

**WOMEN STREET TRADERS IN URBAN SOUTH AFRICA:  
A SYNTHESIS OF SELECTED RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Francie Lund**

**CSDS Research Report No 15**

**SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (incorporating CSDS)  
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL  
DURBAN**

**September 1998**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

- Pat Horn, Julian May and Imraan Valodia of the Research Advisory Committee for the WIEGO Project, and Debbie Budlender in her personal capacity, made extensive and useful comments on the first draft.
- Caroline Skinner contributed information on legislation and support institutions, and also contributed to data collection for the Tables.
- Eric Watkinson gave access to data and press clips held by Durban Metro, and provided further information on data from the DRA survey done for Durban Metro.
- Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) - and in particular Ross Jennings - provided unpublished data from the CASE census and survey of street trading in Johannesburg Central Business District.

The WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) research programme in South Africa is sponsored by the International Development Research Centre, Canada

ISBN NO:

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	1.1 Outline of the report	2
	1.2 Sources used for the report	3
	1.3 Related current research initiatives	7
<b>2</b>	<b>A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY</b>	<b>7</b>
	2.1 The history	7
	2.2 A gendered snapshot of the South African economy	12
<b>3</b>	<b>WORKING IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY</b>	<b>15</b>
	3.1 The number of street traders	16
	3.2 The work done by street traders	17
	3.3 Age	18
	3.4 Education levels	21
	3.5 Marital status, household status and income earning status	22
	3.6 Children, dependants, and child care	22
	3.7 Homes and accommodation	24
	3.8 Health status	26
	3.9 Previous work experience, and the effects on entry into street trading	27
	3.10 Earnings	28
	3.11 Working hours	30
	3.12 Access to infrastructure	30
	3.13 Crime	31
	3.14 Areas for further research	32
<b>4</b>	<b>ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>SOCIAL PROTECTION</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>CHARTS AND TABLES:</b>	
	Chart 1: South African surveys research on urban street traders in the informal sector, 1990 onwards, used in this report	4 & 5
	Table 1: Selected comparative indicators from five African countries	9
	Table 2: Racial distribution of selected development indicators, South Africa	10

Table 3: Unemployment rates in South Africa, OHS 1995	13
Table 4: Gender and activities in the informal economy in Durban Metropolitan area, 1997 (Source: DRA)	18
Table 5: The biggest obstacle faced by women and men street traders, <b>Durban, 1997 (Source: DRA Study)</b>	31

## 1 INTRODUCTION

WIEGO is part of a growing international alliance of women street traders, and of research supporting women in the informal economy. The acronym stands for Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising. It is an international research collaboration between researchers and organisations of women in the informal economy. WIEGO aims to improve women's economic and social prospects by highlighting how important women's informal employment is in national and global economies. It will undertake research which will feed into better economic policies and programmes, and which will integrate work done in the informal economy into urban planning and policies.

The International Alliance of Street Vendors held its inaugural meeting in Bellagio, Italy, in 1995. Representatives of vendors from seven countries<sup>1</sup>, including South Africa, were signatories to the Bellagio Declaration. This called for national policies for street traders which would, among other things, give traders legal status, provide legal access to the use of appropriate space, treat vendors as an integral part of the urban distribution system, enforce regulations and promote self-governance. In addition to national policies and actions, the Declaration called for follow up action at four other levels: by individual traders, by traders associations, by city governments, and by international organisations including the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, and the World Bank.

WIEGO intends to do action research on women in street trading in four African countries, and South Africa is the site of the pilot research. The Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU) has contracted the Centre for Social and Development Studies (CSDS) at the University of Natal to manage the research.<sup>2</sup> The research aims to clarify and record the situation of women street traders in selected towns in South Africa, as the first step in comparing the situation of vendors in different African countries. Kenya will follow the pilot, probably followed by Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

This paper - 'the Synthesis report' - draws on existing research findings about the informal economy, women in the informal economy, and the working conditions of street traders. It draws on studies done since 1990, and mostly restricts itself to urban research (for reasons given later). A further study will concentrate on issues of governance and the regulatory framework governing street trading. A comparison of four cities in South Africa will highlight best (and worst) practices regarding, for example, formal policies regarding street trading, the level of integration of street trading into future planning for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Brazil, Bolivia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa and the USA.

<sup>2</sup> SEWU's membership comprises both home-based workers and street traders. WIEGO in Africa focuses on street traders; a WIEGO programme in Asia concentrates on the position of home-based workers.

cities, the appropriateness of local authority structures, the presence and efficacy of mechanisms for negotiation with street traders, and support services for street traders. A third study will then concentrate on collective organisation among street traders, including the barriers to associational life, and the ability of traders to access the new supports and services envisaged under the SMME policy. It will identify specifically the constraints to women's being able to organise effectively to improve their economic position.

Many of the empirical studies on which this synthesis report draws have been done in KwaZulu-Natal. This is one of the nine new provinces in South Africa, the most populous, and one of the poorest. Many of the studies have concentrated on the province's biggest city, Durban. As the research progresses, the WIEGO project will try to locate and integrate research findings from other areas as well. However, extensive library searches show that this province, and the University of Natal in the province, have been sites where most research activity has been undertaken. Durban is also where SEWU was started, and is the site of its national office.

## **1.1 Outline of the report**

The rest of this introductory section gives an overview of some of the South African research which has been published, and on research initiatives underway which relate to the WIEGO project. The purpose of this is simply to document some of the studies which, while they do not necessarily relate to a gendered analysis of women street traders in urban areas, can be used to further understanding of the broader field of the informal economy.

Section 2 gives a very brief history of the way the political and economic control of previous South African governments had implications for the lack of development of the informal economy, and this is followed by a brief gendered snapshot of the economy, as well as an overview of changing policy regarding micro-enterprise development, and changes in labour legislation. These latter two items provide a backdrop for the institutional and regulatory framework study, which will be the next focus of the WIEGO project.

The main section of this report - Section 3 – provides a profile of workers in the informal economy: who they are, what they do, their working conditions, and what their problems are. Section 4 then describes what can be learned about traders organisations and associations from existing surveys; it provides preliminary material for the study of traders organisations that will be the third WIEGO study.

Social protection is not a central focus on WIEGO in South Africa, but is part of the broader international research programme. Section 5 provides a cursory overview of what existing South African studies have found in this

regard, as well as a brief picture of the social protection benefits which are likely to be accessible to women street traders.

Each of Sections 3 to 5 ends with the identification of areas for further research. A few of these will be taken up by the WIEGO project itself. We hope, however, that this review, and the identification of specific research gaps, will be taken as an invitation to the research community to embark on more and better focused, studies.

## 1.2 Sources used for the report

The report draws mainly on studies done since 1990. Chart 1 gives information about the South African studies which relates to women in the informal economy, which have been specifically used for this synthesis. The quantitative surveys, using larger samples, on the whole give useful data about numbers, places, problems, and working conditions. The smaller qualitative studies usually give a richer understanding about what it is like to be a street trader, or they go into more depth about a particular problem like accommodation, or about shelter.

In 1992 Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Christian Rogerson edited an anthology of writing on the informal economy in South Africa (Preston-Whyte and Rogerson, 1992). Michelle Friedman and Maria Hambridge's contribution in that volume provides a gendered analysis of the informal economy. Timothy Mosdell's paper on deregulation in Pietermaritzburg does not address gender, but gives a useful account of the engagement of traders associations in the deregulation process. The policy oriented pieces, especially those by David Dewar and Vanessa Watson, and by Christian Rogerson, can be used by the WIEGO project to see how far proposals have been translated into policy towards the end of this decade of change.

While the focus of this WIEGO project is specifically urban, the Preston-Whyte and Rogerson volume contains good rural or peri-urban studies as well: Tony Cunningham on the herbal medicine trade and on the *ilala* palm wine industry; Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Sibongile Nene on black women informal sector workers in KwamZimela and KwaDlangezwa in former KwaZulu, and Eleanor Preston-Whyte's study of the traders at Umgababa on the Natal south coast.

This report draws heavily on two recent large studies of street traders. One was done in the Johannesburg CBD by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), and the other in the Durban Metropolitan area in 1997 (the DRA survey for the Durban Metro, still to be published).<sup>3</sup> Both of these studies

---

<sup>3</sup> The study done by CASE led to three publications: the Census, the Survey, and possible future scenarios. Each of these is attributed to multiple authors. I have called them CASE 1995a, CASE 1995b and CASE 1995c, and have given authors in full in the list of references. The study done by DRA for the Durban Metro has not been published, and the data are being further re-worked by the Metro. I just call it 'the DRA study'.

involved a census of all street traders in the area, followed by more detailed interviews with some 400 or 500 traders. A survey of nearly all street traders in Isipingo, south of Durban, has a similarly large sample (Mbona, 1997). All three studies provide gender breakdowns for most major variables; the research agencies have all co-operated in providing the WIEGO project with further data analysis.

SEWU commissioned Laura Bedford (Bedford, 1995) to do a study of its membership, analysing the data which appeared on the organisation's comprehensive membership forms. Sandhya James did a further survey of SEWU membership in 1997 (James, 1998). Numerous smaller, more qualitative studies have been done, mostly by Masters students, and mostly in the Durban or KwaZulu-Natal area (Emmanuel Kasongo, 1996; Thumida Maistry, in process; Themba Mzimela, 1995; Naidoo, 1993; Yugi Nair, 1996; Catherine Ndinda, 1997; Pentz, 1992). Some of them (especially Nair and Naidoo) give a much richer idea of the quality of street traders' lives. Nearly all of them invite concern about sampling bias. There is a possibility that through 'snowballing', respondents are being consistently chosen who may be more articulate and confident and better off than the average street trader, without this being a purposeful aim of the sampling.

Some South African studies have sampled with the express purpose of finding entrepreneurs in sectors where there is potential for growth. Claudia Manning has concentrated on the growth potential of manufacturing in the informal economy, but her own, and her joint work with Pinky Mashigo (Manning and Mashigo, 1993) for the Industrial Strategy project, contain useful conceptual and analytical material on the informal economy in general terms as well. The ERU/ BEES research (no date) of KwaZulu-Natal included street traders as 'survivalists' in its sample as well. Nikki Dunne has done a study of the Essenwood Road market in Durban - the 'top-end' of street trading, as it were.

In contrast to many of the studies which are one-off interviews with a sample of traders, Harald Witt has used the filieres framework to explore the production, marketing and distribution of vegetables in the Durban Metropolitan area. This type of study 'follows the vegetable', rather than 'studies the trader', as it were. It enables the linkages between formal and informal economies to be seen more than other studies do.

In 1994, Debbie Budlender synthesised research material on women and micro-enterprises from three regions in South Africa for an ILO study (Budlender, 1994). This is a rich source of qualitative and quantitative data. It could usefully be drawn on in developing educational materials for the WIEGO project. In addition, the first and third editions of the Women's Budget (Budlender, 1996, and Budlender, 1998) contain extremely valuable data about women in the economy. At a more general level, Sally Baden, Shireen

Hassim and Sheila Meintjes undertook a South African country study gender profile which contains information about many aspects of the life of women in South Africa (Baden et al, 1997).

### **1.3 Related current research initiatives**

CEPERTT - The Centre for Partnerships in Enterprise Research and Technology Transfer - is a joint venture of the Ford Foundation and a number of tertiary institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. The Centre aims to 'co-ordinate research on and assistance to the developing SMME sector in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly the manufacturing sub-sector, and more particularly women micro-entrepreneurs in the survivalist sub-sector'. In her feasibility study for the programme, Henrietta Moore points out the need for research which is longitudinal, qualitative, and can lead to recommendations which feed into specific policies and actions (Moore, 1997).

