Towards a Comprehensive Social Protection for Informal Workers

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Comprehensive Social Protection in the SADC
Outline of Section 1

1. Informal workers and comprehensive social security – what’s the problem?
2. Some characteristics of informal work
3. WIEGO framework and approach
4. Significant conceptual and institutional barriers to including informal workers AND to building comprehensive systems

- Reconciling women’s economic empowerment and child care
- The trinity
- Governance: national and local levels of government
- Governance: health and urban policy
- Prevention
There has been an impressive swing towards cash transfers in the last two decades.

Evidence for their efficiency and efficacy is strong.

In the Global Social Floors, cash transfers take up a central role, and the health component is relatively small.

“Cash transfers” were never meant to be the whole answer to addressing poverty and inequality for children and families, and they should not be used as synonyms for “social protection”.
There is much positive talk about prevention, in discourses of social protection and in particular in universal health coverage schemes.

It is hard to integrate good preventive health practices into insurance based health schemes where the main financing mechanism is private insurance. Schemes incentivise doctors, through payment protocols, to do unnecessary curative surgery, for example.
Some commitment, through among others the ILO, to ‘formalizing informal employment.’

But there are strong global forces that operate to erode and reduce work-related social benefits.

Social protection cannot overcome the unequalizing effects of global capitalism.
Work-related social security emerges with industrialisation

Based on a deal between formal labour, capital and the state

Design: through (mostly men) workers, workers and their families would earn enough to live on, and be compensated or supported for a set of contingencies under social security – for example, sick leave, maternity leave, disease, death

These were discussed and negotiated as part of regular bargaining between employers and employees.

Process was premised on the existence of an employer/employee relationship.
Informal employment as proportion of non-agric employment

- 45% Middle East & North Africa
- 66% Sub-Saharan Africa
- 82% South Asia
- 65% East Asia, South-East Asia, and the Pacific
- 33% Urban China
- 51% Latin America & the Caribbean
The World of Work Has Changed; Places of Work Have Changed
Gender Differences

- There are more women than men in informal employment.
- Men earn more than women in both formal and informal work.
- Men informal workers are more likely to employ others.
- When entering the urban informal sector, men have more previous work experience than women.
- Where women have worked before, it is likely to be in domestic work, in highly unequal power relationships.
Towards more inclusive & comprehensive social protection for IWs – the WIEGO Approach

- Life cycle approach overlaid with risk based approach,
  - throughout the life cycle,
  - with different risks faced by different types of worker/ sectors of work
  - and analysis has physical place of work as central variable.

- Value chain analysis which includes informal workers
  - Construction sector in Lusaka
  - Horticulture sector in South Africa
  - Fisheries sector in Uganda and Malawi
  - Seaweed harvesting in Zanzibar

- Place of work enables the analysis of autonomy and risk, and identification of points of entry for intervention.
Key conceptual & institutional barriers

- Reconciling economic empowerment of women and care work: the relationship between child care and women’s incomes.
- Synergystic trinity or competitive silos?
- Governance – national and local levels
- Governance – the domain of occupational health and safety for workers within the overall health system
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<th>Social insurances</th>
<th>Street Vendor: Self-employed; working in urban public space</th>
<th>Home-based Worker: Sub-contracted; working in own home</th>
<th>Waste Picker: Works in cooperative in urban public space</th>
<th>Domestic Worker: Employed Working in home of employer</th>
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<td>State-based insurance/assistance</td>
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<td>Municipal social security</td>
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Pathways to Inclusion:

- Legal Routes
  - Legal Reforms
  - Litigation
- Inclusion in Existing Programmes
  - Extension
  - Lowering barriers to access
- Representation of Informal Worker Organisations
  - Tripartite boards
  - Policy forums
  - Negotiating platforms
  - Commissions
Thank You!

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