



# College of Humanities

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## UKZN academic addresses conference on social protection for informal workers



*Professor Frances Lund.*

Professor Frances Lund of the [School of Built Environment and Development Studies](#) addressed the topic of extending social protection to informal workers when she spoke at the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA) World Labour Congress and Labour Conference in Cape Town.

The conference was held under the theme: The Changing World of Work: Implications for Labour and Employment Relations and Social Protection.

The ILERA conference aimed to generate interaction, communication and serve the needs and interests of the members and enable them to keep abreast of the latest developments in the employee and labour relations field; to continually upgrade skills and knowledge and to maintain expertise in the discipline.

Lund, who gave the ILERA keynote address, works in the Social Protection Programme in [WIEGO](#) - Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising - which is a global research and advocacy organisation that supports organisations of poorer women who work in the informal economy.

In her address, she referred to the extent of informal employment as a share of non-agricultural employment in the global south.

Furthermore, she noted that the majority of poorer informal workers are self-employed, and that informal work is without legal protection or social security/social

protection. 'With a few exceptions, labour law does not reach informal workers. And it is unlikely that many informal workers will rapidly be formalised,' she said.

Lund outlined three broad pathways to inclusion: legal routes, inclusion in existing social protection programmes, and representation of informal worker organisations in local, national and international policy bodies.

Several WIEGO affiliates from organisations of the working poor have been actively involved in policy reform. In Thailand, HomeNet Thailand was intensely involved over more than a decade in the national body that reformed the health system; and in India, the Self Employed Women's Association has influenced policies for street traders, and has built up, over three decades, a large insurance scheme for

members.

'In most developing countries, there are more women than men in informal work,' said Lund. 'Men earn more in both formal and informal work and are more likely than women to employ others. Women experience a more defined and lower glass ceiling (upward mobility), and when entering the urban informal sector, men have more work experience than women. Where women have worked before, it is likely to have been in the domestic field.'

Lund and colleagues developed a method of analysis of value chains in industries in which it was possible to identify quite precisely at what points in the chain, through the continuum from formal to informal work, there was potential for extension of social protection to excluded informal workers.

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