.org.za/wp-content/uploads/We-Have-Hope.pdf>.

4. Member of StreetNet International, IDEA provides legal and social support to its members, also in articulation with local governments to establish labour standards for informal workers, such as street vendors, waste pickers, tuk-tuk and moto drivers, etc.

5. More information available in: <https://globalrec.org/>.

6. Around 30 countries, mainly in Latin America, Asia and Africa regions.

7. Data from the Pretoria-based Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, available in WIEGO's website: <https://www.wiego.org/waste-integration-south-africa-wisa>.

8. In consultation with the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) and the environmental justice organization groundWork.

(WISA), a three-year project (2016-2019), aiming at building capacity for waste pickers organizations to negotiate with local authorities⁹ also advocating for connecting those organizations with the recycling and waste management system. The result of this mobilization can be reflected in the establishment of the “Interim Johannesburg Reclaimers Committee”, that promotes dialogue between the waste pickers and local authorities.

Another major challenge in guaranteeing the right to the city through its inclusive economy component is to provide egalitarian rights and means for urban women to access decent work opportunities, taking into account the consolidated unequal conditions of wage and professional growth and frequently oppressing labour conditions to which they are subjected. Women’s economic independence and autonomy is central to tackle gendered inequalities and discrimination. Regarding this aspect, WIEGO has also developed a Gender and Waste Programme,¹⁰ in the state of **Minas Gerais**, in Brazil. By a participatory process, it mapped gender inequalities, and organized gender workshops, aiming at empowering women waste pickers guaranteeing fairer working conditions and wages. This pilot project resulted in a women waste pickers’ rights toolkit¹¹ to allow the project to be replicated in other cities.

Red Hábitat¹² is working for over a decade to provide decent work conditions for women in the construction sector in Bolivia, with a sequence of three interrelated projects. The main goal is to disrupt the idea that construction is a “traditionally” male sector, providing an inclusive and safe environment for women. For that, technical training and construction workshops were provided, as well as open classes on labour rights, laws, and violence against women in the labour envi-



ronment. This experience resulted in the establishment of the first Association of Construction Women of La Paz and El Alto (ASOMUC), a labour union defending women’s rights in the sector, also guaranteeing women’s political power. This mobilization surpassed the local context, also impacting the creation of the Bolivian Women’s Construction Union.

According to ILO (2018), “more than 30 percent of women in informal employment in low- and lower-middle income countries are contributing family workers, usually considered as unpaid (2018, p.21). In that sense, **Action Aid in India**¹³ is working to provide training to indian domestic workers – who are mainly women - so they can recognize and claim for their (labour) rights. This project,¹⁴ supported by the European Commission, resulted in the creation, and strengthening of domestic workers unions in seven states¹⁵ of the country, mobilizing over 8,000 domestic workers. The Rajasthan Mahila Kaamgar Union, for instance, created in 2008, had the help of the project to consolidate some of its work. It began to run five Worker’s facilitation Centers to mobilise the membership of the union, where affiliates can ask for bank accounts, food

Part of the toolkit produced as a result of the WIEGO’s Gender and Waste Programme, developed by WIEGO in partnership with National Movement of Waste Pickers in Brazil (MNCR), Center for Study and Research on Women (NEPEM) of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and Instituto Nenuca De Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Source: Women Waste Pickers: discussing women’s empowerment and changes in their relationship with men.

9. Notably in Johannesburg, Tshwane and Sasolburg municipalities.

10. More information is available in: <https://www.wiego.org/gender-waste-project>.

11. More information available in: <https://www.wiego.org/resources/women-waste-pickers-toolkit-low-resolution>.

12. More information (in Spanish) available in: <https://www.red-habitat.org/programa-empleo-mujeres-constructoras/>.

13. More information available in: <https://www.actionaidindia.org/publications/ensuring-decent-work-and-dignity/>.

14. Initiated in 2015, named “Securing rights and sustainable livelihoods through collective action and education for people dependent on the informal economy in India.”

15. Notably: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal.

cards, education scholarships etc. The result of this work can be seen in the numbers: the Union that was initially composed of 100 members, has, nowadays, 16,500.

