

ORGANISING WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

A Resource Pack for Worker Educators



International Federation of Workers' Education Associations

Produced for an IFWEA DFID funded project.

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About IFWEA

IFWEA is the international organisation responsible for the development of workers' education. It brings together national and international trade unions, workers' education associations, non governmental organisations (NGOs) and social-democratic foundations engaged in the provision of adult education opportunities for workers and the communities in which they live throughout the world.

IFWEA seeks to encourage the expansion of workers' education provision worldwide, covering a broad range of workplace, cultural and economic issues. It supports the development of workers' democratic engagement with society and the economy, through trade unions, community organisations, or democratic political parties.

Co-ordination of solidarity forms an important part of IFWEA's responsibilities. Along with its partner organisations in the international trade union movement and labour-related development agencies, IFWEA plays an important role in bringing together labour organisations in the North, South, East and West; initiating development programmes, and building new partnerships between trade unions and labour NGOs.

This IFWEA project, supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom (UK), focuses on building support among UK trade unions and their members for the effective democratic organisation and representation of informal economy workers. The project was run in partnership with Unite the Union - Transport & General Workers' Section, War on Want, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the International Transport Workers' Federation, and the Workers' Educational Associations and colleges in the UK.



Introduction to this Resource Pack

All around the world, many millions of workers are forced to survive outside what would be regarded as bare minimum basic rights and legal protection associated with work, and instead are in the so-called informal economy.

Informal economy workers are to be found everywhere – in markets, streets, the home, factories, sweatshops or in the fields. The majority of these workers are women. In some countries the informal economy accounts for the vast majority of the workforce and it is growing (including in the UK).

About the Informal Economy

Informal work has always been a feature globally, but it has increased massively in the last ten years. The debt crisis of developing countries, the dismantling of the public sector, the deregulation of the labour market and the succession of economic and financial crises since 1997 have pushed millions of people out of formal employment and into the informal economy.

By cutting down the jobs of permanent full-time workers, by decentralizing and subcontracting all but the indispensable core activities, and by relying wherever possible on unstable forms of labour (casual, part-time, temporary, seasonal, on call), transnational corporations deregulate the labour market, not only to reduce labour costs but also to shift responsibility for income, benefits and conditions on to the individual worker.

Workers in the informal economy face serious deficits in decent work - they are engaged in poor quality jobs, with low productivity and incomes, little to no social protection, poor working conditions, and occupational health and safety standards and limited access to knowledge, technology, finance and markets. For the most part, informal workers are women. These workers problems are compounded by



their lack of organisation and democratic representation.

In some countries, conditions of informal economy workers echo those of nineteenth century England, such as the Tolpuddle martyrs, who were fighting for the rights of the informal economy workers of their day.

The challenge for trade unions

The nature of the informal economy, and the status and conditions faced by workers within it, demands an approach to workers' education that is distinct from the provision for workers in formal employment. This approach must embrace and develop new organising skills and strategies designed to strengthen informal economy workers' organisation within the democratic labour movement and other organisations of the working class. It must also build solidarity between informal and formal economy workers.

This DVD resource pack (DVD) is part of a DFID funded project aimed at developing an awareness and understanding of the informal economy. As more and more workers face a future of survival in informal work, it becomes more important for us to give priority to informal economy worker organisation and representation. Within the context of globalisation this understanding is an essential and basic element of educational provision needed to promote and defend the interests of informal economy workers.

The DVD is one further step in building awareness and understanding. It is intended as a tool for British based worker educators/tutors who are engaged in developing and implementing worker education programmes on the informal economy. Beyond this immediate purpose, it is hoped that this resource will also prove of value to a wider audience of educators/tutors, researchers, and activists concerned with the organisation and representation of workers in the informal economy.



What You Will Find on the DVD

This DVD contains a variety of different entries, in different formats, directly related to the informal economy.

The resources included on the DVD are in no way exhaustive of what's available on the informal economy. There will be many omissions and many new resources developed as this DVD is being produced. We do hope that this presents a broad enough cross section of relevant resources to be useful.

By providing access to resources on the informal economy, it is hoped that this production will facilitate ongoing education work on organising workers in the informal economy.

How the DVD is structured

Once the DVD is inserted into your DVD player the following 5 items will appear as part of the main menu:

Building unions, building rights: A documentary film on the informal economy

Worker educators: Education materials on the informal economy

Informal workers: Photographic slideshows

Resources: A document library on the informal economy

References: Contact list and weblinks

By clicking on any of these menu links you will be able to access the detail of each menu item. These details are outlined below.

