Addressing the Informal Economy in the time of COVID-19

Caroline Skinner, Live Learning Event, 29 April 2020
The Size of the Informal Economy

- **Size:** 2 billion workers worldwide are informally employed – that is 61% of all workers.
- **Impact of COVID:** Devastating as the vast majority have lost their livelihoods and are currently facing hunger.
- **Direct income support:** Is critical for those who can’t work over this period.
Informal Economy and City Systems: Food

- **Food system**: The research shows that the informal economy – informal producers and distributors – play a critical role in food security (see [African Centre for Cities](#)).

- For example, research done in across 11 cities in Sub-Saharan Africa found 70% of households normally sourced food from informal outlets.
Informal Economy and City Systems: Waste

- In many countries, waste pickers supply most if not the only form of solid waste collection at little or no cost to municipalities (see WIEGO).
Solutions: ‘Unlock’ these systems

- Those working as in the informal food and waste systems that can and want to, should be allowed to work. Many countries have declared this work an ‘essential service’.
- BUT safety guidelines must be followed.
- Implies the urgent provision of appropriate protective equipment (e.g. masks, gloves) and water + sanitisers and/or bleach.
- Consider health screening at place of work.

WIEGO has worked with Public Health Experts to develop detailed health guidelines for waste pickers and informal food traders see https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis
Street traders and waste pickers around the world are designing their own solutions – work alongside them.
For more solutions ...

- Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is tracking COVID impacts on informal workers but also policy and organisation responses – with a focus on good practice see https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis, updated daily.
THANK YOU!