Informal Workers in Bangkok, Thailand:

Scan of Four Occupational Sectors

WIEGO and HomeNet Thailand

Authors: Sarah Orleans Reed, Ana Carolina Ogando, Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan, Chidchanok Samantrakul and Pannee Towakulpanich

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Viboonsri Wongsangiym, a member of HomeNet Thailand, produces Muslim garments in her home in suburban Bangkok.
Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

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Executive Summary

Self-employed home-based worker leaders depict their homes during a focus group. Photo credit: S. O. Reed

This study draws on focus groups (FG) with 66 informal workers and worker leaders in Bangkok, Thailand, across four occupational sectors —home-based workers, domestic workers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and street vendors — to explore the following:

- key issues impacting informal workers' livelihoods and access to public services;
- strategies used by workers and their membership-based organizations (MBOs) to address barriers;
- relationships between informal workers, state institutions, and other actors and organizations;
- the contributions of informal workers to urban life and society in Bangkok.

Findings from the study will inform the Action Plan and policy platforms of the Bangkok Federation of Informal Workers and generate recommendations for WIEGO, HomeNet, local and national government, and civil society partners.

Overall, findings show that:

Informal workers contribute to making Bangkok a livable, safe, and prosperous city, playing a structural role in the formal economy. Informal workers are deeply engaged in their city as active community members, service providers, and economic agents. Contributions named by workers themselves are affirmed by both classic and recent urban scholarship: for instance, the value of "eyes on street" in enhancing public safety and sense of community, the dependence on motorcycle taxi drivers as feeders into mass transportation systems in Bangkok's poorly connected urban fabric, and the role of street vendors in a functioning urban food system. Moreover, focus groups demonstrate the ways in which informal workers directly support the city's formal economy and work force — for instance, by providing transportation and affordable meals to employees of formal businesses or government agencies (motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors), reducing the care responsibilities of professionals and supporting women

professionals in particular to remain in the formal workforce (domestic workers), and manufacturing goods for formal retailers (home-based workers). In this sense, it is clear that formal and informal do not simply operate alongside each other independently; rather, the formal economy depends on services provided by informal workers.

At the same time, the informal status of workers is a source of social, economic, and legal vulnerability. Across sectors, workers expressed a sense of social stigma attached to their professions. Domestic workers and home-based workers experience various problems of isolation — domestic workers have no contact with local government, for example — whereas motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors experienced removals, forms of harassment, and/or financial exploitation by local government or law enforcement agents. It is hard to overstate the sense of vulnerability and uncertainty experienced by street vendors recently removed from their vending locations under the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority's (BMA) recent "Return the footpath to pedestrians" campaign. Moreover, their informal work status excludes many workers from financial services that would support homeownership, which in turn prevents them from exercising full rights and entitlements as citizens of Bangkok. In these ways, informal workers' roles are characterized by "indispensability, marginality, and invisibility" (Sopranzetti 2013, 65), vulnerable to shifting interests and priorities of the state.

Workers perceive benefits to organizing but face a number of obstacles to strengthening their MBOs. Many workers, particularly those who were leaders within their MBOs, did raise the importance of working collectively or gave examples of how group strategies supported their livelihoods. Nevertheless, most workers still favoured individual approaches to tackling livelihood barriers: become a more skillful or reliable worker, develop products that are more relevant or appealing to their market, or adapt to a reduced income by economizing on living expenses. Organizing challenges described by participants reflect the distinct issues facing informal worker organizations globally (Bonner and Spooner 2011) — for instance, conflict among group members, capacity and engagement gaps between leaders and more isolated workers. In the absence of a citywide network of vendors, efforts by local street vendor organizations to negotiate for use of public space have been unsuccessful in the face of the citywide clearance campaign. Through the newly established Federation of Informal Workers, MBO leaders have the opportunity to enhance planning and communications between members and workers, and strengthen the collective identity of MBO members as *workers* while leveraging their existing identity and support systems as *community members*.

Specific findings include:

Livelihoods and role in the economy

Informal workers in Bangkok frequently depend on multiple sources of income beyond their primary activities to meet their needs: Roughly half of all motorcycle taxi drivers and a third of home-based workers had additional jobs unrelated to their primary activities. Most domestic workers who worked full-time for one employer nevertheless used their day off to take jobs at other households. With evictions of vendors underway citywide, it appears that street vendors in affected areas are facing new pressure to find fallback livelihood options.

Informal workers service both "formal" markets and "informal" markets: While most street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers target their services for formal employees during the morning, lunchtime, and evening peak hours, motorcycle taxi drivers in suburban parts of Bangkok rely more heavily on fellow informal workers as clientele. Similarly, sub-contracted home-based workers received orders mostly from formal clients like private businesses or government agencies, but many self-employed producers primarily served individual consumers in their network and within their community.

With regard to livelihood barriers, motorcycle taxi drivers and home-based workers emphasized market pressures, street vendors emphasized city/government policy and practice, and domestic workers emphasized human capital. Key livelihood barriers affecting informal workers include the following:

– Market Pressures: Self-employed home-based workers have limited channels for selling or marketing their goods, while sub-contracted home-based workers experience an inconsistent flow of orders, with sudden and unexpected demands on their time when rush orders come through. Motorcycle taxi drivers suffer from the fluctuating demand between peak and non-peak hours.
– City/government policy and practice: The recent shift in BMA policy toward vendors has directly and dramatically impacted one group in this study, while the second group faces ongoing pressure and anxiety because of their market's legal status. Motorcycle taxi drivers likewise describe a legal framework that allows law enforcement and other agencies to extract various fees, and domestic workers lose available working hours to long, cumbersome commutes.
– Human and material capital: Domestic workers feel constrained by their skillsets (e.g. foreign language, cooking) to attract desired clients in the short-term and to adopt new careers following retirement. Home-based workers also require a high level of skill and appropriate equipment to reach desired markets.
– Care and health issues: Women workers have additional burdens associated with care and reproductive responsibilities, which impact their productivity and earning opportunities. Aging is a concern across genders and sectors and is particularly important for domestic workers who fear age discrimination from employers.
– Macroeconomic drivers: Thailand's slow economy was perceived as a significant impediment to earnings, particularly for those workers with a greater dependence on "informal" markets. Informal workers also observe rising competition within their markets, for instance from unregistered motorcycle taxi drivers, cheaper or younger domestic workers, ready-made clothing and cheap imports, and new vendors and convenience stores.

Access to Public Services

Operational challenges and negative perceptions of public health services are barriers to quality health care for informal workers: Many workers express skepticism towards the quality of care provided under Thailand's universal health coverage scheme, despite positive experiences shared by other workers. Barriers to service include long waits, various limitations in quality of service or care, a cumbersome referral process, and additional fees and expenses for medicines, operations, and deposits, as well as operating hours and policies related to emergency care and vehicle accident insurance. Most of these barriers exacerbate workers' financial vulnerability by causing them to miss working hours or incur unexpected costs. For this reason, many participants described paying for private services, to avoid losing their daily income.

For some workers, lack of housing registration also limits civic participation and access to services: Among the focus group participants, motorcycle taxi drivers and domestic workers were less likely to own a home in Bangkok than home-based workers and street vendors. Without local housing registration, they were excluded from voting in elections and accessing certain types of social support from local government, such as community funds managed by the District Office. Domestic workers who lived with their employers described difficulties registering for health services at local hospitals under the universal coverage system.

Lack of financial access – linked to their status as informal workers – was the primary barrier raised by informal workers to improving their housing situation. With the exception of "live-in" domestic workers, most workers who did not already own their home in Bangkok expressed a desire to do so. Workers who already owned their homes wanted to renovate for flood mitigation, to separate their workspace from living space (home-based workers), or to improve

the general quality of living. However, workers across all sectors struggled to access necessary bank loans due to lack of assets, pay slips, or a formal guarantor. Others expressed simply an unwillingness to take on debt.

Relationship with Urban Actors and Institutions

State institutions, particularly law enforcement agencies, heavily regulate and constrain but do little to support motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors. Due to their use of public space, street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers have regular engagement with law enforcement representatives. Some workers have a neutral perception of these interactions, but most described negative experiences that they attributed to unjust city policy or lower-level corruption. Despite the public safety services they contribute as "eyes and ears", neither street vendors nor motorcycle drivers describe any examples in which officers had supported their livelihoods.

In contrast, support mechanisms are available to home-based workers and domestic workers, although their relative isolation as workers inhibits access. A number of supportive services (e.g. Homeworkers' Fund, community funds, trainings from District Offices) are available to home-based workers from local institutions. The quality of service appears to vary, however, and accessing them relies on the personal initiative of individuals — which likewise, varies. Domestic workers were highly proactive in accessing trainings — primarily from civil society organizations — but have no contact with local government agencies like their District Office.

Urban political participation is limited, and further constrained by the current political context: Despite participation in advocacy campaigns and committees at the national level (among domestic and home-based workers), workers raised very few instances in which they had participated in local planning or policymaking, and none with satisfactory outcomes. The dissolution of District Councils and delay of elections nationwide under the military government does not bode well for an imminent resurgence in public participation, moreover.

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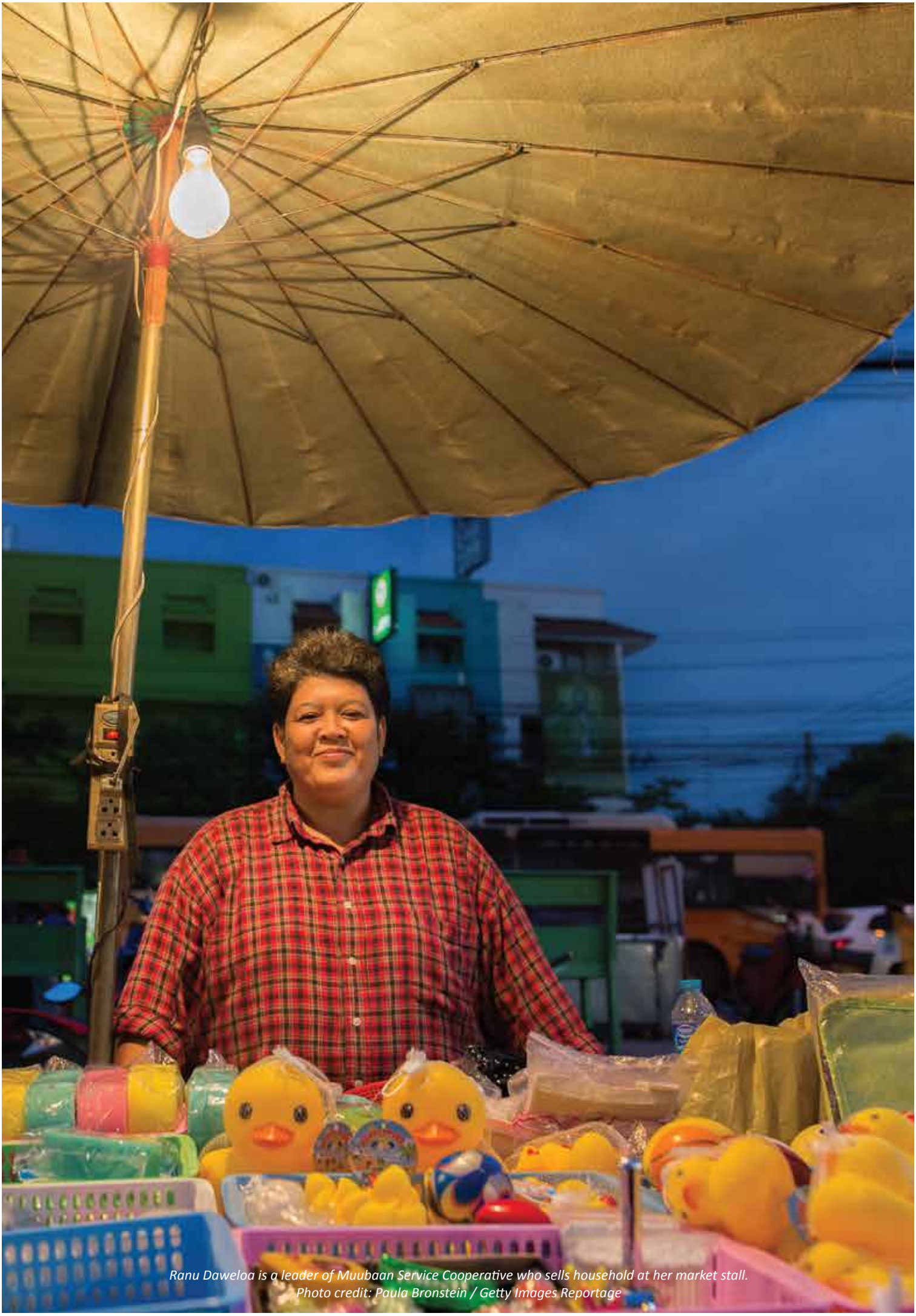


Ranu Daweloa is a leader of Muubaan Service Cooperative who sells household at her market stall.
Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

Part 1: Introduction

Director of HomeNet Thailand Poonsap Tulaphan reviews focus group exercise. Photo credit: P. Towakulpanich

Background and Objectives

Informal workers compose a majority of Thailand's labour force and play a critical role in the Thai economy. Thailand's National Statistics Office (NSO 2017) estimates that 55.6 per cent of the labour force in the Thai economy is informal, lacking legal protection and social security. Throughout the Global South, informal workers are integral, particularly to urban systems, as providers of food, care, transport, and manufacturing services in cities (Chen et al 2016). In spite of this, they are marginalized politically, frequently penalized for the nature of their livelihoods, and vulnerable to the whims of urban policy, markets, or employers.

With support from the Rockefeller Foundation and European Union, this study aims to identify key issues impacting the livelihoods and access to public services of informal workers in Bangkok, Thailand; strategies used to overcome these barriers; and the role and position of informal workers with regard to other urban institutions and actors. Findings from the study will inform the Action Plan and policy platforms of the Bangkok Federation of Informal Workers and generate recommendations for WIEGO and HomeNet, local and national government, and civil society partners.

Research questions for this study were derived from a previous survey and initial meetings conducted by HomeNet Thailand, which elicited the concerns and priorities of informal workers with regard to livelihoods, public services, legal rights, and urban policy. Based on this initial scoping, this report seeks to understand:

– What are the main livelihood activities and markets for informal workers in Bangkok? What types of barriers prevent workers from reaching these markets and/or enhancing their income?

– What are the main barriers for informal workers to access critical urban public services, such as health care and housing?
– What types of strategies do workers and their membership-based organizations (MBOs) use to overcome barriers to livelihoods, markets, and services?
– In what ways do informal workers engage with urban institutions and actors — and what is the nature of these interactions?
– What do informal workers themselves see as their main contributions to society and to the city of Bangkok?

The research sought to identify specific challenges and needs within occupational sectors, while also capturing cross-cutting themes impacting informal workers across the four occupational sectors represented by the Federation.

***Box 1:* About Research Partners**

About WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce.

