



**Statement on behalf of the Grassroots Group
Habitat III Informal Consultations
New York, 25-29 April 2016**

I am speaking on behalf of the Grassroots Group, members of the Global Assembly of Partners under co-chairmanship of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) to reiterate several key messages for the New Urban Agenda, particularly for the Panel on *Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Growth, Prosperity and Opportunities For All*, drawn from a stakeholder engagement and statement to February's Africa Regional Meeting in Abjua.

WIEGO and its affiliates represents around 2 million informal economy workers, SDI operates in 34 countries and has more than 2 million members in India alone. Their responsibility has been to engage and consolidate the priorities and action agendas of two constituencies – women and grassroots, including the urban poor and informal workers – who stand to gain or lose the most in the New Urban Agenda.

Through the GAP process grassroots women, informal settlement dwellers, and informal workers, have joined forces to consolidate issues that they feel are essential for the New Urban Agenda to address.

Participants in Abjua emphasized how women and the urban poor are generating income and contributing to the urban economy but often face arrest, harassment, criminal sanctions like fines and imprisonment – rather than business subsidies, and how they saw poverty, dispossession and cycles of violence and abuse of the urban poor being compounded by:



- (1) the lack of legal recognition of informal workers and informal settlement dwellers who contribute enormously to the cities in which we live,
- (2) the lack of participation by women and the urban poor in planning and problem solving; and
- (3) the unequal access to resources and affordable finance.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and with the overriding principle of leaving no one behind, the Grassroots Group therefore calls for recognition:

- of all forms of work, both informal and formal, in all sectors in which women and the urban poor are active such as caregiving, market and street trading, domestic work, waste picking, etc.
- that the working poor need an enabling, not punitive, policy and regulatory environment; secure tenure for their homes and workplaces; basic infrastructure services at their homes and workplaces, and affordable/accessible transport between their homes and their workplace
- that the organizations of urban poor **must** be invited to join the processes or forums that determine urban plans, policies, regulations; design; urban energy, transport and waste management systems; and allocate urban land.

Street-vendor leader, Gloria Solorzano Espinoza, from Lima said that:

“This is why we are in the Habitat III Process, because we believe that The City We Need must be economically and socially inclusive for the informal economy. But this can only be possible if the Habitat III Process takes us into account. This process will affect us, and we want to be included - in the dialogues, in the planning and in the implementation”.



Thus the Grassroots Group welcomes the approach of PU7 when it states that: *“Cities need to adopt more appropriate and inclusive policies to support the working poor in the informal economy.”* But we think it needs to go further.

Re-emphasizing four key points made to the Abjua statement, the Grassroots Group therefore wants a New Urban Agenda that prioritizes the needs of women and the working poor in order to:

1. **Recognize and support organized networks of informal workers** who contribute to urban economic growth and build movements towards influencing and enhancing their own development and the cities in which they live.
2. **Formalize engagement and partnerships between local government, national government and grassroots groups and empower organizations of informal workers (especially women) to participate in equal partnership with local government** in decision-making, including participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.
3. **Develop laws and urban policies that promote the economic and social security of informal workers** and their contributions to the local economy.
4. **Create pathways for incremental formalization and integration of informal workers**, which protects jobs in order to guarantee decent livelihoods for all.

Women in Informal
Employment:
Globalizing and Organizing

Shack/Slum Dwellers
International