The GRUPHEL initiative - Gender Research Programme on Urbanisation, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life - in southern Africa is a joint venture between Swedish and African institutions. It produced its first publication early in 1998 (Larsson et al, 1998). It focuses on women at home and at work in Southern Africa, and includes Nomnikelo Fadane's study (1998) on women street vendors and housing in Durban.

In the same GRUPHEL volume is Meshack Khosa's study of gender relations in the taxi industry in Durban (Khosa, 1998). He includes a discussion of gender and transport policies - how women's needs, and different life cycle needs, are not taken into account in transport planning; women's experiences with harassment as taxi commuters; and his fascinating discussions with 'sisters on the wheel': the few women taxi drivers operating in Durban. They describe the difficult working conditions, and the domination by men - but also how they are trying to challenge gender marginalisation.

Matseliso Mapetla and Pea Machai (1998) did research for GRUPHEL which looked at beer brewing as a survival strategy for women in urban Lesotho. Alison Todes's study in the same volume is of the gender dynamics of migration around Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal - why households stay in areas where there has been economic decline (Todes, 1998). This provides food for thought about the circular migration of many of the street traders who move back and forth between rural and urban areas, mentioned in other studies.

## **2 A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

### **2.1 The history**

South Africa has a unique history of repression which started a long time

before the apartheid government came to power in 1948. A combination of political and economic measures purposely stripped people who were not white of access to the means of production, and repressed entrepreneurial spirit. These policies controlled where black people could live, what they could own, and what work they could do.

While policies were in place last century, an early significant law of this century was the Land Act of 1913, which entrenched in legislation the process which had started in the previous century of removing property rights, controlling residential areas, and using taxation as a means of forcing people to find paid work in the mines. It resulted in the removal of millions of people from their land, and displacement into 'native reserves' and later the homelands/ bantustans. This combined with the migrant labour system to ripping apart the social fabric and family integration of millions of South Africans.

Urban development was very skewed. In 'white towns', infrastructure was focused on the minority white population. Within the bantustans, constraints were placed on the development of small towns in homelands areas, and there was strict control over land and the development of businesses. This, combined with the huge extent of landlessness (which still exists), has meant that people in rural areas were denied the possibility of making a productive living.

The Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was the precursor to the array of legislation, which controlled the movement of African people to and in urban areas. Black people could only be in urban areas if they were there to service or work for white people. Women could only get the right to reside in an urban area by virtue of a relationship with a man. The 1923 Native Act was followed by a wave of repressive legislation - influx control, pass laws and the Group Areas Act, and the 'white by night' policy.

The job reservation policies which were legislated over the years said that black people could not employ or raise capital from or share profits with non-Africans, and strict limits were placed on the types of work black people could do (see appendices in Manning and Mashigo (1993) for detailed lists of the industrial activities denied to black people). Furthermore, the employment contracts under migrant labour were such that generations of now elderly black people were unable to save for their retirement, or have access to longer term work-related social security, even though they may have worked for forty years or more.

Overall legislation was enacted at a national level. The policies on black business in general and the informal sector itself were controlled through Provincial Ordinances and local municipal by-laws. Black businesses had to get, in addition to a municipal license, permission from the Labour Minister

every year to operate a business. Activities were strictly regulated, and people harassed. There were 'move-on laws' whereby hawkers had to move their site of trading every half hour or so. It would appear that street traders were the section of the informal economy operators who were most harassed. They were and are the most visible component of the informal economy.

Rising resistance to the discriminatory policies of the regime threw the country into economic and political crisis. This came to a head with the 1976 uprisings, and led to a period which was characterised as one of reform and repression in the 1980s: an attempt at strict control of political activity, while the government began to pay attention to the conditions of life for black people in for example transport, health, education and welfare services, and in changing attitudes to the informal economy.

The government was unable to avert the deepening of the economic and political crisis, nor to control the national and international resistance. The democratic elections of 1994 marked the end of 'formal' apartheid. The legacy of inequalities created by the previous regime is well known, and will take years to overcome: poverty rates and shares are highest for black people, and for black women in particular, and for black people in rural areas, especially women.

Table 1 shows comparative indicators of development for five African countries, including South Africa. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Kenya are the countries in which the WIEGO research project in Africa may locate itself. Data about Botswana is included as it is the only southern African country with a per capita GNP which even remotely approaches that of South Africa.

**Table 1: Selected comparative indicators from five African countries**

	<b>GNP p.c. doll. (1995)</b>	<b>Poverty % of people living on less than \$1 a day</b>	<b>Life Expect. at Birth</b>	<b>GDI rank*</b>	<b>GEM rank*</b>
Botswana	3020	34.7	68	79	39
Côte d'Ivoire	660	17.7	55	126	n.a.
Ghana	390		59	111	n.a.
Kenya	280	50.2	58	112	n.a.
South Africa	3160	23.7	64	71	22

Source, World Development Report, 1997 except for columns marked \*, sourced from UNDP, 1997.

Table 1 shows the difference in per capita GNP in the five countries; it can be seen that South Africa's per capita GNP is over eleven times greater than Kenya's. It shows how half of Kenya's population (50.2%) lives on less than one dollar a day, compared to one quarter of South Africa's population. Poverty in South African, however, must be analysed in relative terms within the country – there are great extremes in wealth and poverty. Botswana has had a higher life expectancy at birth compared to the other countries; new

research evidence shows this rate to be falling dramatically as a result of the HIV/ AIDS epidemic, as will happen in Kenya and in South Africa.

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI), developed by the UNDP, builds on the well-known Human Development Index (HDI) which is a measure using life expectancy, educational status and income to assess and rank countries in less starkly economic terms than for example the GDP. The GDI concentrates on the differences in achievements between men and women. Table 1 shows that South Africa and Botswana, both middle income countries, rank 71 and 79 respectively in the 175 countries for which the measure was done. The other three countries rank much lower.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) measures the relative empowerment of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity - for example, the number of women in parliament, women's percentage shares of professional and technical jobs, and of managerial positions. The statistics needed to make these calculations are often not collected, or made public, by governments. Table 1 shows that the UNDP could not construct the GEM for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana or Kenya, and the report notes that the best way of encouraging governments to make such data available is to increase the demand for the data (UNDP, 1997: 123).

Recent surveys show that inequality within the black population now accounts for a larger portion of overall inequality - in other words, there are some very wealthy black South Africans. But Table 2 clearly demonstrates the racial inequality that persists in three key indicators of human development - life expectancy at birth, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), and the illiteracy rate. The white IMR compares with the most industrialised populations of the world, the black IMR is at a similar level to Kenya's - while South Africa's per capita GNP is, as previously noted, more than eleven times greater than that of Kenya.

**Table 2: Racial distribution of selected development indicators, South Africa**

	<b>Life Expectancy at Birth Female/ Male</b>	<b>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births 1994)</b>	<b>% Illiterate (1993)</b>
Black	67 / 60	54.3	46
Coloured	65 / 59	36.3	34
Indian	70 / 64	9.9	16
Whites	76 / 69	7.3	1
South Africa	68 / 62	48.9	-

Source: Health Systems Trust, 1996

In the 1980's the obsession with political exclusion of people who were not white changed to a search for ways to promote the development of black

business (seen for example in the 1987 White Paper on Privatisation and Deregulation in the RSA). The government had lost control over the movement of black people to cities by the mid 1980s. Influx control legislation was formally repealed in 1988, and property rights for black people in cities started to be granted in 1988. The 1991 Business Act was a key measure for de-regulation, removing barriers to informal sector operation, and making it an offence to enforce the move-on laws. Also in 1991, four key pieces of legislation which had underpinned the apartheid regime were removed: the Group Areas Act, Black Land Act, Development Trust and Land Act, and the Population Registration Act (according to which all South Africans were officially racially classified at birth).

Rogerson (1992) describes how during 1980s ambitious claims were made for what the informal sector could contribute to the repair of the damaged South African economy. In the early nineties the euphoria turned to a more sober assessment of what the informal economy could deliver. What has been important has been the recognition of the role of local economic development - the moving away from the over-determined role of the central state in economic planning.

The key objective for the state's role in the new white paper on small business (RSA, 1995) is that it will create an enabling environment for the development of small enterprises. The white paper identifies four categories in the informal economy: survivalist, micro-enterprises, small enterprises, and medium enterprises. It recommends that different support strategies be devised for each category. The paper is mute on what such strategies for survivalists would be, while it has much to say about strategies for the others. It would seem that the SMME policy as it is at present has little relevance for the survivalist sector - in particular for women street traders and home-based workers. What is seen by policy makers as a 'micro-enterprise' isn't micro enough. And though the government espouses policy support for the development of micro-enterprise, little in the way of material resources has been allocated so far. It is important to take into account, however, that there was a widespread and naive under-estimation of the amount of time it would take the new government to institute policy changes (across all sectors) and then follow these up with changes in budgetary allocations.

The government has introduced some institutional support to the small business sector. The 1995 Small Business Act set up two bodies: the Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency (commonly known simply as Ntsika), and the National Small Business Council (NSBC). Ntsika is designed to be a facilitation and promotion body for small businesses; the NSBC was intended to give a voice to small business interests at national, provincial and local levels, but it has subsequently been abolished. A third institution, Khula Finance, was set up as a public body outside of the ambit of the Act. It aims to secure access to financial services for small businesses, with special

emphasis on micro-enterprises. Ntsika has instituted a Regulatory Review encompassing all facets of policy and regulation governing the informal economy. It is due to make its findings known at the end of 1998.

These institutions are located in or emerging from the economic departments of national government. At local government level, Local Business Development Centres (LBDCs) are being established, with a view to providing integrated, highly localised, accredited services to micro-enterprises. The support these institutions provide to street traders, and especially to survivalists, will be assessed in the institutional study.

While the Business Act sets the national legislative framework, byelaws governing street trading are drawn up by local government structures. The WIEGO project happens at a time when the national legislation is liberal; some municipalities are trying (and succeeding) to over-ride the national framework with more restrictive rules for street traders. The national policies embrace the openness and inclusivity of this time in history; municipal structures - new as some of them are - are having to implement them in the face of rising antipathy from their own officials, and from formal businesses. This would seem to present a real window of opportunity for negotiations between street traders and local governments.

## **2.2 A gendered snapshot of the South African economy**

Sally Baden, Shireen Hassim and Sheila Meintjes's recently completed a country gender profile of South Africa which provides the following compressed basic information about the South African economy:

South Africa is the largest and richest economy in Southern Africa, and Africa as a whole, with a total GDP of 133.5 billion dollars and a per capita income of over 3,500 dollars. It is rich in natural and mineral resources and relatively industrialised, with more than 55 percent of the population in urban areas.

Mining and quarrying as well as agriculture contribute relatively small percentages directly to GDP ... but provide the basis for much manufacturing activity (25% of GDP in 1995) as well as being major sources of exports. Overall services is the largest (and fastest) growing sector, accounting for over 50% of GDP in 1995. (Baden et al, 1997: 45)

In the 1980s and early 1990s, negative real growth rates were experienced, and went along with large-scale job losses. Many women in the clothing and textile manufacturing industries lost jobs (Valodia, 1996: 71). Women's participation in the labour force has increased in recent years. In 1995, 46% of all women were reported to be economically active, compared to 63% of all men (Budlender, 1997b: 2 - 21). Of all those in employment, about 56% are

men and 44% are women.