HomeNet Thailand was founded in 1999 as a non-governmental organization to support home-based workers across Thailand. In 2008, it became a membership-based organization (MBO) of informal workers and registered formally as an Association in 2013. Today, it has over 4,000 members, consisting primarily of home-based workers as well as street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, farmers, and day labourers. Technical and organizational support for the Association is provided by the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). FLEP also supports the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand, which was founded in 2008.

The Bangkok Federation of Informal Workers is composed of HomeNet Thailand, The Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand, Muuban Nakila Service Cooperative, and the Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers of Thailand. It was established in 2016 to represent a collective voice for home-based workers, domestic workers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and street vendors in Bangkok. At the time of writing, the Federation was in the process of drafting its Action Plan.

Context of Informal Workers in Bangkok

Thailand's National Statistics Office (NSO) defines informal workers as those workers "who are not protected or have no social security from work." The NSO's 2016 Informal Employment Survey estimates that there are 1.48 million informal workers in Bangkok's labour force, as compared to 3.73 million formally employed workers (NSO 2017). However, this definition of an informal employee excludes workers protected (at least nominally) under National Law, such as domestic workers and home-based workers, as well as workers who receive certain voluntary benefits under Articles 39 and 40 of the Social Security Act. An alternative estimate therefore is given by supplementing the NSO figure with the number of individuals participating in these schemes, which was 2.1 million in 2015 (Social Security Office 2016).[1]

[1] Based on 317,884 individuals covered under Article 39 and 335,602 individuals covered under Article 40. The Article 39 scheme is accessible to workers who were previously employed through formal arrangements, whereas Article 40 can be used by workers with no previous social security benefits.

This estimate nevertheless excludes some of the city's most vulnerable workers, including domestic and home-based workers without social security and undocumented migrant workers.

As detailed in FLEP (2015), in less than two decades, Thailand has established a number of landmark policies to extend social protection to informal workers. These include the initiation of a Universal Health Scheme in 2002, the Homeworkers' Fund Protection Act (2010), the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Domestic Workers (2012), and a voluntary social security scheme (Article 40, 2014) intended to cover informal workers. Implementation of protections for domestic and home-based workers remains weak, however. The voluntary social security scheme lacks several of the protection benefits afforded to formal employees and participation rates remain limited. As described further below, a number of barriers hinder informal workers from exercising their right to health care under the universal coverage scheme (FLEP 2015, Tangworamongkon and Tulaphan 2014)

Moreover, Thailand's economy experienced a sharp downturn in 2014 following the country's military coup, with the GDP growing at only 0.8 per cent for that year. Growth rates in 2015 and 2016 remained substantially lower than those of other countries in the region (IMF 2016). The military government under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) remains in power at the time of writing. No new elections are scheduled, and a newly approved Constitution is largely seen as entrenching the military's authority (Cambroux 2016). As a result, members of Bangkok's elected Metropolitan Council have been replaced by appointees at the end of their terms and District Councils have been dissolved. The NPCO removed Bangkok's elected Governor from office in 2016, appointing a former police general as his replacement.

Demographics and Policy, by Sector

Reliable data on the four occupational sectors considered in this study (home-based workers, domestic workers, street vendors, and motorcycle taxi drivers) remains scant. Below we provide an overview of each sector based on available information.

Home-based Workers:

This study considers home-based workers as "informal workers who carry out remunerative work within their homes or in the surrounding grounds." Within this category, it distinguishes between sub-contracted home-based workers (sometimes simply called "homeworkers") and self-employed home-based workers.[2] The most recent statistics on home-based workers in Thailand come from the 2007 Homeworker Survey, which included data on sub-contracted workers only. It found 52,000 sub-contracted workers in Bangkok, 60 per cent of whom were women, with 30-39 composing the largest age bracket.

Sub-contracted home-based workers are protected under the 2010 Homeworkers' Fund Protection Act, which guarantees minimum wage and requires employers to ensure occupational health and safety. The Act does not cover self-employed workers. A review by WIEGO's Law Programme in 2017 found considerable challenges in enforcement of the law, due to workers' reluctance to use the law's grievance mechanism because of fear of reprisal (von Broembsen 2017). Findings from the 2013 IEMS indicate moreover that both sub-contracted and self-employed home-based workers in Bangkok earn significantly less than the minimum wage (Horn et al 2013).

[2] As described by Horn et al (2013), "Self- employed workers are those who are generally in direct contact with the market and buy their own raw materials. Sub-contracted workers, often called "homeworkers," may be contracted by firms, individual entrepreneurs, sub-contractors or other intermediaries. They are often provided with the raw materials for their production, and are typically paid a stated amount per piece produced. They have little or no direct contact with the markets for the goods they produce" (7).

Domestic Workers:
NSO (2017) identifies nearly 120,000 Thai domestic workers in Bangkok (under the category of "activities of Household as employers"), 100,000 of whom are women. It is likely that the number of migrant domestic workers (primarily from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia) in Bangkok is comparable or greater than this. However, estimates of migrant labourers employed as domestic workers are extremely crude. This is due to several factors: employers rarely register their domestic workers as employees, official migration is not disaggregated by occupation, and many workers are undocumented (Anderson 2016). Like Thai domestic workers, migrant domestic workers are also primarily female.

Domestic workers are protected under the 2012 Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Domestic Workers, although the regulation remains unknown to many employers and is poorly enforced.

Motorcycle Taxi Drivers:
97,771 motorcycle taxis were registered with the Ministry of Transport in Bangkok in 2016, at 5,477 queue or *"win"* locations throughout the city (BMA Statistics Book 2016). Sopranzetti (2013) estimates that there could be as many as 200,000 drivers in Bangkok, however, when including unregistered drivers and *wins*. The sector is highly male dominated, although exact figures are unknown.

The profession of motorcycle taxi driver is relatively young compared with the other three sectors. The profession emerged during the economic boom time of the 1990s, during which migrants particularly from the Northeast *Isaan* region began taking up seasonal work to fill the demand for flexible transportation services. Following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the sector grew as layoffs put factory labourers out of work. Today, motorcycle taxis play a critical role in Bangkok's transportation system by acting as feeders to buses and trains (Sopranzetti 2013, Ratanawaraha and Chalermpong 2015). Motorcycle taxis are organized into *"wins,"* groups of taxi drivers serving passengers on a particular road system or intersection. In 2005, Thailand became the first country to formalize services provided by motorcycle taxi services at a national level, and issued regulations on fares and safety standards under the Motor Vehicle Act of 2004 (Oshima et al 2007). Under the new system, the government provided yellow license plates and vests, the latter of which functioned as a personal license. The vest identifies the location of the driver's *win* and the routes the driver covers.

In 2014, orders from the military government required motorcycle taxi drivers to apply for new identification cards and to be issued new vests.This doubled the number of registered motorcycle taxi drivers (approximately 50,000 to over 100,000) and the number of locations (from 4,500 to 5,800). According to the government, the new regulation aimed to combat extortion of drivers by mafia, by ensuring that only registered drivers are in operation. It also aimed to reduce fares by stimulating competition and reducing the expenses paid by taxi drivers, through bribes and purchase of vests. New national standard fares also reinforce previous caps on fares and create some new caps for longer rides.[3]

Street Vendors:
Street vendors have a ubiquitous presence in Bangkok's urban fabric, with a long and celebrated history (Nirathron 2006). 10,676 street vendors were licensed to operate in designated areas by the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) in October 2016 (BMA 2016). This represents a tiny fraction of the vendors operating in public spaces throughout the city, however. Most vendors are not legally registered: many are either mobile or have a temporary status of "pending registration" (Batréau, Quentin and Francois Bonnet 2016, Tangworamongkon 2014). Though ubiquitous throughout the city, vendors in Bangkok operate under precarious and unpredictable

[3] See for instance Thai PBS 2016. "Motorcycle taxi service to become fairer, reasonable, and safer under the military revamp" 19 June 2016. http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/motorcycle-taxi-service-become-fairer-reasonable-safer-military-revamp.

legal circumstances. The legal framework on street vending in Bangkok allows local officers to designate vending areas and hours and grant permissions to vendors to operate in these locations.This permission, however, can be easily revoked and leaves vendors vulnerable tochanges in policy and extortion by local authorities or mafia. Successive governors over the last several decades have modulated their actions between more restrictive, tacitly accommodating, and even supportive (e.g. through provision of small business loans – Tangworamongkon 2014, Yasmeen and Nirathron 2014).

Under the country's military government since 2014, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) has sought a dramatic reduction in the number of vendors in public spaces. The government's city-wide removal campaign (under the slogan "return the footpaths to pedestrians") has helped dramatically shrink the number of registered street vendors by almost half from 2014 to 2016. Media reports indicate that many more vendors have been evicted from vending areas, including a number of historic and iconic markets.[4] As evident from focus group discussion below, this suggests that a large number of vendors have either moved out of vending, are now operating illegally and precariously, or are selling in less strategic and/or more costly locations.

Representation of Occupational Sectors:

Focus group participants engaged in this study are members of MBOs representing their respective occupational sectors:

• Home-based workers are represented by the HomeNet Thailand *Association*, which has over 4,100 members nationwide comprised primarily of home-based workers, as well as limited additional membership from street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, and farmers. Women account for nearly three-quarters of all members in Thailand, and 127 home-based worker members reside within Bangkok.

• The Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand was established in 2009 with support from HomeNet Thailand. In 2016, it had a membership of 337 Thai workers and 114 migrant workers, predominantly from Myanmar. Almost all members are women, and the majority of members are employed within Bangkok.

• The Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers was formed in 2010. According to leaders, it currently has over 5,500 members. Out of the 3,300 members registered in the Association's original database, only 130 are women. This gender balance is consistent with general observations of the motorcycle taxi *wins*, which are heavily male-dominated.

• Although street vendors have organized themselves sporadically in certain areas over the last several decades, particularly when facing threats of removal, organization of Bangkok's street vendors remains fragmented (Tangworamongkon 2014). Muubaan Nakila Service Cooperative in the Nakila Loemthong Housing Estate in Saphan Sung District was formed in 2008 to help build the collective bargaining power of vendors operating in a community market. The market was located on public space owned by the National Housing Authority, which filed a court order to evict the vendors. The Service Cooperative is composed of 152 women and 52 male members and represents nearly all of the market vendors. 180 street vendors from elsewhere in Bangkok have joined HomeNet Association, including vendors from Pradit Torakan Community in Chatuchuk District, Thung Song Hong Housing Estate in Laki Si District, and vendors from Bangkrapi and Nongchok Districts.

[4] See Khaosod's "Vanishing Bangkok" for a list and map of areas cleared through the eviction campaigns through July 2016.

Table 1: Composition and Organizational Structure of MBOs*				
	Sectors Represented	Membership in Bangkok	Gender and Age	Organizational Structure
HomeNet Association	Home-based workers, street vendors, farmers, motorcycle taxi drivers,[5] day labourers, and workers with multiple occupations	425 workers total; 127 home-based workers, 180 Street vendors, 307 "other category" (farmers, day labourers, multiple occupations)	Nation-wide, membership is nearly 75% female	Affiliated with Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion
Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Motorcycle taxi drivers	3,300 database members; up to 5,500 members	3,200 men, 130 women (database) Average age: 44	
Network of Domestic Workers	Domestic workers	337 Thai, 114 non-Thai. Majority of members work in Bangkok	All women	Affiliated with Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion
Muuban Nakila Service Cooperative	Market vendors at Nakkila Laemthong Road	204 members	152 women, 52 men	

Source: Based on information available from MBOs
* All MBOs are members of the Federation of Informal Workers

Methodology and Study Participants

Research was conducted through 11 focus groups with leaders and members of MBOs across four occupational sectors from December 2016 to January 2017. Focus group tools were developed by Sally Roever, Urban Policies Programme Director of WIEGO, in collaboration with the research team and based loosely on the participatory qualitative methodology developed for WIEGO's 2013 Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS — see Annex I for full tool-kit).[6] During each focus group, one facilitator conducted the tools in Thai. In addition, a translator helped the note-taker register the information to produce reports on the main findings. The focus groups generally lasted no longer than three hours with the previous consent of participants. Following the completion of focus groups and initial analysis, researchers presented partial results to representatives of four sectors in the Federation of Informal Workers for their feedback and suggestions during a meeting on 19 February 2017.

Participants included 66 informal women and men workers, including 12 home-based workers who are primarily self-employed, 13 home-based workers who are primarily sub-contracted, 11

[5] Drivers in HomeNet Thailand Association are from Pradit Torakan Community; they are not members of the Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers.

[6] The Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS) is a qualitative and quantitative study designed to evaluate the reality of informal workers' lives. With research conducted over three years in 10 cities, the IEMS aims to provide credible, grounded evidence of the range of driving forces, both positive and negative, that affect conditions of work in the informal economy. Workers' perceptions of the challenges and roles they play in cities across the world were registered based on methodology developed collaboratively with Caroline Moser, Angélica Acosta, and Irene Vance.

street vendors, 18 motorcycle drivers, and 12 domestic workers. All participants in the focus groups were above 36 years of age, with only one worker of 36, and all others above 40.

Table 2: Individual Participant Characteristics		
		No.
Sector	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	18
	Street Vendors	11
	Domestic Workers	12
	Home-based Workers	25
	Self-employed	*12*
	Subcontracted	*13*
Gender	Women	52
	Men	14
Age	18-25	0
	26-35	0
	36-45	11
	46-55	30
	56-65	24
	Over 65	1
Leaders	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	7
	Street Vendors	6
	Domestic Workers	6
	Home-based Workers	11

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Across four occupational sectors, men were the majority of the participants only among motorcycle taxi drivers, whereas all domestic worker participants were women (100 per cent). The street vendors were the eldest participants, with an average age of 56 for women and 63 for men. Motorcycle taxi drivers were the youngest participants in the entire sample (women: 43.3; men: 52). Across sectors, the average age of the male participants was higher than that of women, with the exception of home-based workers. In general, the men (54 years old) were on average four years older than the women participants (50 years old).

Table 3: Participant Characteristics, by Sector					
Sector	Women		Men		No. of Participants
	No.	Average Age	No.	Average Age	
Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	7	43	11	52	18
Street Vendors	10	56	1	63	11
Domestic Workers	12	51	0	***	12
Home-based Workers	23	52	2	48	25
Total	**52**		**14**		**66**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Participants were selected based on their participation in MBOs. Focus group participants were then divided into groups by occupational and leadership/member status (MBO leaders and MBO members), as described in Box 2. Of the participants, 46.2 per cent (30 participants) were leaders from each sector, and five out of eleven focus groups included leaders only. The participation of worker leaders was important to gain a broader perspective on issues in the sector, even though the experiences of leaders as individuals do not necessarily represent those of other workers. Aside from their role in the MBOs, these individuals frequently held additional leadership positions within their communities — for instance, as health volunteers or police volunteers, in the case of several home-based workers and street vendors.

