

May Day: Investments in social and labour protections needed for economic recovery

Organizations representing over 2.1 million informal workers from around the world call on governments to accelerate investments in worker protections as a central component of economic recovery plans.

In COVID-19 lockdowns one year ago, informal workers across the world lost their livelihoods, plunging their families into economic crisis and hunger.

The lockdowns also revealed the critical role that so many informal workers play in society, whether in providing services such as collecting recyclables and caring for families, or by producing goods for local markets and contributing to food security through the sale of affordable produce. When informal workers were forced to stop working it became clear just how important these workers are to making cities and towns function.

From the depths of the crisis in May 2020, we called on governments to recognize the essential role informal workers play in local and global economies; to partner with workers' organizations to ensure robust relief and recovery approaches; and to do no harm and end practices of harassment, violence and forced evictions.

Yet throughout the year, informal workers have faced limited and patchy government relief, ongoing exclusion from recovery plans and policies, and continued violence and harassment in many contexts.

We urge policymakers to do the following as they plan for economic recovery:

Invest in policies to connect workers to social assistance, inclusive social insurance, and health and child care.

Governments must protect—not cut—spending on social assistance, social insurance and key social services: the policies and programmes that protect workers and their families from poverty, vulnerability and exclusion.

Global financial institutions can support governments in doing so by ending practices that result in harmful fiscal consolidation measures that disproportionately impact poor and vulnerable workers and squeeze vital public spending.

Ensure that social protection policies and labour protections work together to protect workers from poverty.

Social protection alone cannot make up for the inequalities produced by unfair and punitive policies which worsen conditions of work. Global institutions must stop promoting the flexibilization of labour markets and start implementing basic protections for both wage employed and self employed workers.

All workers have the right to collective bargaining and to be invited to the table when governments are discussing policies that will affect their lives. All work, including informal work, must be covered by labour protections so that all workers can access decent work.

Municipal governments must end the practice of evicting informal workers from public spaces and ensure that livelihood security, especially for women informal workers, is protected. Workers and their livelihoods must be prioritized in urban planning processes.

Governments and multilateral institutions must ensure that global brands bear responsibility for worker welfare regardless of their proximity in the supply chain and end practices that profit off exploitative working conditions, particularly for women who work from home as dependent contractors in global supply chains.

Recognize the critical role informal worker organizations have played in the COVID-19 relief effort and must play in recovery.

Informal worker organizations were vital actors in the COVID-19 relief effort. From sharing life-saving health information, to mobilizing donations and delivering food rations, masks and hand sanitizer, their crucial role in linking workers to crisis relief should be recognized.

To do so, governments must include informal workers in key decision-making platforms, ensure that workers' organizations involved in delivering services to workers are supported financially, and provide support to informal worker organizations which were critical in providing relief to their members when governments fell short.

A year into the pandemic, governments are recognizing that informal workers are essential to local and global economies and societies. Urgent and appropriate investments in social assistance, social insurance and key social services, including health and child care, are needed to ensure the world's 2 billion informal workers can recover their livelihoods now and protect them in the future.

The undersigned organizations are members of the growing global movement of informal economy workers and together represent over 2.1 million members worldwide.

[International Domestic Workers Federation \(IDWF\)](#)

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[StreetNet International](#)

Oksana Abboud, International Coordinator

[HomeNet International](#)

Janhavi Dave, International Coordinator

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Soledad Mella (Spanish)

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