There is growing informalisation and casualisation of employment, with Africans and African women particularly affected by these trends. CSS (1996) estimates that 1.7 million people, or about one in ten of the labour force, work in informal activities; the white paper says that about 800 000 small, medium and micro-enterprises absorb about a quarter of the labour force of 15 million people. African women are estimated to be about 60% of workers in the informal economy (Valodia, 1996: 61).

The unemployment rate is high. Many different definitions of unemployment are used, some stricter, some broader. The narrower definition requires the unemployed person to have actively sought work in the recent past; the broader definition allows for the fact that people react to persistent failure to find work by ceasing to seek actively for work. With the present state of data in South Africa, we cannot determine what proportion of street traders would count as employed or unemployed; the 1998 October Household Survey should dramatically improve knowledge about this, as the Central Statistics office has improved the methodology regarding the informal economy.

Table 3 shows that according to the broader definition, the unemployment rate in 1995 was 28.6% for the whole population. It was much higher for Africans - 36.2% - than for whites - 4.6%. The unemployment rate for women was higher than for men, and within each race group. Five out of ten (47%) African women were unemployed in 1995, compared to three out of ten (29%) African men (CSS, 1996). Well-educated women are still likely to have higher unemployment rates than men with the same level of education. The unemployment rates are much higher for rural areas, and for African women in rural areas. Unemployment is also very high for young people, especially young African women (Klasen and Woolard, 1998: 36).

**Table 3: Unemployment rates in South Africa, OHS 1995**

	Strict Rate	broad rate	broad rate: men	broad rate: women
rural	18.2	36.6		
urban	15.7	24.0		
all	16.4	28.6	29.4	46.9
African	20.6	36.2	28.6	45.7
white	3.5	4.6	3.0	7.0

Source: Klasen and Woolard, 1998

There is a strong relationship between race and gender, and position in the labour market. Some of the factors that contribute to gender bias are:

- Women do most of the unpaid labour in child care and household

maintenance; this specially affects rural and peri-urban women who don't have access to services. A great deal of time is spent in collecting water and fuel.

- Women have high levels of unemployment, especially in rural areas.
- There is a bias against women in access to skills training and apprenticeships
- Women have a narrower range of choices than men about what work they can do, and they get lower pay.
- Women are represented more than men in rural agricultural work, in casual forms of employment and in informal activities, and in low wage work in the public sector (for government).
- Women have a slightly lower rate of being unionised than men, but many more women than men work in sectors which are not unionised. With the increasing unionisation of the public sector, it may be that rates of women's unionisation will increase.
- Women have less access to employment-related benefits.

(Standing et al, 1996; Budlender, 1995)

In the transitional period, the economic policy tended towards greater emphasis on trade liberalisation. The new macro-economic strategy, GEAR - Growth, Employment and Redistribution, introduced in 1996, reaffirms the commitment to trade liberalisation, to export led economic growth, and to the small business sector as an engine of growth. GEAR is a conservative economic policy with strong neo-liberal aspects to it, and many fear that it may reverse some of the gains which have been made by and for women. Some see it as a self-imposed version of a structural adjustment programme, and fear that it will lead to similar cuts in government spending in the social spheres which are favourable to women.

In three important respects, though, the direct analogy with a 'typical' structural adjustment programme is inaccurate: first, the 1998/9 budget showed no decrease in social spending in the three big sectors of health, education and welfare, though there were cuts in housing and water spending. Second, structural adjustment programmes do not usually, as GEAR does, include a commitment to targeted employment creation. And third, GEAR is accompanied by an ambitious programme of land reform with a potentially strong redistributive element.

Little consideration is given in GEAR itself to the effects of trade liberalisation on women. What effect will export led growth have on their economic position? In the first round of the Women's Budget, Valodia argued that the short to medium term effect would be a fall in the numbers of women employed (Valodia, 1996). Bell and Caetano (1996) concentrated on the effects of the trade reforms on the manufacturing sector, and concluded that there would be a decline in the labour intensive industries in manufacturing -

which Valodia had pointed out was where women are employed, especially in clothing, textiles, and the shoe industry. Some would argue that the losses will be in the short to medium only. The commitment in GEAR to public sector restructuring, with the proposed reductions of civil service jobs, will lead to job losses for women. The sectors offering some hope for expansion of employment are construction and tourism. The latter employs a high percentage of women.

The reversal of the government's early commitment to the expansion of early child development facilities will affect women in two ways: there will be little growth in the numbers of those who have access to child care facilities, and this gets in the way of access to work; and there will be less growth of the thousands of employment opportunities, close to home, even though low-waged, that this sector offers.

While economic policy changes are being formulated and debated, the legislative and institutional framework regarding labour relations, and conditions of employment, is undergoing significant reform. The extent to which the new framework will extend to the informal economy is not yet clear, and this will be explored in the institutional study of the WIEGO project.

This section has given a sketch of the political and policy background to the development of the informal economy, and to women in the South African economy. The paper now turns to a more detailed profile of workers in the informal economy, and especially to women street traders.

### **3 WORKING IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

There is a great deal of debate about the definition of and hence terminology used for those parts of the economy not included in the formal economy. The 1972 ILO definition of the informal sector was widely used for two decades. According to this definition, the informal sector was characterised by ease of entry, the small scale of enterprises, family ownership of the enterprise, the use of labour-intensive technology, and reliance on indigenous resources. Early on, the distinction was made regarding the location of the enterprise, with the major distinction being between home-based work, and street-based work. The ILO definition was never unproblematic: particularly, its static definition of 'family' failed to accommodate changing household forms, and gender positions within households.

Recently, the effects of globalisation on labour markets, combined with South Africa's particular history, have led to the term 'informal sector' being increasingly unhelpful. For example, as far as street-based traders are concerned, there is a world of difference between women in up-market flea markets trading in niche antique or luxury goods, and the women in the survivalist sector trading in fruit and vegetables produced by someone else.

Even the traditional distinction between home-based and street-based work becomes unhelpful as a means of classification when there are now so many spaza shops - trading taking place on the street but attached to, and in some cases in the yard of, a person's home.

This paper uses the term informal economy, and concentrates mainly on street traders. Some street traders are employed by formal traders, though the majority of women in the survivalist or poorest end of street trading are independent traders.

### **3.1 The number of street traders**

It is difficult to estimate with any accuracy the numbers of people engaged in the informal economy as a whole. At the national level, CSS (1996) estimates that 1.7 million people, or about one in ten of the labour force, work in informal activities. A major nuisance is that the CSS includes domestic workers in its definition of self-employed informal sector workers, which skews both figures and the analyses based on them. The White Paper for SMME policy estimates that just less than 4 million people - one quarter of the labour force of 15 million - work in the informal economy; African women are estimated to be about 60% of workers in the informal economy (Valodia, 1996: 61 – the estimate included domestic workers).

With regard to street traders, the 1995 October Household Survey picked up an absurdly small number (six, weighted up to 2038 nation-wide). It is clear that the way CSS has been asking the question has been inadequate; the next OHS will give a much better estimate (Debbie Budlender, personal communication). At the local level, Witt points out the wildly different estimates of traders in one relatively small vending area in Durban, the Warwick Triangle. A report commissioned by the Council estimated some 1500 legal and 200 illegal traders in that area. A senior Council employee's estimate was 4000 - 4500 (Witt, 1997:117). The DRA census counted 4010 traders in Warwick Triangle.

A 1990 a substantial three-phased study was done of small scale enterprises in Mamelodi and KwaZakhele (Liedholm and McPherson, 1991). The first step was a complete enumeration of and questionnaire to all small firms, in homes, in backyards, and on the streets. Second, a smaller sample of 256 was then selected from the 2736 firms in Mamelodi and the 2517 firms in KwaZakhele for a deeper probe into the establishment and growth of the enterprises, and main problems faced. Third, anyone who claimed membership of a stokvel in the enumeration phase was asked further questions about that. Liedholm and McPherson (1991: 13) note:

... The vast majority of the enterprises in the two South African townships are operated out of the home ... typically operating without

any outward sign of activity. One must clearly penetrate the privacy of the household if the full extent of small enterprise activity is to be illuminated.

The 70% of enterprises operating from the home, and only 11% trading on the streets in this study, is a reflection of how far apartheid residential policies forced a separation between social and economic life. Would a survey done in those two townships now, nearly a decade later, reveal more informal sector work that was not home-based? This research is a good reminder that the WIEGO project on street traders is dealing with the highly visible part of informal economy work - street trading, in large cities.

Two large studies have been done recently which combined a census of all street traders in a particular area with further interviews with a smaller sub-sample. The Johannesburg Administration of the Transitional Metropolitan Council commissioned a study to determine the 'size, distribution and density of informal street trading' in Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD), and three non-CBD locations in the metropolitan area were surveyed at the same time as controls and for comparative purposes (CASE, 1995a, b and c). CASE field workers counted three times at the same locations and there was a great variation in the numbers of stalls each time: from a low of 3167 and to a high of 6893 (CASE, 1995a: 3). CASE felt that this high fluctuation might be explained by the better trading days at the end of the week, or at the end of the month, but remained uneasy at the size of the variation.

In 1997, DRA did a census and survey of street traders in the whole Durban metropolitan area - it thus included vendors in the townships, while many other studies focus only on the CBDs. Some 19000 traders were identified in the DRA census: 57% were in the inner city, and 30% were in high density non-CBD areas such as Umlazi. When doing check backs as a matter of quality control in the study, DRA found many missing traders (Julian May, personal communication). This is another indication that trading may be more of an intermittent activity than is usually supposed, and is a theme which will be pursued in the research to come.

### **3.2 The work done by street traders**

The informal economy in South Africa differs in important ways from those in other African countries and elsewhere in the world. One major difference is in composition. Claudia Manning cites House's Kenyan study of legitimate informal sector activities in Nairobi in 1994, for example, which shows that half of the participants were involved in manufacturing, about a third in services, and only one fifth in trade and distribution. She similarly shows manufacturing in Columbia and Mexico to constitute a sizeable part of informal economy activities (Manning, 1993: 55). Liedholm and McPherson (1991: 5) express surprise at the comparison between Mamelodi and KwaZakhele on the one

hand, with a paucity of manufacturing activities. The 16.9% is very low compared with Fisseha's findings of 36% in Maseru, Lesotho and 32% in Maradi, Niger.

Thus in South Africa, manufacturing and services comprise a smaller proportion of overall activities, and trade in fresh produce and made goods such as clothing and cosmetics comprise a larger proportion. Women are concentrated more in the non-manufacturing activities, and in the poorer, survivalist end of the sector.

A high proportion of South African traders deal with produce not produced by themselves. Table 3 gives the DRA census results of 19000 traders in the Durban metropolitan area. Eight out of ten traders - 78.7% - were selling food or other products; two out of ten - 21.3% - were doing something else such as providing services. Only 3% were selling goods or food produced by themselves. Those selling clothes were likely to be employed by another person; those selling fresh produce were nearly all self-employed.