While the findings provide an overview of key issues for informal workers in Bangkok, samples of each occupational sector are relatively small. First and foremost, the findings are representative of the experiences and views of MBO leaders and members, rather than of informal workers in the target sectors more broadly. In particular, it is worth noting that domestic workers in the sample had almost exclusively foreign employers, an employment situation associated with higher wages and superior working conditions. Among motorcycle taxi drivers, female motorcycle taxi drivers were overrepresented in the sample as compared to their membership in the Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers, although this provided a unique perspective into the gendered challenges faced by women female drivers. All focus group participants were Thai Nationals, such that the sample does not cover the particular needs of migrant workers in Thailand, whose participation in the informal work force is high particularly among domestic workers.[7] Overall, therefore, the sample represents an older, more active and empowered group of workers, who may have greater access to knowledge and support mechanisms compared to Bangkok informal workers in general.

** This graphic does not show the work locations of "live-out" domestic workers, who did not share the workplace of their employers and/or work part-time for a number of employers in different locations*

[7] Previous studies, such as Anderson (2016), Tangworamongkhon and Tulaphan (2014) and FLEP (2017) have sampled and provided considerable insight into the livelihood constraints, employment conditions, and health service access of migrant domestic workers.

***Box 2:* Study Participants by Sector and Location**

Street Vendors: Focus groups for this study engaged eleven street vendors in Bangkok: six women leaders from the Muubaan Nakila Service Cooperative, as well as five vendors from Pradit Torakan Community in Chatuchuk district, who are members of the Association of Informal Workers. Only one male street vendor participated in the focus groups and he was representing his wife and daughter, both of whom are the principle operators of their stall in Pradit Torakan.

Though under the threat of eviction for over a decade, the Muubaan Nakila market has not yet been affected by the military government effort to remove street vendors from the main roads of Bangkok. In contrast, the livelihoods of the Pradit Torakan vendors have been seriously impacted by an order in October 2016 from the BMA to their District Office to clear vendors from their previous designated areas on Phahon Yothin road.

Motorcycle Taxi Drivers: Focus groups for this study included three groups of motorcycle taxi drivers, including one group with Association leaders hosted at the Association office. The greatest number of drivers worked on Lat Prao road. While one group of members and most leaders worked primarily in central urban areas with many office buildings like Lat Prao and Sukhumvit Road, the third group of drivers worked in less central, suburban areas in Bang Na and Bang Plee Districts. Out of 17 drivers in the focus groups, seven were women.

Home-based Workers: The study held four focus groups with a total of 25 home-based workers, comprised of the following:

– Self-employed home-based workers: members of Association of Informal Workers, six women living in or nearby Thung Song Hong Housing Estate in Lak Si District;

– Self-employed home-based workers: leaders of HomeNet Thailand Association, five women and one man living in various locations in Bang Bon, Lak Si, and Nong Chok Districts;

– Sub-contracted home-based workers: members of Association of Informal Workers, five women and one man living in Chalongkrung Housing Estate, Nong Chok District;

– Sub-contracted home-based workers: leaders in HomeNet Thailand Association, seven women living in Min Buri, Nong Chok, or Bang Krapi Districts.

Domestic Workers: This study held one focus group with leaders and one focus group with members from the Network of Domestic Workers Thailand. Both groups were composed of six women of Thai nationality working almost exclusively for foreign employers.

Fruit vendor at Muubaan Nakila Market. Photo credit: S. O. Reed

Part 2: Livelihoods

Activities and Market Access

Of the four urban informal economy sectors participating in the Bangkok Focal Cities Project, two sectors — motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors — provide goods and services in public spaces, whereas the two other sectors — domestic workers and home-based workers — primarily provide services in the private sphere. Table 4 shows the different activities in which each informal worker engages, along with the additional jobs they take on to complement their earnings.

Table 4: Activities by Sector

Sector	Activities	No. of Mentions
Motorcycle Taxi Drivers		
Main Activity	*Driving passengers*	15
Secondary Activity	*Delivering parcels, documents*	4
Additional Job	*Other informal job/Alternative livelihood*	8
Street Vendors		
Main Activity	*Vending*	11
Secondary Activity	*Basket weaving, bronze polishing*	2
Additional Job	*Stipend from Service Cooperative*	4
Home-based Workers		
Main Activity	*Garment production/tailoring*	21
Secondary Activity	*Beadwork, crafts work*	7
Additional Job	*Other informal job/Alternative livelihood*	14
Domestic Workers		
Main Activity	*Domestic work*	12
	Full-time (one primary employer)	8
	Part-time (multiple employers)	4

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Motorcycle taxi drivers are mainly involved in driving passengers and delivering parcels or documents. Alternative jobs included selling food and working as a handyman, mover, or Uber driver. For one female participant, becoming a motorcycle driver was one way to earn additional income, since her salary as a domestic worker was insufficient to cover her basic expenses (FG 1). Two other female participants from a suburban district described working as street vendors part-time; one noted that selling Northeastern style Thai food in the afternoon was a greater source of income than being a motorcycle taxi driver in the mornings (FG 2). Another who worked full time as a motorcycle taxi driver had recently returned from a hiatus during her pregnancy, during which she sold desserts as an alternative income source (FG 2). Overall, most of the female group members had an additional income source and worked only part-time as motorcycle taxi drivers. Taking up motorcycle taxi driving as a supplemental income source appears relatively common, in fact: one suburban male driver described that in his *win* of 105 drivers, *"Some of the* win *members work in a factory or company and ride motorcycle taxi only in morning and evening"* (FG 2).

Association leaders described that members could make roughly 1,000 baht per day (28.5 USD) at their *wins* on Lat Prao Road, an urban and densely populated area of the city. In contrast,

drivers in suburban areas like Bang Plee and Bang Na (FG 2) appeared to have lower and less stable earnings: one older man who worked only in the morning earned approximately 250 (7.14 USD) baht per day, and a woman described gaining 300 (8.57 USD) baht when driving from 5:30 to 10 am.[8]

Female motorcycle taxi drivers described facing discrimination when starting out their jobs, but that eventually, passengers began to trust them and even develop a preference to ride with them; women in particular are frequently more comfortable with a female driver. One male driver shared his own preference to have women drivers in the *win*, as more easy-going colleagues: *"they have fewer issues than men"* (FG 2).

Street vendors: The majority of the street vendors who participated in this study are engaged in selling food. Some of the street vendors from Pradit Torakan still do occasional work in the bronze workshop that previously employed them in the community, providing a fall back livelihood during times of low earnings. As vendors from Muubaan Nakila interviewed for the study were all leaders from the Community Service Cooperative, four received a small salary (1,500 baht per month or 42.81 USD) for this work. The participants in this sector have been working as street vendors from as recently as two years ago to up to 28 years.

Because they operate in public spaces and rely on daily pedestrian circulation, motorcycle taxis and street vendors have very similar clientele. In four out of five focus groups with these sectors, formal workers (including civil servants and workers for private companies or factories) represented the most important clients. These clients are accessible only in the mornings on their way to work and in the evenings on their way back, such that both street vendors and motorcycle drivers managed their own schedules around this daily rush. As described by a vendor at Muubaan Nakila: *"Employed people have very limited time — they have to rush to work, so we have to prepare the food to be ready to sell to them"* (FG 10). Other groups of local residents — self-employed people, housewives, and students — were secondary clients (FG 11).

The exception to this pattern were motorcycle taxi drivers in suburban areas such as Bang Na, where the latter group — "people in general," composed of self-employed, housewives, and others not beholden to the daily rush hour — formed the larger clientele group. As one woman explained, *"for formal workers, most customers go by shuttle bus. They mostly walk from their house to wait for the bus. Only if they cannot catch the bus, will they will use a motorcycle taxi"* (FG 2).

Home-based workers: Most home-based workers in this study (21 out of 25) are involved in garment production, although they are engaged in a variety of other production activities as well: making handbags and purses, separating recycled plastic, beadwork or other crafts, soaps and detergents, and cultivating fruits and vegetables. Eight out of 25 workers described making two or more types of products, and seven out of 25 workers described having additional sources of income outside of production, like working as a van driver, babysitter, selling food, or in seasonal agriculture. One worker said that she does *"anything that earns money"* (FG 6). Five out of six self-employed leaders also worked as community health volunteers under their local Health Security Offices, for which they receive a monthly stipend.

With regard to primary markets, home-based workers target both individual consumers as well as clients more likely to order in bulk: private companies, public organizations, civil society organizations, small shops, or sub-contractors. Self-employed workers appeared to rely more heavily on individual consumers; this was especially true for participants from the Thung Song

[8] This difference in earning potential reflects the varying price of entry — in the form of vest purchases or rental — to motorcycle taxi drivers in central versus peripheral parts of the city (Ratanawaraha and Charlermpong 2015).

Hong Housing Estate, who described their market as "people in general," or "community people." In contrast, self-employed cooperative leaders have a wide diversity of clients, ranging from individual consumers to public agencies, NGOs, and businesses.

Domestic workers: Of the four sectors, domestic workers were the only participants who spend most of their time in one activity — domestic work. The majority of the women have been working for more than 20 years as domestic workers. Of the 12 domestic workers in the study, only four are part-time workers, meaning that they work in more than one household. Nevertheless, most full-time workers took additional jobs on their weekly day-off. Five of the workers live with their employers, while seven live outside of their employers' homes.

As described above, participants in this sample worked almost exclusively for foreigners; those with Thai employers worked for them only part-time. Therefore, they viewed "foreign employers" as their main market. Both groups viewed working for foreign employers as a "promotion" because of better wages and conditions. Monthly earnings for domestic workers in one of the focus groups range from 17,000 (493 USD) to 30,000 (870 USD) baht per month.

Table 5: **Main Markets Mentioned by Sector**

Sector	Important Markets	No. of Mentions
Motorcycle Taxi Drivers		
	Employed persons	3
	Students	3
	Self-employed and housewives	2
	People in general	2
Street Vendors		
	Employed workers	2
	Students	2
Home-based Workers		
	People in General/Community	3
	Private company	2
	Sub-contractor	2
	Civil Society organizations	1
	Public organizations	1
	Small shops or enterprise	2
	Community/chao baan	1
Domestic Workers		
	Foreign employers	2

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Livelihood and Market Barriers

Focus group participants were asked to list the most significant barriers to increasing their earnings (Table 6). These topics have been categorized as follows:

– *Market pressures:* access to markets, cost of inputs, price of remuneration (wage or piece-rate), time pressure, and inconsistent work and/or few customers;
– *Macroeconomic forces:* economic crisis or downturn, the high cost of living, and market competition;
– *City and government policies and practices:* market place location and evictions, harassment by city authorities including fines and bribes, legal recognition and permission to work, traffic, and transportation/urban mobility problems;
– *Capital constraints:* lack of skills, lack of capital, difficulty in obtaining loans, and equipment costs and repairs;
– *Care Responsibilities and Health issues:* poor health and ageing concerns, care, family or reproductive responsibilities, and community responsibilities.

Across all four sectors, participants placed the greatest emphasis on market pressures (43 mentions), followed by city-government practices (32 mentions), personal care and health issues (28 mentions), capital constraints (20), and macroeconomic forces (20 mentions), as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: **Perception of Negative Forces, by Sector** [9]

Type of Driver	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Street Vendors	Home-based Workers	Domestic Workers	Total
	# of mentions and % within sector	# of mentions and % within sector	# of mentions and % within sector	# of mentions and % within sector	# of mentions and % of all sample
Market Pressure	11 [32%]	5 [16%]	26 [49%]	1 [4%]	43 [30%]
City/Government Practices	8 [23%]	17 [54%]	1 [2%]	6 [24%]	32 [22%]
Personal Issues	10 [29%]	1 [3%]	10 [21%]	7 [28%]	28 [20%]
Capital Constraints	3 [9%]	2 [6%]	4 [8.5%]	11 [44%]	20 [14%]
Macroeconomic	4 [12%]	6 [19%]	10 [21%]	0 [0%]	20 [14%]
Totals	36 [100%]	31 [100%]	51 [100%]	25 [100%]	143 [100%]

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

The table reveals how the aforementioned negative forces impact the sectors differently. Motorcycle taxi drivers and home-based workers mentioned issues linked to market pressures more frequently than any other barrier category. Most issues mentioned by street vendors (over 50 per cent) related to city/government practices, whereas the concerns of domestic workers fell most heavily into the category of capital constraints. Personal care and health issues were the second most-cited barrier for all sectors (equal to macroeconomic drivers, for home-based workers) except for street vendors, who cited macro-economic drivers more frequently.

In a subsequent question, participants were asked to identify barriers to accessing their target markets. Discussions from both questions are described below by sector.

[9] Note that participants were asked to list key constraints, rather than prioritize them.

Home-based workers: While market pressures were dominant for both self-employed and sub-contracted home-based workers, the nature of their concerns differed. Self-employed workers complained most frequently about lack of market access, since they often do not know where to sell their products and/or are forced to sell them for a lower price. As one self-employed worker noted, "there is no market place and no regular customer" (FG 4). Another raised their lack of marketing capacity: "My work is not well-known in the community and people don't know I can make this kind of product, because my products have no advertisement" (FG 4). Concerns around inconsistent work and time management to meet work orders were more salient for sub-contracted workers. They described that while on one hand, the inconsistency of orders creates long periods without income, there is high pressure to complete orders by their deadline once received.

Self-employed workers made more frequent references to barriers from macroeconomic drivers, like the slow economy and competition from cheaper producers (Box 3). Particularly in Thung Song Hong Housing Estate, participants described that the economic downturn had reduced demand for their products, which are of higher quality and higher price than many others on the market. One group member revealed that four years earlier, she had ten employees: "now it's only me" (FG 4). Subcontracted workers in another group confirmed that private companies were hiring fewer workers.

Box 3: **Impact of Macroeconomics on Home-based Workers**

"Currently the economy is not good and this kind of product is not necessary for households….the hidden problem of the market is economics: people sometimes prefer to buy second hand and feel that our products are not necessary" (Self-employed worker, FG 4).

"The market is very competitive. In the Thai markets, sellers reduce the price to compete, and goods from China are very cheap" (Self-employed worker, FG 7).

"The economy is not good these days. Before this I never borrowed money from anyone, but these days I need to borrow to pay for house rent and car installments" (Self-employed worker, FG 5).

Source: New City Policy Impacts on Pradit Torakan Vendors' Livelihoods (FG 11), Bangkok (2017)

In contrast, capital constraints (loans, skills, and equipment) came up more frequently for sub-contracted workers as livelihood barriers. A cooperative leader noted, *"generally I sew normal clothes, not elastic fabric. At this time, the market is demanding a lot of elastics, but I cannot get these jobs because my machine does not work for this"* (FG 7). Participants described experiencing malfunctions with their older sewing machines, or the need to rent or borrow certain types of machinery in order to finish their products.

Several sub-contracted workers noted the time and commitment needed to train themselves to work for companies: *"A new person who wants to work for a company must be very skilled. They must practice a lot"* (FG 5). In a subsequent exercise on market barriers, a self-employed worker similarly expressed that *"We also need to improve our sewing skill, because different kinds of fabric require different kinds of skill"* (FG 7). In some cases, personal issues, such as care work, competed with this need to improve worker capacity; several sub-contracted workers were unwilling to join trainings by a company that offered a high salary and steady income. One participant explained, *"If we go out to find work, we can find it. But because of our family burden, we cannot go out to find work"* (FG 6).