Menu: Building unions, building rights: A documentary film on the informal economy

This 16 minute production has been designed for teaching, education research and for use in union meetings, either in segments or as a whole. It explores the problem of informal work, rights and con-



ditions of informal economy workers, the importance of democratic organisation and representation, and positive action in support of workers. It's constructed from still photographs and video footage, many of the photographs can also be found as part of menu item 3, 'Informal workers: Photographic slideshows'.

You will have the ability to view the whole film or specific film chapters:

Chapter 1: No rights, No Choice

Chapter 2: A Place in the Union

Chapter 3: Building Solidarity

We suggest viewing the whole film on first use. Thereafter you can decide on the relevant chapters you may wish to use.

Menu: Worker educators: Education materials on the informal economy

This chapter contains a set of draft education activities with accompanying facilitator /tutor notes designed for education officers to adapt and amend as part of their own education programmes. It is designed for you to 'dip in and out of' and can be used in many ways, depending on the time available and the target group.

Primarily the activities are aimed at developing an understanding of changing forms of employment both globally and in the UK. It will encourage an exploration of the specific challenges and experiences of workers in the informal economy, particularly women workers, and their role in building democratic organisation. It is also intended to develop practical strategies for co-operation in support of workers in the informal economy.

Each activity has also been designed in a way that would allow it to 'stand alone'.



These education activities have been developed as participatory activity guides and are structured into 3 parts:

- **Notes for facilitators/tutors:** These are guidelines for tutors/educators to use in planning the activity and in understanding how the activity will proceed. They include education materials or resources to support the 'teaching' of particular activities.
- **The actual activity:** This is the activity to be engaged by learners. It includes activity aims, a suggested timing for the activity and the task/s that need to be undertaken.
- **Further reading/reference materials:** These are supplementary handouts or suggested readings that accompany the relevant activity. They could be used for preparing plenary presentations but may also be reproduced and distributed to learners.

To view the education materials you will need to run the DVD on a computer. The document should automatically open through your web browser or you can access it manually through your computer's disk drive.

Menu: Informal workers: Photographic slideshows

This chapter contains a selection of photographs and graphics. It is intended for use by educators wishing to build their own materials.

The entries have been organised into 10 slideshows. The first 5 are regionally based:

- Africa
- Asia Pacific
- Latin America
- Middle East and North Africa
- UK and Europe



The final 5 slideshows are as follows:

- UK Seminar (Photographs from a Seminar on the Informal Economy held in Eastbourne in 2008 as part of the same DFID project.)
- Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) by One World Action (OWA) (Photographs commissioned by OWA in support of their work with SEWA in India)
- Migrant domestic workers by Maarten Wolterink (These cartoons were developed during a Domestic Workers Seminar in 2007 organised by the Dutch trade union federation, the FNV)
- Zambia by Paul Weinberg (Photographs on the informal economy in Zambia)
- Zambia Study Visit (Photographs from a study visit of British trade unionists to Zambia in September 2007)

By clicking on the sub menu item you will have access to the slideshows.

Menu: Resources: A document library on the informal economy

Here you will find a resource of key documents organised thematically, relating to workers' rights and workers' organisation in the informal economy, none of which predate 1998. This resource library is in no way exhaustive of what's available.

The entries have been organised chronologically under the following 6 key headings:

- Conceptualising and defining the informal economy
- Trade union strategies and approaches
- Gender
- Social protection
- Occupational health and safety
- Case studies



For ease of navigation under each heading entries include title, abstract, author, number of pages and the document format.

All of these documents are available in PDF format. In order to view any of these documents click on the document title.

You may find that some entries overlap categories.

Menu: References: Contact list and weblinks

This final chapter contains an annotated list of organisations that may be useful when doing education on the informal economy.

These are only a select list of organisations. It would be impossible to fully list all organisations involved in working with or in support of informal workers.

For a more comprehensive database on informal economy trade unions, networks, alliances etc. you may want to refer to informal economy database developed by Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) database, which can be found at http://www.wiego.org/program_areas/org_rep/database/

For each entry we have included the organisations name, a very brief outline of what they do, their contact details and a link to their website.

The entries have been organised under 7 main headings:

- Informal Economy Trade Unions
- Informal Economy Associations
- Informal Economy Networks and Alliances
- Other Trade Unions
- Campaigning & Workers' Rights Organisations
- Education & Research Organisations
- National UK Bodies for Information and Advice

To view any of these references you will need to run the DVD on a computer. The document should automatically open through your web browser or you can access it manually through your computer's disk drive.




We hope that you find this resource useful and would welcome any feedback! For comments, feedback or suggestion please e-mail: secretariat@ifwea.org

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