**Table 4: Gender and activities in the informal economy in Durban Metropolitan area, 1997 (Source: DRA)**

	male	female	(missing N)	Total N	% of all traders
Selling any food	15.5	31.5	(226)	9171	<b>46.2</b>
Selling any other product	13.7	20	(54)	6459	<b>32.5</b>
Other activities	10.8	11	(115)	4235	<b>21.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>62.5</b>			<b>100</b>

The rural women interviewed by Preston-Whyte (1992) defined themselves very clearly as traders, not producers. The beachfront vendors in Durban did the same (Nair, 1996). They perceive production of their own baskets as a sign that one is enduring very hard times. They feel that tourists prefer the colourful and various trinkets and toys imported from the East, or the more exotic carvings coming in from other African countries. They access these different products in turn via different traders - goods from Zimbabwe and Swaziland through a contact at the Durban station; wood carvings from Malawi through Indian traders at the Victoria Market, and goods from the East through a Chinese person in Point Road.

The DRA study showed that each trader sells a very limited range of goods. Nearly half (45%) sell only one type of product, a quarter sell only two product types, with the remaining quarter selling three or more types. Seven out of ten of those who sold food or other products were selling fruit and vegetables, and meat or poultry. About 900 people were trading in traditional medicines.

The CASE study in the Joburg CBD had similar findings:

The most common goods sold were foods (41%), fruit and vegetables (37%), and clothing (30%). Household goods and services were the least common activities. (CASE, 1995b: 7 - 9)

The same report notes that there has been increasing diversification recently in the informal economy - this appears to be linked to the recent increase in the number of foreign nationals. About six out of ten of the foreign street traders were men.

Some of the differences between men and women in the DRA study were:

- Slightly more men (13%) than women (10%) employ other people - but this is a very low figure overall.
- Nearly twice as many women as men were employees.
- Nearly all of the women were sellers only, compared to about two thirds of the men. Of the women sellers, about 40% sold fresh produce only.
- More men (61%) than women (54%) purchased from a large dealer, rather than from a small shop - this is not a big difference

In Mamelodi and KwaZakhele, women comprised over half (53%) of the labour force in small enterprises, and about two thirds of all the small firm proprietors were women. However, female-run firms had a significantly lower average annual growth rate than did male-run firms - 20.6% per year compared to 30%. The fastest growing sectors were those run by men (Liedholm and McPherson, 1991: 12).

The notion of independence and dependency needs to be explored further. Some street traders may sell only goods produced by themselves; it appears there are limited numbers of such traders. Others are 'independent' but sell goods produced by others; others may sell on commission, or be agents, or may be fully employed on a wage basis by a formal sector trader. There is a stereotype held by council officials, the media and parts of the public that the majority of street traders are 'merely a front' for formal traders - and the conventional stereotype has African traders (mainly women) fronting for Asian businessmen. As Witt commented in his study of fresh vegetable distribution, he heard lots of rumours but found little concrete evidence of this. In the DRA study in Durban, just over 10% of the sample said that they were employed by someone in the formal sector.

Some researchers have expressed concern that deregulation will weaken women's position in the informal economy. Posel et al (1993: 48) summarise the concerns of three studies:

Naidoo (1993) argues that while deregulation has eased police harassment, it has also facilitated the entry of formal Indian male traders using local women as a front - and paying them low wages. These traders further have brought in manufactured goods, which have displaced some of women's previous activities of producing goods for sale. This is consistent with Friedman and Hambridge's (1992) warning that with deregulation, activities could become more profitable, encouraging men to take over. More generally, however, men tend to move into areas of informal activity when they become lucrative as Preston-Whyte and Nene's (1992) study of KwaMzimela shows.

However, the Naidoo study gives no evidence that the women were in fact producing goods beforehand. In Nair's study, the beachfront traders give a mixed picture of what is influencing trading patterns: officials have discouraged their selling trinkets from the east; and they themselves know that this is what tourists want. It is now a mark of a poor trader - one who is really struggling - if she has to 'resort to' making a traditional Zulu mat to get by.

Further careful research is needed to trace out more precisely what the effects of globalisation and deregulation will be on women street traders (and also, of course, on women doing home-based work). At the same time, research should be done to understand the potential implications for women of the interesting new initiatives where major companies are embarking on new relationships with informal economy workers: South African Breweries with shebeen owners, Unilever with spaza shop owners over soap powders, Edgars in Johannesburg CBD negotiating with street traders to sell Edgars goods on the pavement outside their new flagship store, with street traders enticing customers into the store with descriptions of the greater variety of goods to be found inside.

### 3.3 Age

The Johannesburg CBD census showed that the great majority of traders - 77% - were in the age groups 25 to 49 years (CASE, 1995a: 6). The Durban Metropolitan census and the Isipingo study reflect a similar finding. They both do a gender breakdown and find the same thing: there are many more men than women in the 21-30 year age group, and this then changes until in the 41-50 year age group, there are many more women than men. Men are thus entering street trading earlier and withdrawing earlier. Women are more likely to start later and trade when they are older. These patterns are clearly related to childbearing and rearing, and possibly to men leaving the informal sector to take up formal work opportunities, or to become successful entrepreneurs operating away from the streets in built premises.

The smaller studies rely greatly on 'snowballing' to identify their non-random samples, and little can be learned from them about age trends.

### 3.4 Education levels

All of the studies show levels of education to be woefully low - reflecting black South Africans' lack of access to reasonable education until relatively recently. Key findings are:

- Many street traders have no education at all - 10% in Johannesburg CBD, 18.3% in Isipingo.
- About half of street traders surveyed in quantitative and qualitative studies have either no or only primary school education - up to six years of schooling.
- The DRA study is the only one of the larger studies to do a gender breakdown of education - more women (14.4%) than men (8.6%) have no schooling. The DRA study also found that 81% of women and 87% of men could read and write their mother tongue, but only half of women (and two thirds of men) could read and write English.
- There have been significant improvements recently in educational levels. The qualitative studies show the younger women traders to have more years of education than the older (see especially Nair, 1996). For example, more than half (52%) SEWU members who are over 65 years old have no education, compared to one in five (19%) of those who are 25-35 years old (Bedford, 1995:5). In Durban in 1984, the Hawker Report showed that 48% of its sample to have no schooling or up to five years of schooling (Durban City Engineer's Department, 1984). The comparable DRA figure in 1997, some thirteen years later, is 22.5%.
- The Isipingo study in KwaZulu Natal, and all the qualitative studies, shows that very few traders - and especially women - enter high school or complete matriculation.<sup>4</sup> The DRA's 10.6% who have matric (7.2% of women and 14.6% of men) is about the same as with the Johannesburg CBD figure of 10%. Interestingly, the survey of SEWU members show 8% to have matric, and about half having higher junior and/or Standard Nine schooling level - far higher than for the Isipingo traders, for example. This suggests that SEWU's membership is better educated than street traders at large.
- The foreign migrants in the CASE study of Johannesburg CBD had higher levels of education than South African street traders.
- The ERU/BEES study of black small and micro-enterprises in KwaZulu Natal sampled 650 enterprises chosen for their potential for growth - the opposite end of the informal economy to the survivalist end of the street

---

<sup>4</sup> Matriculation marks the end of secondary education, and requires twelve years of schooling.

traders. All of the city and small town respondents had at least some education and only 3% of rural respondents had no education at all. At the same time, 30% of all respondents had reached matric, and 31% of men and 30% of women had some post-school education.

The strong relationship between poor education and being in the survivalist sector can clearly be seen. Basic literacy was relatively widespread. Street traders thought that reading and writing another language - and especially English - would be very important in enabling them to be more successful in their businesses.

### **3.5 Marital status, household and income earning status**

The surveys vary greatly in findings about the marital status of street traders. Some variation could be expected depending on how questions were asked, how they were understood, and on what the interviewees' perceptions were of the relevance of the questions.

In the Durban metropolitan area, one quarter of both men and women were married and/or living with a partner. Seven out of ten men (70%) men and six out of ten of the women (60%) said they had never been married and did not have a partner at that time - a very high proportion. In Isipingo, 40% of traders were married, and 56% were single, with very few being widowed, divorced or separated. Of the smaller studies which addressed the question, Fadane (1998:21) finds over half of her sample of 30 women were divorced, 8 were married (6 of whose husbands were unemployed), 5 were single mothers and one had been deserted.

Research on SEWU's membership showed an increase from 53% to 60% between the first and second survey in those who stated they were married, with a corresponding decrease in those reporting they were single - 40% to 30%. The earlier survey had three quarters of the members (75%) as main breadwinners in their households, and two thirds (67%) of their households had no other earner at all (Bedford, 1995; James, 1998).

The 1995 survey also reveals the differences between SEWU's street vendor membership and home-based membership. Street vendors are more likely to be household head, to be the main breadwinner, and to have no other earners in the household (Bedford, 1995).

### **3.6 Children, dependants, and child care**

Access to child care is a key variable affecting women's ability to work in the paid economy. Child care facilities in South Africa as a whole have been unsupported by the state. There has been limited subsidised provision for

white, Indian and coloured children, and very little indeed for African children. Much of the provision that there is, has been offered by NGOs and religious organisations.

The CASE survey investigated the children and child care responsibilities of street traders in Johannesburg CBD in some detail (CASE, 1995b: 35-46). Just less than a third (31%) had no children under 16 and of those who did, nearly four fifths (77%) had up to three children. In other words, few traders had 4 or more children. The 1995 survey of SEWU members showed higher numbers of children - the mean number of children was slightly more than 4 (and of surviving children, slightly less than 4).

Johannesburg traders with children under six years were asked where the child or children were living. About half of them (48%) said their children did not live with them - they send their children to live with a grandparent or other relative, for example, so they can do their work. For the half whose children of less than six years were living with them, far more of the men could rely on their wives or partners to care for the children, whereas women were much more likely to rely on other family members than their spouse or partner.

Bedford's study of SEWU members showed that 40% relied on another family member as a caregiver. Even more children of school going age were sent to live elsewhere. Only 41% of the traders reported that children of school going age lived with them; 55% said the child lives somewhere else and the few remaining said the child sometimes lives with them and sometimes somewhere else.

As CASE points out:

Families are broken up for economic reasons; traders are unable to sustain the dual responsibilities of economic production and child-care simultaneously. While the apartheid migrant labour system has been scrapped, families continue to be separated for economic reasons. (CASE, 1995b: 45)

The CASE study found that 28% of women traders, and 9% of male traders, took care of the children under 6 themselves, and the way the question was asked implies that it meant 'look after your child at your place of work'. In the Durban metropolitan area, DRA also found that more women (26%) than men (15%) had small children present. A different interpretation might be that it is quite surprising that as many as 1 out of every 10 male traders are looking after young children. It might also be that the men had their women partners present as well, and/ or that they only occasionally had their children with them.

Naidoo's research on women traders in the Warwick Avenue area shows that

there was limited if any money for childminders, and created complex arrangements based on a mutual exchange of services. Some street traders, however, did use creches or pre-school care facilities. A surprisingly high number of Johannesburg CBD traders had their children under six years old in creches. Some 17% of the women and 8% of the men street traders had children in a crèche. Viewed from another angle, women working in educare facilities constitute an important segment of home-based informal employment (not necessarily in their own homes).

The access of street traders, and especially women traders, to childcare facilities in future will be dependent on policy directions in the early childhood development (ECD) field. At the time of the 1994 elections, the Department of Education was keen on integrating both ECD and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) into the overall education portfolio. It soon backtracked and took responsibility for the single pre-primary year (grade 0) - whereas ECD defines early childhood as up to and including the ninth year of age. There is a provincial and national crisis in education, with huge overspends, and almost the entire budget is consumed by teachers salaries, and ECD concerns have taken a lower profile. The welfare department continues to give some subsidies for pre-school care, and is re-prioritising its allocations towards poorer black children.