Motorcycle taxi drivers similarly highlighted market pressures as the most important barrier to higher earnings. Their complaints focused on fluctuating demands, explaining that peak hours are early morning, lunch time, and after office hours. Beyond those hours, work is slow. Although delivering parcels allows them to take work during the slow hours of the day, they had insufficient opportunities for finding this type of work, according to several participants. Delays from customers also cause the drivers to lose income.

With regard to city and government practices, motorcycle taxi drivers highlighted how the current legal framework inadequately protects their profession and/or leads to harassment by authorities. One leader described that the lack of legal protection for one driver creates many loopholes, *"so police and law enforcement can take advantage of motorcycle taxis"* (FG 3). Though aimed primarily at street vendors, the recent "return the pavement" campaign is also creating pressures on motorcycle taxi *wins* to pay more for parking their motorcycles, according to leaders. Drivers also complained of heavy traffic, which slows their work — although paradoxically, they agreed that such gridlock is also what stimulates demand from passengers, since motorcycles cut through traffic more quickly than car or bus.

With regard to personal issues, female motorcycle drivers highlighted their additional domestic responsibilities, like taking care of children or elderly parents. One female motorcycle driver had stopped driving during her pregnancy, but resumed only 15 days after giving birth while still experiencing postpartum bleeding. Men also referred to personal problems, although these related primarily to aging or their own health problems (see Table 7). One 66-year-old driver noted that he can no longer ride as fast as he once did.

With regard to macroeconomic forces, participants mentioned that the number of drivers in a given *win* is itself a source of competition (some *wins* have well over 100 members). In a subsequent discussion of market barriers, drivers in urban areas cited the problems of unregistered *wins* and drivers, who carry passengers without paying for a public taxi license. The problem is exacerbated by GrabBike, a new online booking application for motorcycle taxi drivers permitted only for parcel delivery; however, participants suspect it is being used for passenger services as well. As one driver noted, *"it is more convenient because the passengers can wait in their homes for the driver to arrive without walking out into the street"* (FG 1). In contrast to GrabBike, most *wins* do not permit drivers to provide their personal phone numbers to clients, since this would represent an unfair breach in the queuing system.

Only those motorcycle taxi drivers working in suburban areas raised the impact of Thailand's slow economy. One of the women drivers observed that "*before there were more passengers, but now passengers prefer to walk."* Her group member added: *"In the past, we have earned about 600 baht in the same working hours,"* compared to 300 baht today (FG 2). Part of the explanation for this was provided by the driver: *"Nowadays, people need to save money, so they may prefer to take a Songtaew.*[10] *It's the same as us; we also need to save our money for necessary things"* (FG 2). As a result, drivers have had to take on additional jobs and/or work longer hours.

Domestic workers placed the highest emphasis on human capital as a general livelihood barrier and as a barrier to their desired market. Lack of skills — particularly lack of English language ability — had prevented some of their peers from securing employment with foreign employers: *"Some DWs are very good at housework — they can cook, they can clean, they can do everything very well — but they cannot speak English, so this is a major barrier"* (FG 8).

However, due to their long working hours and levels of exhaustion, they have little time to develop new skills. As one worker observed: *"I would like to improve my skills in cooking and*

[10] Pick-up truck with passenger seating

taking care of the elderly, but I don't have time to join trainings provided by HomeNet or others and learn new skills" (FG 8). Some participants felt that skills training would allow them to take on additional jobs in the restaurant business or even street vending, once they were too old to work as domestic workers. This is consistent with research by FLEP (2017), which found that many domestic workers wish to gain new skills that will allow them to change professions in the long-term. However, as described by one worker:

"I don't have the skills I need for my business. If I open a business, I need to learn how to manage it. I have no experience with business, even though I was able to open a stall — but stalls don't require much organization. I want to learn how to run a business. I've worked for many years, but my boss doesn't raise my salary. This makes me feel insecure — like I am not good enough" (FG 9).

Personal problems emerged as the second most-discussed problem, mostly as related to aging. Aging constitutes a major concern and preoccupation for domestic workers, since foreign employers frequently discriminate against older workers. One participant said that, *"Sometimes the foreign boss requires a domestic worker younger than 40 — I've seen this on notice boards."* Another group member added, *"sometimes Westerners will accept a senior domestic worker, but Japanese will not."* (FG 8).

Finally, the problem of urban mobility arose for domestic workers, highlighting that workers who travel long distances not only pay more for transportation, but also feel more tired given their heavy work load. Long distances and poor transportation options prevent workers from taking on additional clients. One participant explained, *"If our boss' house is far away, it means we can't work for as many others. Secondly, the travel time is long: normally we travel for one or two hours. For one or two hours I could clean one or two houses, but I waste time with traveling"* (FG 8). Choosing to live with the employer was one way workers circumvent this problem: *"My employer asked if I wanted to live in or live out [and] … I replied that I don't know this place or modes of transportation here, so it's better if I live here"* (FG 8).

For ***Street Vendors***, City/government policies and practices are the most important livelihood barrier, and indeed dominated much of the discussion during focus groups. Of the 17 mentions of city and government practices, 11 were problems regarding a fixed market location and removals. This concern was best summarized by a female street vendor: *"For us, there is only one problem: a place to sell. These days we need to sell inside the soi.*[11] *We cannot stop selling, otherwise we will not have any money"* (FG 11). For the vendors in Pradit Torakan community, this reflects the recent evictions faced by vendors as of October 2016, as described in Box 2.

This has greatly impacted vendors' earnings. One female vendor had to stop vending for the past two months because she was unable to make enough money to continue; she had returned to polishing in the bronze workshop as her main source of livelihood. Others have moved into smaller streets, where they are still permitted to sell. This has been detrimental to their business, as highlighted in Box 4.

Vendors at Muubaan Nakila, who have faced the threat of eviction for a decade, also emphasized the precariousness of their livelihoods in the face of urban policy. They worry that the lack of legal recognition extends itself to the view held by many community members with regard to the market. As one vendor claimed: *"We are not able to afford a recognized market. Some of the residents in the community feel that this market is illegal, and they have a negative impression of it. Some don't want to buy from the market"* (FG 10).

[11] Side street or alley

Box 4: Pradit Torakan Vendors on Impact of New City Policy to Their Livelihoods

"My sales are slower — cut by half — in the small soi. Even though I reduced my stock by half, sometimes I cannot sell all of the food."

"When thesakit [12] come, I cannot move away unlike pushcart venders who can move their stuff. Some times thesakit confiscate my goods, and I need to pay to get them back. Even though I've moved to sell in the soi, I'm still not far enough inside, and some times they chase me away."

"Before I earned about 4,000 baht per day. This has reduced to 1,500 baht, which does not even cover the cost."

"After the military order things took a sharp fall…it was like our income was cut, I feel shaky, I don't know what to do or where to go further."

Source: New City Policy Impacts on Pradit Torakan Vendors' Livelihoods (FG 11), Bangkok (2017)

The market vendors also face constant scrutiny from formal business owners in the area, who may complain to the district office and create problems for the vendors. As described by one group member: *"we cannot extend or make improvement to our stall because the tenants in commercial building always keep an eye on us"* (FG 10). The group also spoke of inadequate or inappropriate urban infrastructure and neglect from officials: *"Over the last few years, we have asked National Housing Office to provide a legal market for us, but they don't want to do it. It's like we rent a house that's damaged, we cannot repair it ourselves, we have to inform the owner. If the owner does not want to repair it, we cannot do anything"* (FG 10). Muubaan Nakila vendors also mentioned the problem of floods, which they attributed to recent development of urban infrastructure higher than the market area.

Macroeconomic issues also surfaced in discussions with street vendors, who perceived growing threats from competitors. One participant discussed the proliferation of new street vendors as a result of the bad economy: *"There are many unemployed people, and they turn to selling in the market."* Convenience stores like 7-Eleven, Big C, and Tesco were also reducing their market share, she argued. The vendor asserted, *"we cannot compete with big capitalism" (FG 10).*

Petchareeya Khamyod, member of Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand demonstrates the use of SMART Domestic Worker, an application that provides resources on health care, occupational health and safety, and legal rights.
Photo credit: M. Singsutham

[12] District level law enforcement officials

***Box 5:* Health / Aging Concerns and Impacts on Their Livelihoods**

When discussing personal issues, workers in all sectors frequently referred to concerns over their health and/or ageing (18 mentions), the burdens of care and familial responsibilities (seven mentions) and the time involved in community responsibilities and/or social activities (two mentions). Illustrative quotes below highlight that the concern over one's health is related to impacts on earnings, productivity and well-being.

"When I get older, I may not be able to keep working this kind of job. My employer may invite me to leave. In the past, I have only thought of domestic jobs" (domestic worker, FG 9).

"I cannot drive as fast as a younger person because [I have] to preserve health" (motorcycle taxi driver, FG 2).

"Our work relates to our age: if we are old, we may be unable to sew the garments. In my group, there is one person who is about 55 who cannot sew for long hours and needs to finish the work earlier than others" (home-based worker, HBW, FG 7).

"Sometimes I need to lie down on the floor when I feel tired after sewing. I need to take a nap after lunch, and come back to work after that" (domestic worker, FG 7).

"Sometimes when they ask me to do something, I feel like — OK, I will, I will, but just give me a few minutes. I am getting tired" (domestic worker, FG 9).

"Because we work all day we have no time to exercise. Often we don't eat breakfast – our first meal is lunch" (domestic worker, FG 8).

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Responses to Market Barriers

Participants were asked to develop responses to the key barriers to accessing their desired markets. Table 7 categorizes responses on a scale of least formal to most formal strategies, which included:

– *Individual answers*, reflecting a participant's strategy to deal with a problem on his or her own;
– *Interpersonal strategy*, reflecting a participant's involvement with a colleague, employer or friend/family to help mitigate market problems; and
– *Community strategies*, including actions involving several other peers or an organized group.

Formal mechanisms included those with linkages to formal business or government. Table 8 includes examples of specific strategies and recommendations in each of these categories.

***Table 7:* Levels of Strategies for Enhancing Market Access, by Sector**

	Informal Mechanisms				Formal Mechanisms		
	Individual	Interpersonal	Community/ Group-based	Total	Formal Business	Government Intervention	Total
MTD	6	1	3	7	1	1	2
SV	10	-	-	10	-	-	0
DW	5	2	-	7	-	-	0
HBW	14	4	10	28	4	3	7
Total	**35**	**7**	**13**	**52**	**5**	**4**	**9**

Source: 11 Focus Groups, Bangkok (2017)

It is important to note that home-based workers have a greater number of mentions in part due to the greater number of total focus groups. Nevertheless, this group has the greater diversity of strategy levels and recommendations.

Overall and across sectors, there are almost six times more informal strategies adopted to deal with barriers in comparison to formal coping strategies. In all sectors, the greatest number of strategies discussed came from the individual level, focusing on making themselves more skillful or reliable, their products more relevant, appealing or cheaper, or finding alternative jobs. A number of home-based workers also emphasized the need to simply reduce their own spending, acknowledging that their incomes were unlikely to increase in the near-term.

Interpersonal strategies were raised by both domestic workers and home-based workers. Domestic workers describe their heavy reliance on recommendations from previous employers in order to find new households. *"Through the recommendation system, the working contract and conditions will be better….Without a recommendation, the employer could fire me any time. But with a recommendation, the current employer may feel a debt to the previous employer"* (FG 9). Self-employed home-based workers in Thung Song Hong Housing Estate drew on family networks to sell products. One artisan describes how her husband used to take her products to his office, but had stopped doing this: *"even family members do not think that this is a serious business to help us find customers"* (FG 4).

Community-based strategies were cited most frequently by home-based workers — particularly self-employed workers in Thung Song Hong Housing Estate, whose primary market is individual consumers. This group recommended setting up a community store and local fair, utilizing community radio for advertising, and proposing a community project to the National Housing Authority (NHA). A sub-contracted worker in Chalongkrung Housing Estate emphasized the importance of joining a cooperative group, which provided a direct connection to orders and made workers less dependent on a single employer. Yet these strategies had not always been successful — joining or forming a group did not always guarantee employment, according to another worker in Chalongkrung — and participants were skeptical about the effectiveness of their community committees (as described further in Part 4).

For motorcycle taxi drivers, the importance of the group *win* is not specifically mentioned but frequently implied; the queue system organizes their profession and daily work life. Several strategies proposed by motorcycle taxi drivers — providing clients with individual phone numbers, offering discounts — were eventually discarded, as they would be against the rules and collective benefit of the *win*.

Although the theme did not arise with regard to specific market barriers, subsequent discussion with Muubaan Nakila vendors also highlights the importance they attached to community-based responses. This is evident from the market's history, where vendors established the Service Cooperative to oppose eviction by the National Housing Office. Moreover, the leaders think strategically about collective responses beyond the vendors themselves, as one leader explained: *"We focus a lot on working with the community. When we support the community, they will have a better image of the sellers in the market"* (FG 10). Vendors at Pradit Torakan had also relied on their community leader to approach the district office following their recent eviction, although nearly all of their other strategies were individual.

Motorcycle taxi drivers and home-based workers are the only two groups that considered either market- or government-based strategies; most of these suggestions emerged from MBO leaders rather than members. The leaders of self-employed workers in particular raised suggestions advocating for government procurement processes to favour informal workers and ensure informal representation on relevant government committees. Motorcycle taxi drivers described their desire for police to regulate illegal *wins*, to deal with unfair competition. In subsequent discussions (see Part 4), street vendor groups from Muubaan Nakila and Pradit Torakan described their attempts to negotiate with their National Housing Office or District Office to establish a new market or recover former vending areas — but in both cases, these efforts ended in frustration.

With regard to formal market strategies, leaders of the motorcycle taxi drivers discussed the creation of GoBike, the Association-affiliated (and government approved) alternative to GrabBike. Yet the application was still underused and, according to leaders, faced bureaucratic delays in the Department of Land and Transport. None of the member groups mentioned GoBike.

One sub-contracted cooperative leader described her experience with a formal company who had trained her over a period of four months, requiring her to travel daily to the factory. After training, her initial garments did not all pass quality control, but she has continued to improve and the company offers her well-paid, consistent employment of 10,000 baht per month. Other group members were reluctant to join this company or seek similar opportunities, however, citing personal issues and care work. Another woman worker, who received only 2,000 baht every two weeks from her current job sewing napkins, felt that she could not afford to wait an entire month for her salary due to her rental payments and debt (FG 6).