Other vulnerable groups should also have their proper labour rights guaranteed, with equal working conditions, in an inclusive working environment. **The Solidarity Center**¹⁶ has been working internationally supporting around 500 labour unions and worker associations and vulnerable groups labours' rights – such as people with disabilities, LGBTs, afro-descendants, etc – and advocating against degrading work formats, such as child labour, migrant forced labour, etc. It supported, for instance, the development of the Afro-Colombian Labour Council, the first national organization dedicated to promoting afro-descendants labour rights.

The right to the city also champions that the city should be sustainable, ecologically responsible, with inclusive urban-rural links and just and conscious distribution of natural resources. In that way, urban inclusive economies should also be socially and ecologically sustainable, strengthening local production and allowing for solidarity and circular economies. Key international networks are also working with that aspect, notably **RIPESS**¹⁷ and **URGENCI**.¹⁸ The first has a protagonist advocacy work on social solidarity economy associated with its partner-continental networks, while the second, focuses on local solidarity-based partnerships for agroecology (LSPA), and community-supported agriculture, advocating in favour of local food producers. Both organizations are also working to monitor Covid-19 impacts on local economies, highlighting that networking efforts in promoting inclusive and solidarity economy are key during the crisis.



Besides that, during the Covid-19 pandemics, another related topic regained central urgency: urban food security. The pandemics resulted in a deep economic crisis, seriously affecting small local food producers. At the same time, the deepening economic crisis and the decrease of consumption power of urban vulnerable groups, especially in developing countries, has produced an even more difficult situation of lack of food security and sovereignty. The right to the city is perceived when the city fulfils its social functions, allowing equal opportunities of access to what the city produces, which is intrinsically connected to the right to proper nutrition. To cope with this matter, some innovative initiatives are being implemented in Brazilian cities. The **Institute Stop the Hunger Brazil**,¹⁹ for example, has recently created community gardens in public spaces at the favelas of Paraisópolis and Heliópolis, which are contributing to the guarantee of healthy food to thousands of vulnerable families during this economic crisis, minimizing food sovereignty inequalities. The results have been remarkable: in three months²⁰ the Paraisópolis garden - a 900 m² area - produced 540 kg of fresh vegetables, benefiting directly over 1,600 people in the community.²¹

Action Aid India campaign for the rights of domestic workers.
Source: Action Aid India facebook webpage.

16. More information available in: <https://www.solidaritycenter.org/>.

17. More information available in: <http://www.riposs.org/sse-advocacy/?lang=en>.

18. More information in Urgenci's report available in the Drive Folder: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MU1JyUaW-NdGiVoKbckIT5lludFbTMD/view?usp=sharing>

19. More information (in Portuguese) available in: <http://br.stop-hunger.org/home/nossas-acoas/hortas-comunitarias-1/agrofavela---refazenda.html>.

20. From October 2020 to March 2021.

21. More information (in Portuguese) available in: <http://br.stop-hunger.org/home/noticias/content-col1-area/ultimas-noticias/fazenda-urbana-de-paraisopolis-2.html>.

In conclusion, urban economies should provide the means for diverse social groups to thrive, to earn sufficient income for a dignified life, with food security and social protection guaranteed. Non-governmental organizations play a central role in advocating for decent economic and labour rights, as well as strengthening existing active grassroots initiatives by empowering and training local workers and local unions to claim their rights from public authorities and employers. All these efforts must undertake an intersectional approach, by considering different kinds of oppressions to vulnerable groups such as women, LGBTs, afro-descendants, among others.

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PROSPERING

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 8 on “Prospering”, which focuses on prosperity as a culturally specific and multi-dimensional concept, including income but not only. The chapter explores key drivers of urban inequality reflected in the scarcity of decent work and in social-spatial disparities in the location of different productive activities within cities. The chapter analyses how local and regional governments can increase decent work opportunities, and, drawing on the impacts of COVID-19, how they can mitigate the effects of future pandemics and of climate change on decent work, urban prosperity and inequality.

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