Workers in the ECD field are divided as to the best form of provision of services in the early childhood field. One approach or school wishes to see more protection of better standards of training and curriculum in purpose-built structures. This would be costly, and would cover fewer people - the choice of depth versus breadth. Limited state commitment, combined with the higher standards for pre-school care, will almost certainly lead to increased fees for the user - and consequently to less access for poorer street traders.

A different approach or school advocates for a spread of home-based or even 'backyard' simple creches, with shorter training for thousands of (mostly women) facilitators and carers - the choice of breadth rather than depth. Such centres would be more accessible physically and financially to the children of poorer women. The National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI) has argued that if 75% of children were in low cost ECD facilities with a staff to child ratio of 1: 20, then about 200 000 jobs would be created for teachers and child minders (Naidoo et al, 1996). In 1996, Gauteng was the only province to publicly commit itself to the breadth-versus-depth position.

### **3.7 Homes and accommodation**

Accommodation is a pressing problem for women street traders in central business districts. Many women commute between rural and urban areas. In the past, and until recently, African women were largely excluded by legislation from access to housing in urban areas. Domestic workers typically

'lived in' at the homes of white employers; Preston-Whyte (1992) reports on the decrease in living-in domestic workers as women are able to get independent access to other accommodation in urban areas.

Recent trends are towards a higher proportion of weekly migrants being women, and an increase in migrant levels among women. There is anecdotal evidence that while more women are coming to town, more (unemployed) men are going back to rural areas. This is similar to trends in neighbouring Lesotho. Mapetla and Machai draw from research which analyses changing patterns of migration in Lesotho, and show that it has become more internal, with more young women than young men now going to the urban area of Maseru. Their lack of educational levels and of skills put them at a disadvantage, and many are pushed into the informal economy (Mapetla and Machai, 1998: 158).

There are many women who oscillate - they move between urban and rural areas. For women in Block AK in Durban who lived on the pavements until 1997 when they moved to Mansell Road:

'Family ties with relatives in the rural areas are maintained. Individuals remain in the city for periods of four to six weeks before returning to their rural homes to attend to family matters. They are then replaced by other family members to 'keep the business going' until the woman's return, and so the cycle goes on. In many of their families these women are, in fact, the primary earners and de facto heads of their household.' (Bernstein and Gray, 1994: 127)

The women who Nomnikelo Fadane spoke to had mostly come to Durban from old Transkei and old KwaZulu. Many of them went home monthly. They were among the poorest of the street traders - they may live on the street, use networks and payment to get a site in a shack settlement, live in hostels, or move between all of these. Hostels are known to be violent and overcrowded, and politically partisan (Fadane, 1998: 24). Fadane's study, as also Eleanor Preston-Whyte's (1992), show the need of many women traders for temporary accommodation when they come to town to sell goods.

There have been two organisational responses to accommodation problems in the Durban area involving SEWU. Before SEWU's formation a local branch of the ANC initiated the development of the Mansell Road long haul bus and trading complex for women vendors selling to travellers on long distance buses. The women had very poor shack accommodation on Block AK (Newmarket Street). Once the Block AK women joined SEWU in 1994, the organisation continued putting pressure on the City Council until the complex became operational.

In September 1994, SEWU initiated a plan for overnight accommodation for

traders. A short-term overnight facility was needed for those coming to the city to trade. The Provincial Housing Board was persuaded to put aside R4.5 million for housing for 350 traders (162 rooms) near Durban station. Each person gets somewhere to sleep, somewhere to trade from, access to a crèche and a public bath house, storage and an eating area.

It may be that accommodation ranks more highly as a problem in Durban than in other cities, given the high continuing oscillation between rural and urban areas. Accommodation was not specified as a problem in the study of Mamelodi and KwaZakhele - obviously, because the study took place in townships where people lived. . The CASE study found a third of the traders living in the CBD, and a half living in and commuting from Soweto on a daily basis. The social and economic implications of accommodation for street traders will be pursued as the research proceeds in the other urban areas

### **3.8 Health status**

Street traders largely work in poor environmental conditions. They are exposed to the elements (in South Africa there are extremes of heat and in some areas of cold), with generally poor access to water, sanitation, refuse removal and with poor equipment such as chairs, tables. The conditions under which street traders work can be gleaned by looking at what researchers said had been problems with doing the research: the noise and the heat, the fear of crime in parts of the city where traders work, the presence of children, the political divisions between traders' organisations which make people fearful of talking openly.

It could be expected that there would be a link between this kind of environment and poor health. Both the CASE survey of Johannesburg CBD, and the DRA survey of Durban metropolitan, asked street traders for their own assessment of how healthy they were. Subjective health ratings such as this are always problematic. Poorer people tend to over-estimate their good health, and better off people tend to say they are less healthy than they objectively are. Women are more likely than men to say they are in worse health. Nevertheless, in both studies, the overwhelming majority of the vendors said their health was excellent, very good or good - over 80% in Durban, and 90% in Johannesburg. Men were more likely than women to say their health was excellent (44% men compared to 32% women in Durban; 38% of men compared to 20% of women in Johannesburg). Women were more likely than men to say they were in poor or only fair health (CASE, 1995b: 52-60).

In 1995, the SEWU members were asked about their health. More than one in ten (12%) said they health problems directly associated with their work, and there was no difference between the street vendors and the home based workers. They were asked also about their health in general:

In all, 48% of the respondents said they had no health problems (about 46% of the street vendors, and 53% of the home-based sample). In the case of the street vendor group, there is a clear correlation between higher income and better health (Bedford, 1995:17).

In the 1997 survey of SEWU members, on the other hand, 90% reported no health problems.

The discrepancy in these data would suggest that these self-reported measures are possibly best left out of this sort of survey in future. Three current research initiatives might provide a better assessment of the health status and problems of women in the informal economy. The University of the Witwatersrand's Department of Community Health has started a study of the health of women in the informal economy. The Medical Research Council, in collaboration with the Department of Health, is doing a Demographic and Health Study which includes street traders. Judith Head, of the Department of Sociology at University of Cape Town, is conducting a literature review of the reproductive health problems of women in the informal sector.

### **3.9 Previous work experience, and the effects on entry into street trading**

Both large-scale surveys and the smaller qualitative studies show that most people - men and women - are pushed into the informal economy in South Africa through need rather than by choice. In the Johannesburg CBD, more than 80% said that they entered because they were redundant, they had no other skills, or they couldn't find another job (CASE 1995b: 26). The women in Warwick Avenue survey by Fadane (1998:21) had come to Durban from rural areas because of rural poverty and unemployment. South Africa's high rate of landlessness among rural people is a very strong push factor towards seeking employment in urban areas.

There is a big difference between women and men in work experience before starting as street traders. Far more men than women have previous employment in the formal sector; women are far more likely to have never been employed, or to have been employed as domestic workers, and to start trading when they are widowed. Six out of ten of the women beachfront traders had never had a steady job (Nair, 1996:58). Pentz's 1992 study of Warwick Avenue showed 75% of men had been in the formal sector before, while 85% of the women had either never been employed or had been employed only as domestic workers.

A study which purposely biased its sample towards SMEs which had a good chance of succeeding still found a deep gender bias in previous experience (ERU/ BEES, n.d.). Half of the men (51%) had been an employee of another

enterprise before starting, and 17% had been unemployed; none had housework or family responsibilities. Only a third (35%) of the women had been an employee of another enterprise, and 44% had been unemployed or a houseworker or had family responsibilities.

Some traders give positive reasons for entering the informal economy, and their reasons for staying on. In Johannesburg CBD, 10% said they liked the flexible hours and the independence and the chance of earning more money (CASE, 1995b: 26). In KwaZulu- Natal, women said the informal economy offered more independence and power, flexibility, and the ability to make better child care arrangements (Posel et al, 1993:49). Both these studies showed it was younger people, though, who wanted 'proper jobs'.

Men are in a better position to start trading not only because of the skills learned in the formal sector but also because they are more likely to have some savings for start-up costs. Two thirds of the men trading in Isipingo started with their own savings; nearly half of the women needed assistance from relatives (Mbona, 1997). In the Durban area, much fewer women (37%) than men (47%) started with their own savings. But at the same time, nearly all of both the men and the women said they did not need money from elsewhere than own savings or relatives.

This clearly relates to the fact that this is the survivalist end of the informal economy, where there is easy entry because start-up costs are fairly low for both men and for women. Nearly all of the beachfront women traders who Nair interviewed (17 out of 20 - Nair, 1996:74) started with less than R200. A third of the Isipingo street traders started with less than R50, and another third with R51-R200. Some of those in Isipingo thought that access to a well-located site was more of a barrier to starting than access to capital. Access to both training and credit facilities ranked near the bottom of traders' priorities, which were for shelter, storage, and sanitation (Mbona, 1997: 37).

### **3.10 Earnings**

Both quantitative and qualitative studies of poverty and inequality reveal that, the poorer households are, the more they are likely to derive small amounts of income from a variety of sources, the more they rely on non-cash assets and exchanges, and the more difficult it is to capture accurate information about incomes and expenditures. All of these factors will be compounded when assessing the economic status of street traders, and especially women. Indeed, one of the reasons the term 'informal sector' is so problematic is that it lumps into one category a wide variety of economic activities, which offer very different potential for income earning. Some parts of the legitimate informal economy (and most of the illegitimate) offer opportunities for relatively high earnings, but these are not easily declared. Very few surveys probe about non-income related economic activities which contribute to the creation of

sustainable livelihoods.

In South Africa manufacturing comprises a relatively small (but growing) part of the informal economy. The largest segment is in retailing/distribution and this is where incomes earned are lower. Nevertheless, men earn more than women. Within street trading, the selling of fresh produce is what most people do, most of them are women, and incomes earned are very low. Prostitution, as one component of women's work in the informal economy, is exceptional in that high incomes can be earned - and as Posel points out, incomes can be higher here than for many women in the formal sector (cited in Posel et al, 1993: 47).

Most studies show street traders' incomes at well below R600 per month, with lower levels for women. R600 per month was the approximate minimum living level at the time of the 1995 surveys from which the following income figures are taken. In Johannesburg CBD, 54% of street traders had made up to R600 per month at the time of the survey, with more women than men earning up to only R200 per month (CASE, 1995b: 30). In the same year, only 16% of SEWU street vending members earned more than R800 per month (Bedford, 1995:2), and street vendors earned less than SEWU's home-based membership<sup>5</sup>.

Claudia Manning has commented that although urban earnings are so low, street trading women do not say they want to start other activities or enter new or different markets which offer better earning opportunities, and that this same factor was found in research on small firms in Kenya (McCormick, 1992). She says that:

...the central issue at the heart of this reluctance to vacate existing sectors is women's perceptions of risk. Because of their responsibility for the household, most female entrepreneurs are reluctant to abandon activities which have demonstrated some - albeit limited - capacity to generate an income, in favour of an activity which is yet untested. (Manning, 1996:40)

The over-trading in the survivalist sector has been commented on by many researchers, and also popularly by visitors to South Africa, who compare the monotony and uniformity of stalls here with the diversity to be found in street markets in other African countries. It is critically important that the dynamics are better understood, if the social and economic interests of women traders are to be improved and strengthened.