Table 8: **Workers' Strategies for Enhancing Market Access**

	Level	Strategies and Recommendations
Informal	**Individual**	- Take courses or watch videos to enhance skills (Domestic workers) - Work for family without children (Domestic workers) - Work hard to gain trust (Domestic Workers) - Maintain standards and quality (Home-based workers) - Find additional job, take on alteration work (Home-based workers) - Design new patterns, follow trends (Home-based workers) - Save money, economize on life expenses (Home-based workers) - Give discount or "add-on" (Home-based workers, street vendors) - Reduce quantity and maintain price (Street vendors) - Adjust menu, maintain a variety of products (Street vendors) - Sell in the early morning (Street vendors) - Provide good service (Motorcycle taxi drivers) - Provide phone number to individual clients (Motorcycle taxi drivers) - Pay to repair motorcycle (Motorcycle taxi drivers)
	Interpersonal	- Learn new skills from employer (Domestic workers) - Find clients or jobs through friends, neighbours, word-of-mouth (Domestic workers, Home-based workers)
	Group- or Community-based	- Establish producer group (Home-based workers) - Set up community shop, organize market (Home-based workers) - Advertise through community radio broadcast (Home-based workers) - Look for work in community (Home-based workers) - Find volunteers to help contact foreign customers (Home-based workers) - Do not give discounts, do not give individual phone numbers (Motorcycle taxi drivers)
Formal	**Market-based**	- Attend required training of company (Home-based workers) - Get jobs from contractors (Home-based workers) - Request deadline extensions when necessary (Home-based workers) - Choose reliable clients (Home-based workers) - Create GoBike application (Motorcycle taxi drivers)
	Publicly-provided/ Government Intervention Responses	- Propose community project to National Housing Authority (Home-based workers) - Advocate for government procurement processes to favour informal workers (Home-based workers) - Have representative of informal workers on relevant government committees (Home-based workers) - Improve regulation of illegal *wins* (Motorcycle taxi drivers)

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Neeramol Sutipannapong, a home-based worker and leader with HomeNet Thailand, stitches a variety of hand bags and other products to help support her family. Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

Part 3: Access to Public Services

To understand the barriers informal workers face in accessing services in Bangkok, facilitators asked focus group participants to consider two key services: health care and housing. Participants discussed and ranked which of the two issues — health or housing — had a greater impact on their lives and livelihoods.

Table 9: Service with Greatest Impact on Workers' Livelihoods		
	No. of Focus Groups	
Sector	Health	Housing
Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	1	2
Street Vendors	1	1
Domestic Workers	2	0
Home-based Workers	3	1
Total	**7**	**4**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Over half of the focus groups ranked access to health services as having the greatest impact on their lives. Choosing health services over access to housing made sense for workers who see a direct link to their ability to earn a living. As one domestic worker argued, *"If we have good health, everything is easy. When we get sick, our employer does not want us to work so that we don't get them sick"* (FG 9). A motorcycle taxi driver likewise asked *"if we get sick, how can we earn money?"* (FG 7). In contrast, participants who chose housing over health were generally those workers who did not yet own a home in Bangkok, as described further below.

Health Services

Thailand has a multi-tiered public health system in which the majority of citizens are covered by the country's Universal Coverage (UC) scheme. Other forms of coverage include employer-contributed social security, coverage for civil servants, and private insurance.[13] The UC system requires users to register at a primary health facility — a hospital, clinic, or health centre, depending on availability in specific locales and patient preference. The registered provider is the gatekeeper for patients to receive referrals to specialists, often at another facility.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Region enjoys excellent medical facilities by international standards. It has 140 hospitals and 30,000 beds; however, only one-third of hospitals participate in the UC system, despite the fact that Bangkok receives patients from all over Thailand's Central Region. Primary health care units are unevenly distributed, and over thirty districts do not have hospitals participating in UC. The city's policy to become a global "medical hub" to attract medical tourists also detracts from local services, as private hospitals draw in doctors with higher salaries and superior working conditions. The National Health Security Office's 2013 UC Perception Score is lower among Bangkok users than the national average — although still high at 7.92/10 (NHSO and Assumption University 2013 as cited in Tangworamongkon and Tulaphan 2014).

[13] See Tangworamongkon and Tulaphan (2014) for an analysis of the UC system and its accessibility to home-based workers and domestic workers.

Not all of the focus group participants use UC or depend on it exclusively. In FG 4, which was composed of self-employed home-based workers, only four out of six group members were registered under UC — the others relied on private insurance, social security (a rollover from their previous formal employment under the Social Security Act Article 39), or government insurance from their children. Out of six domestic workers in FG 7, only one participant actually used UC in Bangkok. Many other workers were registered under UC but rarely or never used it, usually because they preferred to pay for faster services, or in some cases because they did not trust the UC system to provide good care.

Many workers who do use UC regularly have an overall positive impression of it. For example, one vendor stated: *"As long as I've been using UC, I have never had any problem"* (FG 11). Some workers shared positive stories about the treatment that they or family members had received under UC care. A male motorcycle taxi driver described having regular check-ups for his hypertension under UC. *"They provide good service if you follow their procedures"* (FG 2). One woman street vendor told a personal anecdote about her care:

"I had an ovarian cyst. At first I was worried that if I went to my registered hospital under UC, it might be a long wait. Instead I went to Chulalongkorn Hospital, and was diagnosed with the cyst in my womb. The doctor told me that I needed to have MRI, an operation and treatment, which would be costly if I paid myself. The doctor wrote me a referral letter for my UC registered hospital. I went to my UC hospital and the doctor treated me very well" (FG 10).

In spite of these positive narratives from users, many workers perceive that UC is inferior in quality to other forms of coverage. One male motorcycle driver expressed that, *"UC is the lowest class of insurance. The second class is social security. For the people who are able to afford private insurance, this is the highest class"* (MTD, FG 1). Another driver corroborated this opinion, describing the differentiated treatment they receive from hospital staff when using their UC card: *"the tone of their voice is different"* (MTD, FG 1).

Rankings of priority barriers were conducted in each group. Across focus groups, **long wait** and **quality of service or care** represented the most heavily prioritized barriers, followed by **referral process, additional fees or expenses incurred, physical accessibility of the hospital,** and other issues, such as challenges with registration.

Long waiting times for service was a nearly ubiquitous complaint from workers. Patients often arrive to hospitals early in the morning to take a queue number, but nevertheless wait for hours before they see a doctor. Some workers are able to plan ahead for this, as one street vendor highlighted: *"Long waits are not a big deal for me. I anticipate when I go to the hospital I will waste the whole day"* (FG 11). For many others, however, this is simply not an option, and some make the rational calculation to pay for private treatment. As one leader of a home-based worker cooperative explained, *"When I go to the hospital, I lose my [daily] income of about 1,000 baht, plus traveling expense. This means in one day, I lose about 1,300 baht. But if I go to the private clinic, I pay only 500 baht"* (FG 7).

Workers also have a variety of concerns linked to the quality of the care or treatment they receive under UC. These are summarized in Box 6; they include abrupt consultations with doctors, being treated with indifference or impoliteness by staff, a perception that UC medicines are of low quality, and limitations of primary care facilities to diagnose and treat more serious illnesses.

It is important to note that not all of these concerns were informed by personal experience. In several instances, participants who do not themselves use UC referred to anecdotes about friends, family, or acquaintances receiving inadequate care.

Box 6: **Workers' Perceptions on Quality of Service and Care**

Short consultations

"Sometimes when I go to the primary care clinic, I see the doctor for only one minute. The doctor doesn't even ask me anything, just gives me medicine" (Home-based worker, FG 7).

Poor treatment from staff and/or doctors

"In Bangkok at government hospitals, doctors do not really care about the patients" (Domestic worker, FG 8).

Inferior quality of medication

"I think that UC provides low quality medicine, which is easy to find at pharmacies. They just give paracetamol or other pain killer" (Domestic worker, FG 8).

Limited range of service:

"Most of the time, the registered hospital or the primary care unit only diagnoses basic illnesses. It is difficult for patients to find the correct diagnosis" (Street vendor, FG 10).

Source: Data from 7 Focus Groups, Bangkok (2017)

After long waits and quality of care/service, the greatest concern for participants was problems in the referral process, which at times requires cumbersome steps and long waits in order to see the right specialist. Some workers described cases in which initial symptoms became more serious as they waited. For instance, one home-based worker had been told by doctors at Nong Chok Hospital that her stomachache was normal. As her condition worsened, she visited a private hospital, where she learned she was suffering from an ovarian cyst. The private hospital referred her to her UC hospital, Lat Krabang, which eventually referred her to Chulalongkorn Hospital, where she "started from zero" with a full-check up and diagnosis (FG 5). The street vendor suffering from an ovarian cyst (quoted above) likewise endured a long back-and-forth from hospital to hospital before finally receiving the correct diagnosis.

In addition, the referral process may entail travelling long distances for appointments. One home-based worker in remote Nong Chok District described waking up at 2 a.m. and leaving her house by 3 a.m., in order to visit her referral hospital.

The fourth most prioritized barrier to quality health care was additional fees or expenses, which workers claimed they sometimes pay for operations, medicines, deposits for treatments, or in some cases "gratitude" or bribes to doctors. As one worker claimed: *"UC does not cover all kinds of medicine. There are medicines outside the main list, which the patient has to pay for. I had to pay 500 baht because I needed emergency care"* (FG 5). One street vendor shared her lengthy ordeal to avoid an additional, unaffordable hospital fee:

"My husband had an eye operation. The hospital told me that we needed to pay 60,000 baht extra. At that time I didn't have a job and didn't have money, so the hospital asked me to pay extra only for consumable medical supplies. This was about 16,000 baht. I had no money, so the hospital sent me to meet with the social work department in the hospital. But they weren't able to help. My nephew wrote a letter to the National Health Security Office about the case, and finally the hospital agreed that I could pay by installments at 1,000 baht per month. But I still couldn't pay this — I was unemployed. My nephew wrote more letters — three letters in total — and finally the hospital canceled all of the expense" (Street vendor, FG 11).

Other vendors at Pradit Torakan raised concerns about a new policy at their registered UC hospital requiring patients to provide a deposit (normally 5,000 baht) in advance of receiving

treatment. *"For the deposit, people have to find the money for this. If we don't have money, we have to go to a money lender,"* explained one vendor (FG 11). Another focus group participant had to borrow from the community's savings cooperative, in order to meet the deposit.

One issue arising in several groups was the requirement to pay for emergency care when visiting a hospital after hours. Under UC, patients can visit a hospital other than their registered facility in the case of an emergency, which is constituted by life threatening symptoms, severe disease needing immediate action or emergency operation, or symptoms of high-risk diseases. However, it is ultimately the hospital staff who determine whether a particular case meets this criteria. Workers had numerous stories of late-night hospital visits, often with children, in which they were eventually forced to pay. One motorcycle taxi driver described negotiating with the nurses: *"Please take care of my daughter and we can talk about money later"* (FG 2). The staff insisted nevertheless that they needed a financial guarantee before seeing a doctor.

A tragic story recounted by another driver illustrates the skepticism of relying on UC for emergency care, in a profession where accidents are a life-and-death matter:

"In the last five months, two of our group members have died. One person had an accident and the ambulance had to send him to his UC hospital, which is far away from the site of the accident. After receiving him, the hospital did not take action. The hospital asked me to confirm the site of the accident, so that the hospital could charge the accident insurance. After getting the money, the hospital took no action and let my friend die" (Motorcycle Taxi Driver, FG 3).

The driver who shared this story had himself experienced a severe head injury, and attributed his survival to his family's decision to take him to a private hospital: *"I believe this is the reason I have survived until today"* (FG 3). Motorcycle taxi drivers also expressed frustration about the confusion between vehicle insurance and UC payments in the case of accidents, with hospitals requiring patients to pay directly and wait for reimbursement from their insurance provider.

Other issues arising in discussions included facilities' limited operating hours — workers in Nong Chok for instance complained that their primary facility opened late and closed earlier than scheduled, and domestic workers struggled to attend during regular hospital hours on weekdays — as well as bureaucratic challenges around registration. Several home-based workers (FG 4 and FG 7) had had their registered primary care facility changed to another location without being informed or consulted. Some domestic workers meanwhile struggle to register for UC care in Bangkok, since their employers did not register them as household members.

Ultimately, these barriers to health care impact workers' daily routines. Participants noted the need to take time off of work to visit hospitals, resulting in less time at work and lower earnings. Domestic workers worried about their employers' reaction to their extended requests for time off. One worker explained: *"I think if I have to go to the hospital consecutively for several days, I think my boss would be upset."* Another participant described, *"I'm lucky because when I get sick and take leave, my employers do not cut my salary — but I have friends who, if they take leave, their salary is cut"* (FG 8). Workers across several sectors highlighted the stress and anxiety linked to these visits.

In general, workers cope with problems in a largely individual manner. A number of workers described improving their health by taking nutritional supplements or exercising. However, according to one woman motorcycle taxi driver, getting regular exercise is not a realistic option for women like her. Referring to the drivers in a previous focus group, she argued: *"At Lat Prao they have more time because they are men. How can we as women have time? We have housework, children, we have to do the laundry and clean the house, we have to prepare food for husbands."*

In many cases, as mentioned previously, workers directly visit a private clinic and pay for treatment, instead of enduring the time-consuming processes at registered UC hospitals. As one domestic worker stated: *"I usually go to the hospital and pay myself, because I don't have time to wait for UC."* (FG 9). In certain situations, workers were forced into borrowing money from their savings cooperative or private moneylenders, to cover expenses.

Focus group questions did not explicitly address the issue of occupational health and safety. In some cases, this topic came up naturally. Some workers attributed their health problems directly to their work, like a home-based worker who struggled to sit all day with her electric sewing machine (FG 5). Another described needing to take a nap in the middle of the day, to have enough energy to finish her work. Motorcycle taxi drivers made frequent mention of how friends, colleagues, or even they themselves had suffered severe or fatal accidents.

Housing Barriers

Out of the 11 focus groups, four groups ranked housing issues as their main concern. Among the sectors, motorcycle taxi drivers, which include the majority of male informal workers, were the only sector with more groups prioritizing housing over than health. As one driver argued, *"housing is the starting point for everything."* His colleague continued: *"when we first came to live in Bangkok, the first thing we thought about was where we should live. Even if we have good health, we don't want to be homeless"* (FG 3). A similar sentiment was present for some participants from other sectors who did not yet own their own homes, such as one sub-contracted home-based worker who felt very strained by her rental fee and installments on her husband's taxi.

Table 10. **Living Situation of Participants, by Sector**[14]

	MTD	SV	DW	HBW	Total
Owns house in Bangkok	5	9	2	23	**39**
Owns house in other province[15]	3	1	6	-	**10**
Lives with employer in Bangkok	2[16]	-	5	-	**7**
Rents room or apartment	11	2	5	2	**20**
Rents apartment or house to others	2	2	-	-	**4**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Among the 66 participants, 20 rent and 39 own their home in Bangkok. Seven live with their employers. Motorcycle taxi drivers are most likely to rent their housing in Bangkok (11 out of 18 participants), followed by domestic workers (5 out of 12 participants). Most of the home-based workers and street vendors in this sample owned their homes in Bangkok, although a number of these workers are still paying installments. While these figures provide a useful insight into the participants' living situation, they are indicative of this particular, geographically specific sample, and may not be reflective of housing conditions for each sector in Bangkok.

[14] This table shows a greater number of housing arrangements than participants. This is due to the fact that a number of participants have multiple arrangements — e.g. own a house outside of Bangkok and rent within Bangkok, own a house but rent a house in a different neighbourhood.

[15] The question of whether participants owned a house in a province outside of Bangkok was not asked explicitly in every focus group, although many participants volunteer this information. This number may be greater than what is shown here, therefore.

[16] Two motorcycle taxi drivers in FG 1 were a couple, of which one person worked part-time as a domestic worker. Both live with her employer.

Table 11: Number of Mentions on Desired Improvements to Housing Situation					
	MTD	SV	DW	HBW	**Total**
Renovation	2	8	2	17	**29**
Own house	11	1	2	2	**16**
Rebuild house	1	2		1	**4**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

When asked to share the single most important thing workers would do to improve the quality of their housing or housing situation, motorcycle taxi drivers were the group most interested in owning their home, since most of them continue to rent their living quarters in Bangkok. One driver expressed his frustration that *"with the rental fees I paid for 38 years since moving to Bangkok, I could already own my own home."* Leaders in FG 3 also highlighted the institutional drawbacks linked to their lack of formal housing registration in Bangkok, which is a requirement for participation in some BMA programmes and local elections. One participant complained, *"I am from another province and cannot get access to support provided for Bangkokians — for example, the community fund. […] When we want to access any kind of formal sector welfare, the government will say that is impossible to gain access to resources with housing registration"* (FG 3).

Among home-based workers and street vendors groups, most participants wanted to renovate their homes. Participants mentioned three main motivations for this: renovations to mitigate problems with flooding, renovations to separate home from work place, and renovations to improve general housing quality or living conditions.

Protection against regular floods was a clear priority for several households. *"When it rains the water comes into my house, so I want to make my house higher,"* stated one home-based worker in Thung Song Hong Housing Estate (FG 4). A street vendor in Pradit Torakan community commented, *"If I have money, I want to fill the land to raise higher than the road level"* (FG 11). Similar desires around flood protection came from a worker in Chalongkrung Housing Estate and street vendors in Muubaan Nakila. Others hoped to renovate in order to improve their workspace and separate it from their living space. This was particularly the case for home-based workers, who face the challenge of finding appropriate space in their homes to carry out their jobs. Participants mentioned the need for more space to organize their materials and equipment — *"my house is full of fabric and working materials"* (FG 6) — or to seat other cooperative members when they convene to share equipment (FG 7). Another home-based worker wanted to build an extension to her home that would allow her to sew at night without disturbing her husband's sleep (FG 6).

Participants were asked subsequently to describe the main barriers to achieving these desired housing improvements. As shown in Table 12, principle barriers included informal workers' lack of access to credit, the fear of accumulating debt, and the inability and/or desire to take on further expenses.

The main barrier across groups is lack of access to loans. *"For low income people, it can be impossible to get a loan,"* one domestic worker lamented (FG 9). Workers complained that they were unqualified to apply for loans, for a variety of reasons, most of which are linked directly to their informal employment status. These include insufficient assets, lack of a pay slip, lack of guarantor or other documents, and even age discrimination.

Many participants felt that although their income was adequate to pay housing installments, these formal requirements for loan applicants constrained them from having the opportunity. A

Table 12: Number of Mentions to Barriers to Improving Access to Housing					
	MTD	SV	DW	HBW	Totals
Access to loans	**17**	**7**	**16**	**13**	**52**
Low income/no money	7	2	7	5	21
No pay slip	4	0	3	4	11
Problems taking out loan	1	2	6	0	9
No guarantor	3	3	0	4	8
No documents	2	0	0	0	2
Age discrimination	0	1	0	0	1
Afraid of taking on debt	**0**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**5**
Have other expenses	**1**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**5**
Totals	**18**	**11**	**19**	**17**	**62**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

domestic worker explained, *"actually, I want to buy a condo in Bangkok, but the nature of my work means that I can't access a loan — I don't have a pay slip. I can't access financial support like credit card or loans."* (FG 8). This was reiterated by another group member: *"Sometimes the bank calls us to offer a loan — but when the caller finds out I am a domestic worker, they immediately reject me"* (FG 8). A street vendor from Muubaan Nakila complained about her experience with the National Housing Authority, which insisted she provide a guarantor: *"I tried to buy a house in the housing estate, and they did not trust me. What about other people, like civil servants? They don't want to be our guarantor — they don't get any benefits from this, and they are afraid that if we do not pay the installment, they will be in trouble"* (Street vendor, FG 10). One motorcycle taxi driver leader expressed frustration that they could not use their vests — an asset of high monetary worth — as collateral to secure a loan: *"Our profession does not have formal recognition from the government….our vest is like land; It's like we own land but without the land certificate"* (FG 3). His colleague emphasized, *"we are not qualified to apply, even though we are able to pay for installments"* (FG 3).

Nevertheless, while many participants noted these constraints to financial access, others expressed their reluctance to take on additional expenses or debt. One motorcycle driver mused that he would like to own a house, but is reluctant to apply for a loan, given how much he already spends on his children's education (FG 1). A self-employed home-based worker stated, *"I do not have enough money, and I am tired of paying off loans"* (FG 7). The fear of debt burden also prevented members from taking collective financial action, in some cases. A cooperative leader in Nong Chok had asked her group members to take out a loan from the Department of Labour's Homeworkers' Fund, in order to build a collective workshop. *"If we apply for the loan from the Ministry of Labour, we can get about 10,000 baht, but the group members do not agree"* (FG 6). Another leader of a home-based worker cooperative discussed his challenges in purchasing their current workshop, which the owner was no longer willing to rent: *"We have considered applying for a loan from a bank, but it is a large amount and members are afraid of debt"* (FG 7).

As characterized by a motorcycle taxi driver leader in FG 3, some workers look for "tactics" to get the financial services they need. This could involve using a family member as a guarantor — one driver in that group had used his wife's papers to access a bank loan. Likewise, a domestic worker described, *"For my house in my province, I needed to use the names of three people — my brother,*

my brother-in-law, and myself — to apply for the loan. It was approved and we bought the house" (FG 8). Another worker shared the following experience: *"When I applied for a loan in Bangkok using my bank account statement, it was not guaranteed. So I had to go back home and apply for a loan and use my land certificate as guarantor. Like this I was approved"* (FG 8).

Additional Barriers

Although workers show a clear concern around access to housing and health, and the discussion enriches our understanding of access to key urban services, these issues were not necessarily the top concern of informal workers. Motorcycle taxi drivers in FG 1 for instance shared that for them, relationships with colleagues in the *win* and high living costs represented greater challenges than either health or housing. They noted that drivers who were not organized were more likely to face harassment from police or *thesakit*.

Several workers across sectors mentioned the issue of debt. Street vendors in Muubaan Nakila returned to the issue of market location and tenure security, as well as aging and lack of energy — and vendors at Pradit Torakan likewise struggled to stay on the topic of health or housing, given their strong preoccupation with vending location.

Focus group with leaders of Muubaan Nakila Service Cooperative. Photo credit: P. Towakulpanich

Thiphaporn Tongkham, a street vendor, is a vital part of the Bangkok neighbourhood where she sells affordable, home-cooked food.
Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

Part 4: Institutions and Actors

Similarly to the 2013 IEMS, this study sought to identify the position of informal workers in relation to other urban actors and institutions in Bangkok, highlighting forms of regulation, engagement, participation, and support — or lack thereof.

Extent of engagement

Findings show that the types of institutions with which informal workers engage — and the extent to which they engage at all — varied according to sector and the leadership status of workers. Home-based worker members have the most limited contact with external institutions out of all sectors (with the exception of street vendors from Pradit Torakan, as described further below). Participants in these groups mentioned only their district office, community committees, and (among sub-contracted workers) HomeNet.[17] Self-employed workers had little engagement with all of these institutions, moreover. One woman explained that she joins community committee meetings only occasionally, where *"sometimes they give us free things"* (FG 4). Another participant complained that *"the committee never informs us about government welfare or projects….They know things, but we are just poor people and we never know"* (FG 4). In contrast, in two cases focus group members who served on the community committee voiced frustration with what they viewed as the passivity of community members.

Figure 1: **Number of Agencies/Organizations with which Workers Interact, Mentioned by Each Sector Group and by Leader/Member**

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

In contrast, leaders of both self-employed and sub-contracted worker groups describe their interactions with a variety of agencies beyond those listed by members. For instance, leaders contact the Employment Department and Department of Social Welfare for registering groups,

[17] When workers discuss HomeNet, they are often referring to support provided by both HomeNet Thailand Association and the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP), as described in Box 1.

applying for loans from the Homeworkers' Fund (under the Homeworker Protection Act), or for social security. They had attended occupational health and safety trainings provided by the Labour Protection and Welfare Department. Sub-contracted leaders noted their involvement in an advocacy campaign for raising the minimum wage, directed towards the Ministry of Labour. One cooperative group leader said that the Employment Department visits his group every month — last December, they visited three times. Self-employed leaders are in frequent contact with a variety of public and private organizations involved in organizing producers' markets, ranging from the National Housing Office, the National Council of Thailand, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the District Office, the Adult Education Department, the Thai Public Broadcasting Station, the Government Savings Bank, and various cooperatives.

Participants explain that these frequent interactions come about due to their organization into cooperative groups. Leaders in this way have taken on the burden of managing registration and seeking various types of benefits for their members, while workers, in the leaders' perceptions, generally remain more passive.

A similar gap was evident between the two groups of vendors.[18] Leaders from the Muubaan Nakila Service cooperative described nine institutions — the most of any sector group — ranging from their community committee, to commercial buildings and shop owners surrounding their market, to the community health centre, HomeNet, and the District Office and land-owner National Housing Office (NHO). These relationships were not universally positive — formal shop owners tended to complain about the vendors to the NHO, and the NHO and District normally appeared at the market only when such complaints emerged. However, the leaders also describe their coordination with the community committee, health centre and private hospital, and police volunteers, who provided safety trainings (several members were also police volunteers). Their active engagement and frequent coordination with this variety of groups clearly reflects the leaders' explicit strategy to maintain a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with local residents and, where possible, local government. In distinct contrast, vendors from Pradit Torakan mentioned only two institutions: *thesakit* [19] and District Office.

Institutions receiving the most mentions include law enforcement agencies (*thesakit* and police) and District Offices. The District Office, under the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) is a main point of local government contact for workers from nearly every sector — with the exception of domestic workers who did not mention any instances of engagement with local government. It is worth noting that home-based workers and street vendors in Muubaan Nakila, Chalongkrung, and Thung Song Hong Housing Estates fall under the jurisdiction of the National Housing Authority (NHA), which owns the land and operates separately from BMA. Though not discussed during focus groups, this has at times raised issues of overlapping authority and responsibilities, as well as unfulfilled mandates around infrastructure and service provision, particularly in Chalongkrung Estate.

Below, interactions with these local actors are considered with regard to registration and regulation, law enforcement, livelihood promotion, and participation.

Licensing and Registration

Motorcycle taxi drivers, home-based workers, and street vendors all have occasion to register themselves or their businesses with the District Office — with the exception of Muubaan Nakila vendors whose market is unrecognized and, therefore, whose members do not receive formal registration. For motorcycle taxi drivers, the District Office is the first gatekeeper for obtaining licenses and vests to function as a "public motorcycle." This process has changed several times

[18] Unlike the home-based workers, the two groups of vendors are from different MBOs.

[19] District level law enforcement officers.

under successive governments — as one participant complained: *"Every time the government changes, the motorcycle taxi drivers have to register to the district office again"* (FG 2). Motorcycle taxi drivers also visit the Department of Land and Transport yearly to renew their license plates, driving licenses, and accident insurance, and obtain vehicle inspections.

Street vendors at Pradit Torakan must likewise register themselves as vendors, in order to sell at designated areas during permitted hours. Previously, those who wanted to sell in the mornings during non-permitted hours paid *thesakit* a fee of 550 baht per month. Selling at the same location during permitted evening hours required official registration from the district office, including a medical certificate to confirm they had no contagious diseases. They paid 200 baht per year for an approval letter from the District Office. Due to the recent citywide order, however, street vendors are banned from selling on the main road. According to focus group participants, some have continued to sell in this space illegally, risking fines or confiscation. Others have rented space in the entrance to commercial buildings, some have been permitted to sell in the parking lot of the post office after-hours, and others are attempting to eek out a living in smaller alleys.

Registered street vendors can receive training related to food hygiene, attire, and food quality. "*Sometimes district office comes to advise us on cleanliness and environment. And sometimes they hold workshops on food hygiene. Sometimes they came to teach us how to wash our hands,*" said one vendor from Pradit Torakan (FG 11). However, unregistered vendors are permitted to join trainings only if there is extra space, as a vendor from Muubaan Nakila market explained, "*Normally the trainings are for those in the legal market. But because we are an invader — an illegal market — if the training is already full, they do not allow us to join*" (FG 10).

Home-based workers are able to register cooperative groups with the District Office. As noted above, registration allows groups to apply for funds from the Homeworkers' Fund, managed by the Department of Labour, as well as other types of producers' funds or programmes managed by the District.

Law Enforcement:

Due to their urban service provision roles, street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers have regular contact with law enforcement agencies. City police, district law enforcement officials (*thesakit*), the Department of Land and Transport, and, to a lesser extent, military officials all play a regulatory and inspection role. Police give tickets for traffic violations such as speeding, and *thesakit* regulate the use of sidewalks for parking motorcycles. Managing parking payments is the responsibility of *win* leaders. According to leaders, the *thesakit* come to collect weekly fees for parking on the footpath, and *win* leaders make payments to the District Office each month. In addition, the Department of Land Transport has recently started to come for monthly inspection of their *wins*, as have military personnel under the new government.

Among street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers, perceptions of these interactions fall into four broad categories:

1. Neutral: Motorcycle taxi drivers in FG 1 describe daily interactions with the police. They rarely have problems with the police, however, because they follow the traffic rules.

2. Negative, with perception of systemic causes: Vendors at Pradit Torakan describe being "chased away" by the *thesakit*, when vending in non-designated areas. But they acknowledge the local officers are not responsible for the policy itself. As one participant explained, "*We cannot blame the thesakit: they take their orders from the District Office. If he doesn't follow his orders, he will be blamed.*" Another participant elaborated: "*This policy was ordered throughout Bangkok. They cannot just permit our designated area to sell because other area will use this*

against and want to sell as well" (FG 11). Muubaan Nakila vendors have limited interaction with their District Office, in contrast, which they say "*only visits when there are problems,"* sending inspectors when they receive complaints about market cleanliness or disorder (FG 10).

3. Negative, with perception of personal benefit: Leaders of the Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers made frequent reference to the benefits extracted by police and military. As one leader asserted, *"there is only one land transport law for motorcycle taxi drivers — it is quite broad and there are many loopholes, so police and law enforcement can take advantage of motorcycle taxi drivers."* During a subsequent discussion on informal worker contributions to society, he joked: "*One thing that no one mentions is that we support the increasing income for police and district office"* (FG 3). Though drivers complain about these actors taking advantage of them, it is not clear from the drivers' descriptions exactly when and to whom fees are paid, which fees they consider to be legitimate, and which they consider to be bribes. Leaders in FG 3 do specify that military inspectors have not asked the drivers for any form of payment.