---

<sup>5</sup> The rural studies reviewed do not give income estimates for the informal economy, but show similar gendered patterns of inequality. Mackintosh (1992) shows how in rural KwaZulu-Natal it was largely older men running successful businesses and Cunningham (1992a and 1992b) shows the division of labour and wealth in the palm wine trade. Men are the tappers, and they earn more than the women, who transport the wine to markets.

### 3.11 Working hours

The South African studies show that street traders work long and usually regular working hours, over all months of the year. The busiest time of the day is from 4pm onwards when commuters are on their way home. The busiest day of the week is Friday. Sunday is a day off, or a day with reduced hours, for many. The busiest months of the year are around the major holiday seasons of Christmas and Easter.

A number of the qualitative studies show how women have to juggle their multiple responsibilities of domestic, economic, social and community roles. Naidoo gives a very good idea of how women have to integrate household responsibilities with street trading, and how the household tasks are done when other members are at leisure (Naidoo, 1993:89). Other studies also mention the difficulty women face in securing access to a good site if they arrive later than men because of household responsibilities.

The quantitative studies don't reflect this gendered difference in working hours. There was no difference between men and women in the numbers of hours worked by street traders in Johannesburg CBD (CASE, 1995b: 15) - an average of 10 hours a day, except Sunday. It is likely that there will be differences in trading hours between street traders selling different products. For example, muthi traders<sup>6</sup> may start earlier in the day, while beachfront traders certainly work later at night. The working hours of street traders will be pursued further in the South African component of the WIEGO project. The planned national study of time-use to be done by the CSS will hopefully provide a much better picture of this important issue (Debbie Budlender, personal communication).

### 3.12 Access to infrastructure

The South African research shows that the lack of access of street traders to normal infrastructure is the cause of most of the problems they experience. In particular shelter against the sun and rain features consistently as a priority, as do water, sanitation and access to storage facilities. The media reports emphasise the smelly and dirty conditions in which street traders work as a primary problem for cities; the traders themselves readily agree.

With regard to shelter, in the Joburg CBD, only two out of every ten of vendors (21%) had cover (CASE, 1995b: 7). The DRA study found that more men than women traders had covered stalls - 33% compared to 19%. The majority of traders in the Durban area did not have water, electricity, or refuse removal, but nearly seven out of ten (68%) did have access to toilets.

---

<sup>6</sup> Muthi traders deal in herbs and animal parts used in traditional healing.

SEWU's initiatives in campaigning for improved access to these basic services has been noted in council reports and in the public media, as well as by traders themselves, to have made gains for traders. The WIEGO research will use focus group discussions with traders as a way of tracking changing priorities for traders in this area.

### 3.13 Crime

A number of studies cite crime as one of the major concerns of street traders - a reflection of the high rates of crime and violence in South Africa. Different surveys enquire about different things, and an interesting - and frightening - picture emerges.

Crime rated highest as the problem for both men and women traders in the Manning (1996), Mbona (1997), and Nair (1996) studies. In the Johannesburg CBD, 12% of the street traders interviewed had been exposed to a dangerous or life-threatening situation in the previous year while at work - more than half of these (55%) had been robbed, one in 10 had been assaulted (CASE, 1995b: 62). There was surprisingly little difference between women and men traders, except that men had experienced more robbery and assault.

In the Durban metropolitan area, traders were asked which of a whole series of problems was the biggest obstacle faced by the business. Table 5 shows that theft and criminal violence were felt as a very serious problem by both women and men traders, but more so by women than by men. On the other hand, more men than women rated extortion or payment for protection as the biggest obstacle they faced.

**Table 5: The biggest obstacle faced by women and men street traders, Durban, 1997 (Source: DRA Study)**

	female %	male %
theft and criminal violence	41	33
abuse of regulations by officials - e.g. bribery, harassment	14	13
extortion/ protection payments	12	18

The DRA study showed almost no difference between men and women regarding their rating of problems caused by officials. This was unlike the CASE study, where it has been shown how women were more likely than men to have found their contacts with officials to be unhelpful, though the numbers citing problems with officials was still small.

Crime and violence affect women in different ways than men. Women are

more vulnerable and may retreat rather than respond aggressively:

Women in Khayelitsha ... were closing their businesses early on a Friday because they feared being harassed by drunken men and gangsters. While a significant number of men said they wanted a gun, women did not see this as a solution. (Budlender, micro-enterprises and gender, draft p14)

Durban traders were asked whether they thought that women experienced particular problems as traders, and both the men and the women's responses clustered around aspects of crime and violence. Women's vulnerability to sexual assaults is also noted in many of the South African studies such as Nair and Naidoo.

### **3.14 Areas for further research**

This synthesis of South African research findings has shown that while there has been a significant improvement in the quantitative and qualitative data about street traders and their working conditions over the last decade, important gaps still exist.

In particular, there is a need for studies which investigate the following:

- The reasons for the over-trading and lack of diversity in the survivalist sector.
- The reprioritisation of their problems, by street traders, as new policy changes have an impact.
- Regional comparisons of the conditions under which traders work, and in their ability to make a living from trading.
- The effects of the lack of child care facilities on productivity of women traders, and on the educational standards of their children – particularly the older girl children.
- The kinds of skills which would have a direct effect on the ability to grow businesses.
- The nature of linkages to the formal economy.
- A comparison between the trading patterns and practices of foreign nationals, especially those from other African countries, who have relatively recently established themselves in South Africa, and the relationship between them and South Africa traders.
- The impact of the changing institutional and regulatory environment on the actual conditions of street trading.

## **4 ORGANISATION AND ASSOCIATIONS**

A major focus of the WIEGO project in South Africa will be on the organisation of women street traders. Interest group associations can assist informal

economy workers in at least the following ways:

- for the bulk purchase of goods
- for negotiation with local government for improved amenities
- for negotiation with the formal business sector in order to improve linkages or access resources and networks
- to get collective access to skills training
- to organise self-regulation in the interest of better marketing, or improved safety and security
- to help traders defend their legal rights.

The importance of the organisation of informal economy workers is stressed in an ILO document:

It is only through their own organised efforts and through group solidarity rather than through actions taken on their behalf by more or less well-intentioned outsiders, that informal sector producers and workers will achieve lasting improvements in their situation. (Hansenne, 1991:44)

Within the informal economy, women street traders have particular reasons for needing to form strong organisations, most of them to do with trying to break the marginal position they are in, or improving the conditions in which they are marginal. SEWU's Pat Horn argues strongly that income generation and job creation strategies for women rarely succeed in improving women's economic position if they do not address the marginal position of women which is common to all patriarchal societies. She holds that:

... working women have to be well-organised, not only as workers, but specifically as women focusing on the root causes of their oppression as women. (Horn, 1994:85)

What is known about organisations in the informal economy in general, and among street traders in particular? The present review of the South African literature suggests that this is an area about which there is very little documented information. The surveys that have tried to assess organisational membership have a lot of missing information, as well as simplistic information. On the one hand, the respondents are unwilling to talk openly, and on the other, surveys do not ask about multiple membership, length of membership, the status within organisations of those who do belong, for example. None of the studies addressed the specific constraints faced by street traders in organising around their working conditions.

The DRA study in metropolitan Durban found that 11.6% of the men in the sample and 15.6% of the women were members of associations. The

research director says field workers reported that there was a great unwillingness to answer questions in this area, and advises not to use the membership data for further analysis (Julian May, personal communication).

In the CASE study of traders in the Johannesburg CBD:

- Only 15% of the traders belonged to an association.
- There was virtually no difference between men and women as to membership of an association - of the small number who belonged, 52% were women and 48% men.
- The majority of those who belonged were relatively new members, having joined in the last two years.
- Those who belonged tended to be older and to have more education (which suggests they are a relative elite - as usually older black South Africans have lower levels of education). Very few foreign nationals belonged to associations.

All of the smaller qualitative studies which asked questions about membership showed very low levels, except of course those done through SEWU, or directly commissioned by SEWU. Kasongo's study is the exception - half of his sample of 26 belonged (1996:41), and this reflects the fact that his sample is seriously skewed towards the much larger enterprises.

There are different forms of organisation, and different ways of becoming associated or organised. SEWU (for women only) is the only body of informal workers which has organised as a union; its history and experience will be one focus of the study on organisations in this project. At the other end of the spectrum, some become members of associations in an involuntary way. For example,

In KwaMashu, informal vegetable traders become automatically affiliated to an organisation by virtue of trading in a specific area. (Witt, 1997:121)

It is known that some street traders belong to more than one association; that the majority of associations have a leadership dominated by men; and that many associations cannot deliver any consistent membership numbers nor can they claim to represent specific constituencies.

A third of the Joburg CBD traders who belonged to an organisation said that sharing problems with others was the most important benefit of membership. One in five of those who were members said protection was a benefit, with more women than men saying this.

Why didn't more people belong? Again drawing from the Joburg CBD study, more than half (53%) said they didn't know of any associations. Women

traders were more likely than men not to know about any trade associations. Women traders (58% women compared to 42% men) have less contact with other traders and association officials than male traders. Only 8% said that they did not belong because they couldn't afford the fees (CASE, 1995b: 66).

The ERU/BEES study of black small and micro-enterprises in KwaZulu Natal purposely skewed its sample to focus on non-survivalist businesses with growth potential. Interestingly, like the Johannesburg study of street traders, 90% were also not members of small business associations. The main reason given (by 52.4%) for not being a member was also that they didn't know of any such organisation; there was no variation between men and women (ERU/BEES, no date: 36, 37). A large number were not willing to help form an association in their areas.

Mbona's study of Isipingo street traders, which he holds to have covered virtually all traders, has very different findings. Two of every five traders (43%) belong to an association - mostly to FITA (57%) and Inyanda Chamber of Business (32%). He also reports a 'wide level of awareness of other associations'. The benefits of membership were held to be mostly for the protection of the legal status of traders, as well as defence of interests generally, access to credit facilities, and protection of goods overnight. Of those who were not members, 65% were not willing to join an association if they had the opportunity.

Pat Horn puts forward a number of possible strategies for women to pursue once they are organised (Horn, 1994: 85, 86). Some will be addressed very specifically by the WIEGO project: making visible the work that women do; undertaking negotiations to revalue and restructure 'women's work', and breaking down popular and disempowering stereotypes about women in the informal sector.

There are some clear areas for further research:

- How 'membership' is initiated and then defined, by leaders of organisations, and by members themselves. How does this relate to the ability of organisations to claim to 'represent' their members at negotiations with local authorities?
- The extent of multiple membership of organisations, and why traders belong to different types of organisations.
- A gendered analysis of membership numbers and leadership of existing organisations. It appears that slightly more women than men join associations, but have little authority at leadership level.
- The barriers to organising street traders, and especially women. What would facilitate more effective organising?
- What have the key recruiting moments been for organising street traders? Thereafter, what are the factors which enable, or act as a barrier to, the

sustainability of organisations?

## 5 SOCIAL PROTECTION

Millions of workers world-wide are not covered by any formal social security protection. Many of these will be women working in the informal economy. One of the main research and programme planks of the international WIEGO project is looking for ways to expand social protection and social insurance for women in informal employment. This refers to ways in which women can be protected against loss of income and loss of productive assets when they are unable to work, or are disabled, or are affected by crime or by natural disasters. The particular types of social insurance benefits which WIEGO will be looking at are life insurance, property insurance, child care support (it is unusual to find this as a something to be insured against), health insurance, and housing support.