4. Collaborative: It is worth noting that in subsequent discussion on contributions, both street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers emphasized their roles supporting community safety, acting as "watch dogs," "security guards", or "eyes and ears." This includes reporting crimes to the police, or even in some cases catching and stopping burglars in the act. Leaders from the Muuban Nakila Service Cooperative have a particularly collaborative relationship with police, with several members serving as "police volunteers," responsible for reporting crime and providing safety trainings to community members. Service Cooperative members did not register any particular complaints about police and did not mention *thesakit* specifically.

Neither street vendors nor motorcycle taxi drivers raised any examples in which law enforcement officers had acted towards them in a supportive manner. A driver in FG 1 suggested that police could play a more supportive role by better regulating unregistered *wins* and drivers who compete with their *wins*. However, group members feel that "*drivers have no influence on officers and cannot take any action against them as officers may retaliate and penalize us"* (FG1).

Livelihood Support and Promotion:

Table 13: Sources of Livelihood Support Mentioned by Participants	
Trainings - Laws, Rights, Occupational Health and Safety	
HomeNet Thailand	Home-based workers, Domestic workers, Street vendors
Ministry of Labour	Domestic workers
Labour Protection and Welfare Department	Home-based workers
Trainings – Professional or Personal Skills	
HomeNet Thailand (HBW)	Home-based workers
Goodwill Foundation, Adult Education Department	Domestic workers
Japan International Labour Foundation (JILAF)	Domestic workers
District Office	Home-based workers, street vendors
Police	Home-based workers
Loans and Savings	
Homeworker Fund	Home-based workers
Community Savings Funds	Home-based workers, street vendors
Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers of Thailand Savings Fund	Motorcycle taxi drivers
Network of Domestic Workers Savings Fund	Domestic workers

Source: Data from 11 focus group reports, Bangkok (2017)

Table 13 shows the types of livelihood support resources discussed by workers. Home-based workers and domestic workers in particular described a variety of financial, skills trainings, and knowledge support resources, although access and awareness of these resources varied considerably, especially among home-based workers.

The support also varies between different agencies and areas. For instance, several sub-contracted home-based leaders complained about her local Employment Department, where one leader had been advised against taking a loan from the Homeworkers' Fund because of her Muslim faith and religious restrictions against interest. In contrast, other group members whose Employment Department is another Employement Office felt that the officers were very helpful and proactive, visiting at their homes to promote the fund. Home-based workers were generally underwhelmed with the support they received from District Offices. They mentioned that trainings from the District Office were rare (FG 4, FG 5), despite its mandate to provide these services.

Domestic workers did not mention any local government agencies, with the exception of the Adult Education Department, where some received trainings on English language and cooking skills. Members are proactive in seeking training from a variety of non-governmental sources, such as the Japanese International Labour Foundation (JILAF), Goodwill Foundation, and HomeNet.

Domestic workers and home-based workers referenced support received from HomeNet, particularly in relation to education on law and rights. Sub-contracted home-based workers spoke positively and jokingly of their frequent contact with HomeNet, which supports them through skills training, linkages to employers, training law and protection, social welfare, and social security. As one sub-contracted worker explained, "*before we had no idea what an informal worker is, what are the laws and policies, and workers groups*" (FG 5). One domestic worker leader mentioned that "*Before we knew about HomeNet, I never knew of any organization that was concerned with domestic workers. After joining, I learned a lot about the law and rights*" (FG 8). Home-based workers mentioned support from HomeNet to find employment or learn new skills, such as with computers.

The Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers was the only supportive organization mentioned by motorcycle taxi drivers. Members described interacting with the Association monthly or "frequently", regarding the organization's Savings Cooperative and joining social activities (FG 1), or experiencing problems with "influential persons" (FG 2). Street vendors at Pradit Torakan did not mention HomeNet, which is their MBO. They discussed however their community committee leader, who was a founding member of HomeNet and remains a worker leader.

Participation in Policy and Planning:

Participants did not raise many instances in which they had participated in local government planning or engaged in advocacy efforts aimed at improving working conditions. During the feedback workshop, one home-based worker leader acknowledged that, normally when meeting with District Office, they approach as community committee leaders rather than worker leaders.

Street vendors have attempted to negotiate with local authorities regarding their vending locations. Following the announcement of the order to remove street vendors from designated locations in October 2016, the Pradit Torakan community leader and several workers visited the District Office to negotiate a return to their original locations, a new market in a strategic location, or in absence of those agreements, compensation for their income loss. All of these demands were rejected. The District has offered an alternative market, but it requires a rental fee of 100 baht per day and is located 2 km from the previous location on a side street with less foot traffic than their previous location. Muubaan Nakila vendors described their frequent attempts

over a decade to negotiate with the National Housing Office to secure their own market location, with unsatisfactory results.

Mentions of engagement by home-based workers mostly centred on livelihood promotion. One sub-contracted worker in Chalongkrung District (who also served on his community committee) highlighted a series of policy dialogues in 2012 and 2013 with city transportation agencies to address the community's poor connectivity. Transportation has not improved since this time, but he nevertheless urged members to stay active in these types of engagements.

Across focus groups, there were no mentions of the elected District Councils, which have been dissolved under the military government. This stands in contrast to the 2013 focus groups with home-based workers where workers spoke positively about the councils for intervening on their behalf on issues like road repairs (Horn et al 2013). As noted above, motorcycle taxi driver leaders highlighted that, due to their housing registration status outside of Bangkok, they are unable to vote in city elections.

In contrast, leaders of home-based workers and domestic workers both mentioned national level engagement related to their role as workers. Domestic workers had received information and trainings from the Ministry of Labour and had participated in campaigns that resulted in the passage of the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Domestic Workers. Several home-based worker leaders served as worker representatives on the Homeworker Protection Committee under the Homeworker Protection Act.

MBO leaders representing domestic workers, street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, and home-based workers at meeting to provide feedback on initial research results, February 2017. Photo credit: S. O. Reed

Aurapin Savichit is a home-based worker in Bangkok, Thailand, and a member of HomeNet Thailand.
Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

Part 5: Contributions of Informal Workers

Members of Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand at International Domestic Workers Day celebration, June 2017. Photo credit: S. O. Reed

To conclude the focus groups, facilitators asked participants to write down on cards what they contribute to the "local" *(tong tin)*. Some groups struggled with this exercise, requiring time and encouragement to brainstorm. A home-based worker in FG 6 stated, *"we only sell clothes — we don't have any contributions to the community."* Similarly, a self-employed worker claimed: *"I want to contribute to society if I can, but I rarely have the chance"* (FG 4). Frustrated with the exercise, one self-employed worker peered at the cards of other participants for inspiration. Among motorcycle taxi drivers, a male driver noted, *"we never think about this kind of issue. We never think that we are good to the society"* (FG 2).

Workers also expressed a sense of stigma associated with their professions. A female driver asserted, *"the society in general looks down on motorcycle taxi drivers: they look us like the lowest class of society. They don't even know how much the vest costs"* (FG 2). A domestic worker mused *"Society sees us as very little"*(FG 9).

Worker leaders were generally more comfortable with the exercise, but with encouragement from the facilitator eventually all groups began to discuss their contributions. These are categorized in Table 14.

Table 14: Contributions to the City			
Contributions		**No. of mentions**	**Sectors**
Community	Community safety	17	MTD; HBW; SV
	Community health care/assistance when there are accidents	5	MTD; SV
	Publicize, propagate information to community	5	MTD; HBW; DW
	Attend and support community events/activities	26	MTD; HBW; DW; SV
	Community child and elderly care	6	HBW
	Generation of income and work to community	13	HBW; DW
	Volunteer work and general assistance to community	14	MTD; HBW; SV
	Collaboration community public services and infrastructure	6	HBW; DW
	Raise profile of community	2	HBW
Customers/Employers	Benefiting customers/employers	24	MTD; HBW; DW; SV
City	Traffic flow	3	MTD
	Taxes	2	MTD; HBW
	Building relationship between people in the city and people from rural areas	1	MTD
Economy	Activate economy	2	DW
	Sector organization/development	13	HBW; DW
Individual and Family Income	Contribute to the individual and family income	4	DW; SV
Political Participation and Rights Advocacy	Political participation and rights advocacy	4	HBW; DW
Environment	Environment	5	HBW; SV

The greatest number of responses relate to workers' **contributions to their local (residential) community.** It is notable that workers seem to keenly value their contributions as community members. This may also reflect the facilitators' use of the word "local" or "*tong tin*" in Thai, which generally refers to a community or village. Workers highlighted most strongly their **participation in community events** (26 mentions), as well as **volunteer work and general assistance** (14 mentions). *"I give many kinds of contributions to the community when asked, like giving money to the events or selling goods at fundraising events,"* (FG 6) said one sub-contracted worker.[20]

Across all focus groups, numerous examples of such monetary gifts underline the generosity of informal workers and their sense of commitment to community engagement. A leader of self-employed home-based workers described her support to an orphanage: *"I give money and sometimes snacks. During the holiday season, I bring them special gifts. All of this comes from me, from my own money"* (FG 7). Workers emphasized that these monetary contributions were possible due to their employment status and daily work, as stated by one domestic worker, *"I*

[20] It is worth noting that immediately after this focus group, participants stayed after the meeting in the community centre to pack gifts for Children's Day.

have income and I can use my money to contribute to my community building a temple or any kind of fundraising" (FG 8).

As migrants, domestic workers and motorcycle taxi drivers display a sense of responsibility for communities in their hometowns, outside of Bangkok. One domestic worker described donating money to a local school for student scholarships and helping students with their studies: *"because I work with foreign employers, I can speak good English, and I help children in my community finish their homework or to find the right word in English"* (FG 8). Another explained, *"Because I came to work in Bangkok, I have a broader mindset, so when I go back to my hometown, my family listens to me when I give advice"* (FG 8). A motorcycle taxi driver likewise mentioned the role of drivers in building relationships between people in Bangkok and provinces.

Community support is also a strategic concern for Muubaan Nakila vendors, who have sought to build trust and enhance the image of the market among residents. *"People inform me when there is going to be a community event, so that the market vendor can help — for instance, if they are going to clean the canal"* (FG 10). Vendors are proud of this relationship: *"Whenever we go to work in the community people think 'there are the vendors, they come to help the community.' Like this we are gradually building the reputation of the market in the community"* (FG 10).

Workers also placed emphasis on their role in promoting community safety (17 mentions). Motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors in particular highlighted the degree to which they act as "watchdogs." As one driver described, *"we act like the ear and eye of society. We give support to government: if we see something goes wrong, we report it"* (FG 2). Another driver elaborated on a mutually beneficial relationship between the *win* and community:

In the past, most of the community had relied on motorcycle taxi drivers because they help the community in many ways. For example, around security of the community. If the community leader comes to talk to the win *and asks for cooperation, they always give help. This is helping each other because people in the community uses the* win *and we also help them. If we have a good relationship between the community and the* win*, everything will be resolved more easily"* (MTD-leaders, FG 3).

Motorcycle drivers recounted a story in which they had apprehended a robber breaking into the home of one of their passengers. Vendor leaders at Muubaan Nakila, one of whom works as a police volunteer, told a similar story of apprehending or deterring thieves. Several home-based workers described keeping an eye on houses in the community or providing support and care to other community members, since they are home during the day. As one self-employed worker described, *"four of my neighbours have asked me to take care of their house. Sometimes when my neighbours' children come back from school and their parents have not arrived, I can help look after them"* (FG 4).

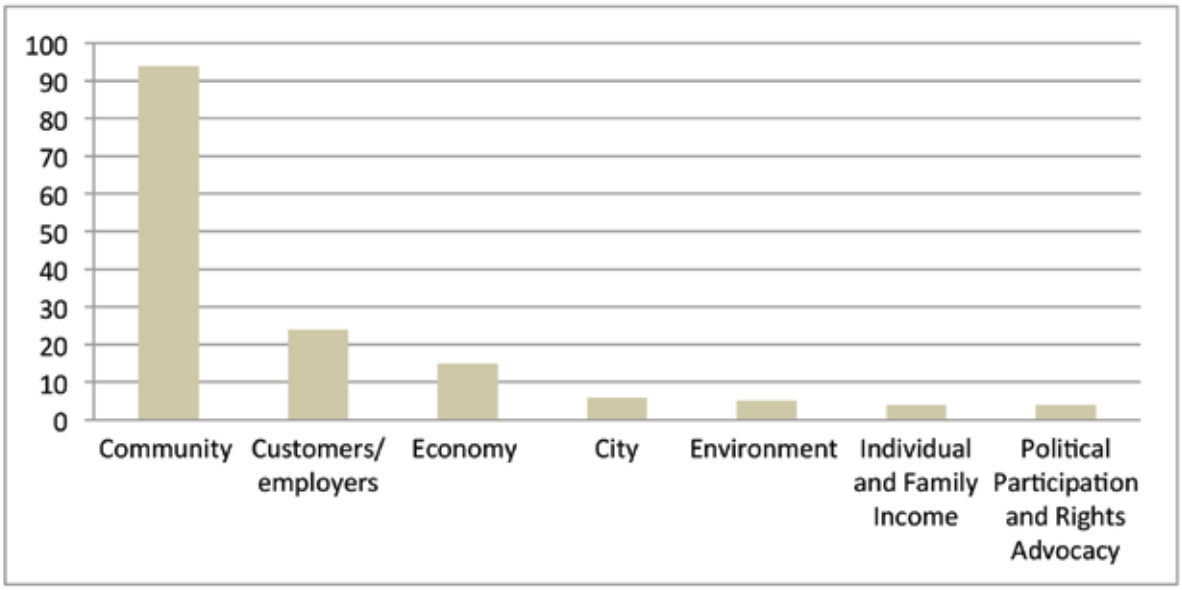
After community-focused contributions, the greatest number of contributions relate to the direct benefits that informal workers provide to their **customers or clients** (24). Domestic workers spoke with satisfaction of the support they provide to their bosses, to ensure they can focus on their work or families, keeping a harmonious household. As one worker explained, *"I help my women employers to maintain their jobs and help the national economy"* (FG 8). Street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers describe their convenient, safe, and cost-efficient service, as one vendor shared: *"I provide convenience for customers, because my food is ready to eat, and it saves them time. If the customers cook by themselves, one pot of food may cost them more than 100 baht"* (FG 11). Motorcycle taxi drivers mentioned delivering passengers to work on time, delivering students to school safely, and helping people who are new to Bangkok to navigate the city. Self-employed home-based workers spoke with pride about the quality of their products, which they were able to introduce to their communities. *"I produce handmade organic products, which also support good health of the user,"* said one worker (FG 4).

Workers alluded to their role in **stimulating the economy** (15), by participating both as consumers and sellers. One home-based worker explained, *"my income goes to buy goods in the community, so I help support the community economy"* (FG 7). Home-based workers in particular emphasized the support they provided to others within their sector: *"When I get a large order for products, I distribute among the neighbours"* (FG 4). One leader explained that *"after I provide training to my group members, their skills improve and they receive a better piece rate"* (FG 7). Another leader in the same group had secured two new sewing machines for her cooperative by applying for a grant with the District Office.