A full investigation of social protection is not part of the WIEGO programme in South Africa. Very little coverage has been given to this issue in the South African studies of the informal economy reviewed for this paper. Relevant findings are given here, as well as brief information about some related social programmes, so that the material on South Africa can be integrated into the broader project as far as possible. It has also been done because the state social security system is an unusual form of support, accessible to many street traders. It will be seen that South Africa is in a very different position to other countries in Africa.

Both Manning (1993) and Rogerson (1992) address the issue of support structures for people in the informal economy. They use international experience to argue that different strategies or policies should be pursued for the survivalist segment, where most poor street vendors are, and where there is high risk aversion compared to other segments which show more potential for expansion. They say that what is needed is 'welfare measures', 'welfare assistance measures', or, 'a safety net'. Both papers, however, refer to a similar bundle of components - none of which should be categorised as welfare or safety net provision. Thus Rogerson (1992:213) refers to:

- access to clean water
- sanitation
- better shelter
- transport
- education
- access to land for production
- and especially health programmes

He adds also 'even the subsidised or free distribution of food to the poorest and most vulnerable groups' (Rogerson, 1993: 219) - and this is a welfare or

safety net measure. Claudia Manning's list emphasises policies which address 'basic needs' such as nutrition, health and housing - these are also not generally viewed as 'welfare' measures.

The point both are making, which is correct, is that the severe depths of chronic poverty experienced by many South Africans will endure for some time, and they see a role for the state in addressing this. It is most important; however, not to fall into the trap of defining normal responsibilities of states as some kind of temporary 'welfare assistance'. The South African government has made a firm commitment to land reform, to free health care for women with children 0 - 6, for greatly improved access to water and to electricity, and to housing subsidies for poor people. Many of these services, once delivered, will make a significant to the lives and security of women such as street traders. The erstwhile commitment to literacy, adult basic education, and child care provision - all of which are salient for survivalist street traders - appears to have faded at present. A gendered analysis of how many women are in, and how many are out, of this array of programmes (including social security), and with what effect, would be very useful to the WIEGO project.

As far as conventional social security goes, South Africa has programmes of social insurance and non-contributory social assistance. The chief non-contributory programmes are the Old Age Pension and the Disability Grant, which are cash transfers awarded to approximately 2 million elderly people, and people with disabilities. The July 1998 level of the grants is R500 per month. Research has demonstrated convincingly that the benefits are well targeted towards the poor, and especially to poor African women in rural areas. The chief mechanism determining their redistributive effect is that while they are applied for by individuals, the household as a whole consumes the money. There are more people in these poorer households, and significantly more young children (Ardington and Lund, 1995; Case and Deaton, 1997).

A new social security benefit is being introduced in 1998, which should be accessible to numbers of street traders, or to their children being taken care of by other relatives. The Child Support Grant is targeted at about half of all children up to the age of seven. It will be payable to the primary care giver, the person with most day-to-day responsibility for the child. It will be introduced at the rate of R100 per child per month. The Means Test will skew the Grant towards rural areas and informal settlements.

The existing State Maintenance Grant goes to approximately 200 000 women, most of whom were classified as Indian or coloured, and mostly goes to urban areas. The maximum amount of the Grant was R700 per month during 1997. This has started being phased out over three years, while the Child Support Grant is being phased in. The street traders who will be most severely affected will be Coloured women in the Western Cape (numbers of whom may be street traders) and Gauteng, and Indian women in KwaZulu-Natal and

## Gauteng.

What do the surveys say about social protection for street traders? It is well known that data collection about any source of income is difficult; the difficulty is increased when it comes to non-wage income and protection. In South African research, the difficulty sometimes relates to research informants simply not knowing appropriate answers, especially for example where wives or partners in rural (or urban areas) areas are asked about social insurance protection of their absent men. They have little if any accurate information. Sometimes the difficulty is caused because the researchers themselves do not know what schemes exist, and hence do not know how to ask questions. Main sources of confusion or inaccuracy are:

- The term 'maintenance' is used by ordinary people to refer to both the State Maintenance Grant, as well as money claimed directly from a father for paternal maintenance through a law court; surveys are usually trying to get at the differences between the state and private support.
- The term 'government pension' is used by ordinary people to refer to both the state Old Age Pension, and to the civil service pension received by government employees.
- A number of surveys have reported respondents' unwillingness to talk openly about stokvel (rotating savings and credit association) membership and contribution - it is a private and protected sphere.

The ERU/ BEES survey purposely sampled to include better-off micro-enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, and the sample covered metropolitan, small town and rural areas. It asked for more details about social protection than any of the other surveys. It provides some useful insights, provided it is borne in mind that this is the top end of the informal economy - the place where social protection would be greatest. Questions were asked about unemployment insurance (colloquially known as 'UIF' after the Unemployment Insurance Fund which is at the heart of the scheme - contributions are made by employers and employees, and the state), pension and provident funds, and membership of medical aid schemes. The data was analysed separately for employers and employees.

Overall coverage was lower for employees on all counts than for employers. Of those who were sole operators, or self-employed, the 9% of men and 6% of women who said they were covered by UIF is surprisingly high, and unexplained. About 16% of both men and women were covered by a government pension or provident fund, with a great variation between rural and other areas. Half of rural male operators, and 35% of female operators, said they had a government pension or provident fund. This seems to be a very high figure. Thirty percent of rural male employees in micro-enterprises, and 22% of women, had such coverage. Twice as many men as women (11%

compared to 5%) had a private pension or provident fund. Slightly more women (17%) than men (15%) were part of a medical aid or hospital insurance scheme.

Five out of ten men (49%) and six out of ten women (61%) said they were members of a stokvel (rotating savings and credit association) or other credit group. The numbers were highest, at more than 80%, for both men and women in small towns, and lowest for men in rural areas (9%). This would again appear to be a high estimate. In the study of Mamelodi and KwaZakhele, for example, which also included the large end of micro-enterprises, stokvel membership was 20% among informal economy workers. No gender breakdown was given (Liedholm and McPherson, 1991: 17). SEWU's 1997 membership survey showed that nearly half of the members (46%) belonged to a stokvel, with urban members being more likely to belong than rural members (James, 1998: 25).

Operators in the ERU/ BEES study were asked what types of scheme they would like to join, and there were very few gender differences here. Medical care for sickness and injury came top at two thirds of the sample, followed by education for family members and disability benefits. What is most interesting is that women, who were the lower income earners in the sample, were more willing than men to pay, and to pay more, for membership of social protection schemes.

In 1995, virtually none (1%) of the SEWU street vendors were insured for accidents and disabilities, and none had insurance. The home based workers were also poorly covered: 8% had insurance for accidents and disabilities, and 14% had insurance - mostly those in the highest income brackets. About 5% of the street vendors were part of a burial society (compared to 20% of home based workers) (Bedford, 1995). In 1997, only 2% of SEWU members had life insurance, which often covered disability and accident insurance (James, 1998: 26). There may be a relationship between this low coverage, and the knowledge that it is possible to claim a state Disability Grant if one becomes disabled.

Clear areas for further research are:

- How people cope with financial crisis - a more dynamic analysis of financial management and coping strategies. Participatory research methodologies, including critical incident analysis, would be appropriate methods to use, and will be used in the organisational study for this project.
- More thorough information about the access of street traders to formal social security, both state and private.
- A gendered analysis of who is being reached by the new state social programmes, with special reference to street traders.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The Preston-Whyte and Rogerson (1991) book brought together a range of studies about the informal economy, and a wealth of research has been done since then. Much of the research has been fairly conventional in design: interviews at one moment in time with traders. One gets a limited sense of the dynamics of people's lives. Existing quantitative studies have not captured the gendered effects of deregulation, and the impact of globalisation on the position of women in street trading.

There is much repetition between and among many of the academic Masters dissertations: they choose a small sample, and interview in depth about more or less the same thing. This is wasteful of limited research capacity, and the WIEGO project may well be able to provide leads for more creative research directions.

The focus of the WIEGO project is firmly on urban areas, to keep the project within manageable limits. Some important aspects of the position of women in the informal economy will not, as a consequence, be able to be explored in any depth. The most obvious is the investigation of women in the rural areas - where the poorest women live. In addition, it has been increasingly acknowledged in South Africa that the rural/ urban dichotomy used in much research is not very useful. The spread of urban settlement, the improved transport and communications between and within urban and rural areas, means that urban and rural economies are dynamically linked on a continual basis. The surveys on street traders show that some women move between rural and urban homes on a continual basis, others on a less regular basis. Much remains to be understood about urban-rural migration as an economic and social strategy.

Another missing link in this study also relates to the rural-urban linkage: the 'pension markets'. The monthly cash transfers which constitute the state social pensions and grants represent a major injection of cash into local economies on a regular basis; in many rural areas, these are delivered by vehicles which alight at the hundreds of pension paypoints. Pension markets have become a significant part of the rural economic scene, and thousands of women are involved in trading in these mobile street markets. This is a uniquely South African phenomenon, worthy of separate study.

Within the urban focus of the present project, there are obvious gaps in research. Those not mentioned, or only briefly mentioned, in previous sections are:

- self-regulation and exchanges among street traders
- child care strategies

- the political economy of storage
- a gendered analysis of access to produce
- a gendered analysis of the relationship between street traders and the transport industry, especially the taxi industry
- an in depth analysis of women's use of financial institutions
- a gendered analysis of the increase in numbers of foreign street traders, with special reference to the development of mechanisms for conflict resolution.

A number of studies or reviews have resulted in recommendations for policy around street trading, and around support strategies for women in particular.<sup>7</sup> A useful arena for further work in the WIEGO project will be to synthesise these recommendations, and then through the focus groups with women street traders, prioritise the recommendations. The focus groups could consider strategies for implementation, and this could be used as agenda-setting material in the policy dialogues. They could also be used as the basis for comparative study as the WIEGO project extends to other African countries.

## REFERENCES

Ardington, E and Lund, FJ. 1995. 'Pensions and development: the social security system as a complementary track to programmes of reconstruction and development,' **Development Southern Africa**, vol 12 no 4. pp 557 - 577.

Baden, S., Hassim, S. and Meintjes, S. 1997. **Country gender profile: South Africa**. Report prepared for the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), Pretoria, South Africa. (Final draft.) Sussex: BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies.

Asef Bayat. 1997. 'Un-civil society: the politics of the 'informal people', **Third World Quarterly**, 18 (1): 53 - 72.

Becker, B. 1998. Problems in incorporating informal sector data. Paper presented to the American Economic Association and the Society for Public Modelling in Chicago, 3 - 6 January.

Bedford, L. 1995. **The Self Employed Women's Union Survey: Members and their situation**. Durban: Independent Development Research.

Beneria, L. 1992. 'Accounting for women's work: the progress of two

<sup>7</sup> They may be found for example in the street traders 'Bellagio Declaration' formulated at the 1995 Bellagio Conference (details in the WIEGO project proposal); Budlender, 1994; CASE, 1995c; Hirshowitz and Orkin, 1994; Rogerson, 1992; and CEPERTT project documents such as Manning, 1996 and Moore, 1996.

decades', **World Development**, 20 (11) pp 1547 - 1560.

Bernstein, A. and Gray, M. 1994. 'Pavement people and informal communities: lessons for social work', **International Social Work** vol. 37 no. 2.

BMI. 1992. A profile of small business in South Africa, and ways of stimulating the sector. Rivonia: BMI.

Budlender, D. 1994. Micro-enterprises and gender. In Hirschowitz, R. and Orkin, M. 1994. **Micro Enterprise development in South Africa**. Johannesburg: CASE.

Budlender, D. (ed.) 1996. **The Women's Budget**. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Budlender, D. (ed.) 1998. **The Third Women's Budget**. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

CASE, 1995a: Jennings, R., Hirschowitz, R., Tshandu, Z. and Orkin, M. 1995. **Our daily bread: earning a living on the pavements of Johannesburg. Part 1: The Census**. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.

CASE, 1995b: Jennings, R., Segal, K., Hirschowitz, R., and Orkin, M. 1995. **Our daily bread: earning a living on the pavements of Johannesburg. Part 2: The Survey**. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.

CASE, 1995c: Hirschowitz, R., Orkin, M. and Jennings, R. 1995. **Our daily bread: earning a living on the pavements of Johannesburg. Part 3: Possible future scenarios**. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.

Case, A. and Deaton, A. 1996. **Large cash transfers to the elderly in South Africa**. Princeton University: Research Program in Development Studies.

Central Statistical Service, 1996. **Living in South Africa: selected findings of the October Household Survey**. Pretoria: Central Statistics.

Chen, M. 1989. 'A sectoral approach to promoting women's work: lessons from India', **World Development** vol. 17 no. 7 pp 1007 - 1016.

Cunningham, A. 1991a. 'The herbal medicine trade: resource depletion and environmental management for a 'hidden' economy', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Cunningham, A. 1991b. 'Lean pickings: palm-wine tapping as a rural informal sector activity', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Dewar, D. and Watson, V. 1992. 'Urban planning and the informal sector', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Durban City Engineers Department. 1984. The Hawker Report: a geography of street trading in central Durban. Durban: Durban City Council.

Economic Research Unit, University of Natal, and the Black Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Support Facility (ERU/BEES). No date. **The characteristics and support needs of black small and micro-enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal**.

Fadane, N. 1998. 'Women street vendors and housing in Durban', in Larsson, A., Mapetla, M. and Schlyter, A. (eds.): **Changing gender relation in South Africa: issues of urban life**. Roma: The Institute of Southern African Studies.

Friedman, M. and Hambridge, M. 1992. 'The informal sector, gender and development', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, K. 1996. Industrial response to globalisation within a medium sized coastal town: a focus on the clothing manufacturing sector in Port Shepstone. University of Natal: Masters dissertation.

Health Systems Trust. 1996. **South African Health Review**. Durban: Health Systems Trust and Menlo Park: Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.

Hirschowitz, R. and Orkin, M. 1994. **Micro-enterprise development in South Africa: Executive Summary**. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.

Horn, P. 1993. 'Empowering women: the Phakamani Textile Co-operative', **Indicator SA**, 11 (1): 85-87.

Horn, Pat. 1994. 'Women and the labour market: challenges posed for job creation policy', **Transformation** 25.

Horn, P. 1995. '(Con)sultation: the President's Conference on SMME's', **Indicator SA** 12 (3): 54 - 57.

James, S. 1998. **The Self Employed Women's Union: 1997 Membership**

**Survey.** Durban: SEWU.

Kasongo, E. 1996. Problems besieging small, medium and micro enterprises: the case of black retail fruit sellers of KwaZulu-Natal. University of Natal: Masters Thesis.

Khosa, M. 1998. 'Sisters on the wheel: gender relations in the taxi industry in Durban', in Larsson, A., Mapetla, M. and Schlyter, A. (eds.): **Changing gender relation in South Africa: issues of urban life**. Roma: The Institute of Southern African Studies.

Krige, D. 1985. The urban informal sector in South Africa: What options for development? A case study of KwaZulu-Natal. University of Natal: Masters Thesis.

Leys, C. 1996. 'The crisis in "development theory"', **New Political Economy** 1(1): 41 - 58

Lind, A. 1997. 'Gender, development and urban social change': women's community action in global cities', **World Development**, 25 (8): 1205 - 1223.

Lund, F. 1996. 'Welfare', in Budlender, D. (ed.) **The Women's Budget**. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Manning, C. 1993. 'International experiences of informal sector activity and the lessons for South Africa', **Transformation** 22.

Manning, C. 1993a. Informal manufacturing in the South African economy. University of Natal: CSDS Working Paper No. 11.

Manning, C. 1993b. 'Mistress Seamstress: A stitch in time', **Indicator SA**, 11 (1): 79-84.

Manning, C. 1996. Women in micro-enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal - avenues for tertiary institutions' intervention: a feasibility study for Ford Foundation and University of Natal. February. Unpublished mimeo.

Manning, C. and Mashigo, P. 1993. Manufacturing in micro-enterprises in South Africa. Research report to the Industrial Strategy Project, University of Cape Town.

Mapetla, M. and Machai, P. 1998. 'Beer brewing as a survival strategy in Lesotho', in Larsson, A., Mapetla, M. and Schlyter, A. (eds.): **Changing gender relation in South Africa: issues of urban life**. Roma: The Institute of Southern African Studies.

May, J. 1989. **Micro-enterprises in South Africa: results of a survey on regulations**. Durban: Data Research Africa.

May, J. 1993. Commerce, the informal sector, and micro enterprise. Working document for input into synthesis report: Socio-economic analysis and assessment, for Economic Development Strategies for Region E. Pietermaritzburg: Regional Development Advisory Council.

May, J. and Stavrou, A. 1988. **The informal sector: socio-economic dynamics and growth in the Greater Durban Metropolitan Region**. University of Natal: CSDS Working Paper No. 18.

May, J. and Schacter, M. 1991. 'Minding your own business: deregulation in the informal sector', **Indicator SA** 10 (1): 53 - 58.

Mbona, D. 1997. **Isipingo Street Traders Survey**. Prepared for South Local Council, Durban Metropolitan Area.

McCormick, D. 1992. **Why small firms stay small: risk and growth in Nairobi's small scale manufacturing**. Nairobi: Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi.

Mead, D. and Morrison, C. 1996. 'The informal sector elephant', **World Development**, 24 (1): 1611 - 1619.

Moore, H. 1996. Women's micro-enterprise in the Greater Durban Area: a feasibility study for the Ford Foundation and the University of Natal, Durban. Mimeo.

Mosdell, T. 1991. 'Power, patronage and control: ambiguities in the de-regulation of street trading in Pietermaritzburg', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Mzimela, T. 1995. 'The muthi business', **Indicator SA** 12 (2): 81 - 85.

Naidoo, K. 1993. Work and life of women in the informal sector: a case study of the Warwick Avenue Triangle. University of Natal: Masters Thesis.

Naidoo, R., Nyman, R. and Caga, X. 1996. **Starting early: a childcare provision framework for workers**. Johannesburg: NALEDI.

Nair, Y. 1996. Women and survival: trading in crafts and curios at the Durban beachfront. University of Natal: Masters Thesis.

- Nattrass, N. 1987. 'Street trading in Transkei - a struggle against poverty, persecution and prosecution', **World Development** 15 (7).
- Ndinda, C. 1997. Coping strategies of women micro-entrepreneurs: the case of women curio sellers of the Durban beachfront. University of Natal: Masters Thesis.
- Nyman, R. 1997. 'Labour reform: addressing women's needs?', **Agenda**, 35:6 - 17
- Pentz, D. 1992. Informal street trading: a case study of Warwick Avenue. University of Natal Masters Thesis.
- Pieterse, E. 1997. 'Urban social movements in a 'globalising' era', **Urban Forum**, 8 (1): 1-18.
- Posel, D., Todes, A. and Friedman, M. 1993. The unrecorded categories: women and gender in the economy of Region E. Durban: University of Natal and Pretoria: National Land Committee.
- Preston-Whyte, E. 1991. 'Petty trading at Umgababa: mere survival or the road to accumulation', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Preston-Whyte, E. and Nene, S. 1991. 'Black women and the rural informal sector', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Rogerson, C. 1992. 'Policies for South Africa's urban informal economy: lessons from the international experience', in Preston-Whyte, E. and Rogerson, C. (eds.) 1991. **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Standing, G. 1989. 'Global feminization through flexible labour', **World Development** vol. 17 no. 7 pp 1077 - 1095.
- Standing, G., Sender, J. and Weeks, J. 1996. **Restructuring the labour market: the South African challenge: an ILO country review**. Geneva: ILO.
- Steel, W., Aryeety, E. and Nissanke, M. 1997. 'Informal financial markets under liberalisation in four African countries', **World Development**, 25 (5):

817-830.

Todes, A. 1998. 'Gender, place, migration and regional policy in South Africa', in Larsson, A., Mapetla, M. and Schlyter, A. (eds.): **Changing gender relation in South Africa: issues of urban life**. Roma: The Institute of Southern African Studies.

Valodia, I. 1996. 'Work', in Budlender, D. (ed.) **The Women's Budget**. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Waylen, G. 1997. 'Gender, feminism and the political economy', **New Political Economy**, 2 (2): 205 - 220.

Wentzel, W. 1993. 'Clothing micro-enterprises: from rags to riches?', **Indicator SA**, 11 (1): 73-78.

Witt, H. 1997. A descriptive account of the production, marketing and distribution of vegetables: a case study of the Durban Metropolitan area. Unpublished report.

**Chart 1: South African surveys of urban street traders in the informal economy, 1990 onwards, used in this report**

Author and date of publication	Date field work	Location	Sector	Sample size	Methodology
Bedford, 1995	1995	Greater Durban	all	245 women (SEWU members)	analysis of information on SEWU membership questionnaires
Bernstein and Gray, 1994	1993	Block AK, central Durban	all	unknown number, all women	interviews
CASE, 1995a, b and c	1994	Johannesburg CBD (with small subsamples in Randburg, Roodepoort and Sandton)	all	census: maximum 6893 stalls (48% of traders were women); interviews: 1100 traders (52% women)	census/ interviews
DRA	1997	Durban	all	census: 19865 ( 61% women); interviews: 550 (63% women)	census/ interviews

ERU/ BEES, 1997	1996	KwaZulu-Natal: metropolitan, small towns, and rural	all	650: 42% women	interviews, also interviewed support organisations
Fadane, 1998	? 1996	Warwick Avenue area	all	30 women	interviews
Hirschowitz and Orkin et al, 1994	1994	PWV, Western Cape, Northern Province	all	150 (gender unspecified)	interviews
James, 1998	1994-1997	KwaZulu-Natal	all (including home-based workers)	133 women (SEWU members)	analysis of information on SEWU membership questionnaires
Kasongo, 1996	1996	Greater Durban	fresh produce	26: 14 men, 12 women	interviews
Liedholm and McPherson, 1991	1990	Mamelodi and KwaZakhele townships, Gauteng	all (including home-based)	baseline: 5253 firms; 53% of workforce were women supplementary: 256 firms stokvel questionnaire: 1017 firms	interviews
Manning and Mashigo, 1993	1992	Western Cape, some in Durban and Johannesburg	clothing, manufacturing, metal working	55 enterprises in W. Cape; some in Durban and Joburg	interviews and mixed
May and Schachter, 1991	1990	8 different administrative areas throughout SA	all	620: no gender breakdown	interviews
Mbona, 1997	1997	Isipingo	all	420: 76% women	interviews
Mzimela, 1995	1995	Durban	herb dealers	20: 11 men, 9 women	interviews
Naidoo, 1993	1993	Warwick Avenue area	fresh produce	20 women	
Nair, 1996	1996	Durban beachfront	crafts and curios	20 women	interviews
Witt, 1997	current	Durban	vegetables	not applicable	mixed