In a few cases, workers mentioned their contributions to their **household and family income** — as one domestic worker noted, *"before we didn't have a vacuum machine — now we have one. We didn't have a TV, but now we have one. We didn't have proper windows, but now we do"* (FG 9).

Motorcycle taxi drivers are the only workers who view their work as contributing to the functioning of **city systems**, mentioning their role in relieving traffic congestion and reducing the number of cars on the road. Both drivers and home-based workers mentioned paying taxes, including VAT for home-based workers. Several home-based workers who separate plastic recycling from waste also allude to their support for **environmental protection**. In some cases, workers shared how their contributions related to their **political participation** or MBO leadership: sharing information on labour and social security (home-based workers), proposing laws to government and advocacy,[21] and expanding the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand.

Figure 2: **Contributions by Informal Workers, by Category**



Source: Data from 11 Focus Groups, Bangkok (2017)

[21] This likely refers to the Network's involvement in advocating for the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Domestic Workers.

Leaders from Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers (from left) Chakrit Suksamran, Mariwan Changaroen, Wattanan Pimwan, and Chaya Intarsorn.
Photo credit: S.O. Reed

Part 6: Key Findings and Conclusions

This section summarizes key findings related to informal workers' livelihoods and primary markets, barriers to increasing their incomes and accessing desired markets and services, the role of informal workers with regard to formal institutions and actors, and workers' contributions to their city and society. Below, we consider the relevance of these findings for research on urban informal employment globally, and the implications for urban actors in Bangkok specifically.

Worker leaders discuss policy recommendations for local, city, and national government with representative from Lak Si District. Photo credit: S. O. Reed

Livelihoods and Markets

Findings confirm that many informal workers do not depend on income from just one job but rather string together multiple strategies to meet their needs. Across all sectors, workers frequently depend on multiple sources of income beyond their primary activities: Roughly half of all motorcycle taxi drivers and a third of home-based workers had additional jobs unrelated to their primary activities, including domestic work, home repair, babysitting, moving, seasonal agriculture, selling food, and working as an Über driver. About a third of home-based workers produce more than two types of products. Among domestic workers, most participants who worked full-time for one employer nevertheless used their day off to take work at other households. Several street vendors also had additional sources of income — and due to the recent restrictions on vending at Pradit Torakan, they are under pressure to find fallback options.

Workers depend to different degrees on "formal" markets (formal employees, businesses, government agencies, etc.) versus "informal" markets. Motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors have similar clientele, with a strong reliance on formal employees who use their services during the morning, lunchtime, and evening peak hours. An exception to this was motorcycle taxi drivers who work in suburban parts of Bangkok and who identify their primary market as self-employed workers. Sub-contracted home-based workers received orders mostly from formal

clients like private businesses or government agencies more likely to order in bulk. In contrast, self-employed producers in Thung Song Hong Housing Estate appear to primarily serve individual consumers in their network and within their community, who are more likely to be informal workers themselves.

With regard to livelihood barriers, motorcycle taxi drivers and home-based workers emphasized market pressures, street vendors emphasized city/government policy and practice, and domestic workers emphasized human capital. Key livelihood barriers affecting informal workers include the following:

– Market pressures: Self-employed home-based workers complained about having limited channels for selling or marketing their goods, whereas sub-contracted workers had a greater focus on inconsistent work and challenges in time management. Motorcycle taxi drivers remarked on the fluctuating demand for their services, especially during non-peak hours, and limited opportunities to fill the quiet hours by delivering parcels.

– City/government policy and practice: For street vendors, the recent shift in BMA policy to "return the footpath to pedestrians" has directly and dramatically reduced the income of vendors at Pradit Torakan. Vendors at Muubaan Nakila have managed to return to their market despite threats of eviction for many years, yet their precarious situation is a constant source of stress and prevents them from improving conditions in the market. Motorcycle taxi drivers likewise describe a legal framework that allows law enforcement and other agencies to "take advantage" of them, through various demands for payment. The current BMA campaign impacts drivers as well, by forcing them to negotiate for *win* parking spaces and often to pay higher fees. For domestic workers, poor transportation options, heavy traffic, and long commutes reduced their available working time and contribute to exhaustion.

– Human and material capital: The issue of skills arose most prominently for domestic workers, who required capacities like foreign language and cooking skills to procure desired clients in the short-term, as well as a different set of professional skills that would allow them to change careers in the longer-term. For home-based workers, a high level of skills and appropriate equipment is needed to reach desired markets, particularly for sub-contracted workers to gain steady employment from factories.

– Personal issues: Members of all sectors noted the ways in which aging had slowed their pace of work. Several described recent preoccupations to avoid occupational health hazards (driving slowly, taking breaks from sewing). Aging was a particular concern for domestic workers, who worried that new employers would prefer to hire younger workers. All mentions of care work — looking after elderly, children, husbands, or other family members — were voiced by women, with a number of home-based workers feeling unable to take on higher-paid work, upgrade their skills through training, or even take care of their health because of family commitments. Some occupational health challenges were also gendered in nature: female motorcycle taxi drivers have to find alternative professions during their pregnancy and suffer uncomfortable conditions after returning to work, without any kind of maternity leave.

– Macroeconomic drivers: Thailand's slow economy was perceived as a significant impediment to earnings. This was particularly evident for those workers with a greater dependence on "informal" markets, like motorcycle taxi drivers in suburban areas and self-employed home-based workers. Informal workers also face competition for markets from a variety of sources: unregistered motorcycle taxi drivers; cheaper or younger domestic workers; ready-made clothes and Chinese imports that compete with home-based workers' products; and new markets, new vendors, and "big capitalist" convenience stories like 7-Eleven and Tesco Lotus for street vendors.

Workers favour informal, individual-level strategies to address these barriers, although some group-based strategies are highlighted as well. When asked about responses to these barriers, the greatest number of proposed solutions across all sectors focused at an individual level — becoming a better, more skillful or reliable worker, developing products that are more relevant or appealing to their market, or adapting to a reduced income by economizing on living expenses. Some group-based strategies were also raised. For instance, home-based workers proposed a diverse range of community-based strategies centred on the cooperative structure or through government intervention. Responses from motorcycle taxi drivers revealed the extent to which the collective benefit derived from the *win* is already a central organizing principle. Only MBO leaders raised strategies involving government intervention (e.g. negotiation with authorities on vending locations, lobbying to shift government procurement processes) or collaboration with formal businesses (e.g. the GoBike application or trainings with factories).

Access to Services:

Operational challenges and negative perceptions of public health services are barriers to quality health care for informal workers. Many workers expressed skepticism regarding the quality of care provided under Thailand's universal health coverage scheme, despite numerous accounts from others of satisfactory experiences in the system. Shortcomings include long waits, various limitations in quality of service or care, a cumbersome referral process, and additional fees and expenses for medicines, operations, deposits, or gratuity to doctors (and in some limited cases, bribes), as well as operating hours and policies related to emergency care and vehicle accident insurance. Most of these barriers exacerbate workers' financial vulnerability by causing them to lose working hours or incur unexpected costs. The length of time needed to utilize UC leads many members to pay for services themselves, to avoid losing their daily income and suffering from anxiety attached to long waits and administrative procedures.

For some workers, lack of housing registration also limits civic participation and access to services. Among the focus group participants, motorcycle taxi drivers and domestic workers were less likely to own a home in Bangkok than home-based workers and street vendors. Without local housing registration, they were excluded from voting in elections and accessing certain types of social support from local government, such as community-based funds. Domestic workers who lived with their employers described difficulties registering for health services at local hospitals under the universal coverage system.

Many workers wish to improve their housing situation, but face obstacles to obtaining credit due to their status as informal workers. With the exception of "live-in" domestic workers, most workers who did not already own their home in Bangkok expressed a desire to do so. Workers who already owned their homes expressed a desire to renovate for flood mitigation, separating work space from living space, or improving the general quality of living. No workers mentioned a desire to move locations from one part of the city to another. However, workers who wished to own and those who wished to renovate struggled to access the necessary bank loans due to lack of assets, pay slips, guarantor, or other documents. Others expressed simply an unwillingness to take on new debt.

Engagement with Institutions and Actors

State institutions — particularly law enforcement agencies — heavily regulate and constrain but do little to support the livelihoods of motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors. Due to their presence in and use of public space, street vendors and motorcycle taxi drivers have regular engagement with law enforcement, with drivers in particular interacting on a weekly or daily basis with officials and inspectors from police, district, city, and even military. Some workers have a neutral perception of these interactions, but most described negative experiences that they attributed to either unjust city policy or lower-level corruption. The relationship can also take on

a collaborative character, with vendors and drivers supporting officers' mission to promote public safety. This support appears to be one-sided however, as neither street vendors nor motorcycle taxi drivers provided any examples in which officers had supported their livelihoods. Motorcycle taxi drivers felt that in particular, officers could do much more to control illegal *wins*. Despite approaching their District Offices and National Housing Office (in the case of Muubaan Nakila), vendors have received little support from local government in securing their vending locations.

Home-based workers and domestic workers are more isolated from external institutions. A variety of training and financial support mechanisms are available to home-based workers and domestic workers, but the quality of service varied, and accessing them relied on the personal initiative of individuals. For home-based workers, this includes a number of state-supported programmes, such as the Homeworkers' Fund, community committee, and District Office. Members are isolated from, and in some instances feel unsatisfied with, the support of these actors, however. Domestic workers were highly proactive in accessing trainings primarily from civil society organizations, but have no contact with local government agencies like their District Office.

In some sectors, there is a considerable discrepancy between leaders and members in terms of institutional engagement. Worker leaders show strong engagement with a variety of actors and institutions, highlighting their engagement with and understanding of the context in which they operate. This was particularly true in the case for leaders of self-employed home-based workers and street vendors. Their strong engagement stood in sharp contrast to non-leaders in their sectors, who struggled to identify organizations or actors with whom they interact.

Social Contributions of Informal Workers:

Despite their perceived low status, informal workers are deeply engaged in their cities and communities. Across sectors, workers expressed a sense of stigma attached to their professions (in the case of street vendors, domestic workers, and motorcycle taxi drivers), or struggled to articulate the value of their work (in the case of home-based workers). Nevertheless, workers highlighted an impressive range of social contributions to:

– **Their communities**, by providing financial or in-kind support to community events or individuals in need; enhancing community safety by acting as "eyes and ears" to combat crime; caring for children or elderly community members; and generating work and employment for other community members.
– **Their clients**, by serving affordable and nutritious meals to busy workers, providing reliable and safe transportation, reducing the time burden on busy employers and in particular allowing their female employers to retain their own jobs, or introducing their customers to higher quality, healthier products.
– **The economy**, through their individual spending, payment of VAT, helping find work opportunities for others within their sector.
– **Their households**, by contributing a steady income to meet daily and longer-term needs.
– **The city and environment**, by reducing congestion through speedy and efficient transportation for passengers during rush hours and through waste recycling.
– **National policy**, through political participation that supports workers' rights.

Box 6: **Key Issues, Vulnerabilities, and Opportunities, by Sector**

Home-based workers: Home-based workers are made vulnerable by their lack of market access and relative isolation. They cite negative macroeconomic forces such as cheap imports, ready-made products, and economic slowdown as contributing factors to reduced orders and income. Among all home-based worker focus groups, care work, skills, and equipment were raised as barriers. As most home-based workers already own their homes, workers prioritized health issues over housing issues. The distance and administrative procedures of UC represent significant barriers for workers in remote districts like Nong Chok to accessing care. This is due to the additional expense incurred and time wasted. Particularly among self-employed workers, there is a clear gap between leaders and workers in terms of marketing capacity and institutional engagement; whereas leaders take considerable initiative to organize markets, advocate for favourable policies for informal workers, and find new clientele, members generally remain passive. Enhancing communications and worker identity within this group, while prioritizing market-linking strategies, may help to strengthen MBO representation.

Domestic workers: The domestic workers in this sample were relatively empowered and mobile, having learned skills and made contacts earlier in their careers that allowed them to access their desired market: foreign households. Nevertheless, many were anxious to improve their skills in order to access new opportunities, should their employers leave the country or no longer need them, or for when they retired from the profession. Aging was a particular concern for these workers, who felt that they were becoming less agile and more tired from such physically demanding work, and at the same feared discrimination based on their age when seeking future employment. They rely heavily on recommendations from previous employers to find new work, and without this may struggle to find clients or worry about being fired on short notice. Discussions highlighted challenges faced by domestic workers in registering and using the UC system in Bangkok. Despite being highly proactive in attending trainings on professional skills, laws, and rights, these workers had no discernable interaction with local government. One avenue for further exploration is enhancing the capacity of District Offices to support domestic workers to access services and realize their rights under the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Workers.

Motorcycle Taxi Drivers: Motorcycle taxi drivers are distinguished by their heavy subjection to law enforcement, under a legal framework that (they argue) makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Although participants never raise the issue of occupational health and safety explicitly, frequent references to accidents — some fatal — underline the hazardous nature of this work. The lack of any occupational benefits or protection, moreover, was highlighted by a female worker, who described returning to work only fifteen days after giving birth, still bleeding from the delivery. However, many members of this group expressed strong skepticism for UC health care, and shared that they themselves rely on private services. Because many drivers do not own their homes in Bangkok, drivers feel a keen sense of burden due to their reliance on rentals and lack of city registration, yet prohibitive loan application requirements or existing financial burdens puts home ownership out of reach. With regard to income, the dependence on commuter demand limits what drivers can earn during off-peak hours. Increasing parcel delivery and the use of GoBike could help address this problem. Yet the situation may be different for drivers in suburban areas, who are already responding to economic downturn by adopting additional occupations.

Street vendors: It would be difficult to overstate the impact of recent urban policies on street vendors, especially those in Pradit Torakan who were removed from their previous vending location in October 2016. Their overwhelming sense of vulnerability is perhaps best summarized by one senior female worker: *"after the military order things took a sharp fall….It was like our income was cut, I feel shaky, I don't know what to do or where to go further"* (FG 11). In this study, no other barrier to livelihoods and markets was nearly so important as this one. The relative isolation of these vendors reflects the absence of city-wide or even localized vendor associations. Vendors at Muubaan Nakila, who have organized their market against eviction for nearly a decade, provide a potential model for organizing elsewhere. Vendors in both areas speak proudly and articulately about their services to the economy and to their clients, for whom they offer cheaply priced, safe meals. Quantifying this contribution in monetary terms could help demonstrate the essential services provided by vendors to businesses and city policymakers.

Discussion

Informal workers: Marginal and Indispensable

As with the 2013 IEMS, the finding above addresses a number of myths frequently attached to informal employment: for instance, that informal workers are a burden on public space and urban systems, or that the "formal economy" operates separately and independently from informal workers and enterprises. Findings highlight that to the contrary:

Informal workers play a critical role in making Bangkok a prosperous, livable, and safe city. It is striking to see the multiple, diverse ways in which informal workers contribute to the quality of life and economy for the city of Bangkok, both as workers and as active community members. Many of the contributions named by participants in our focus groups are affirmed by both classic and recent scholarly research on urban planning: for instance, the role of "eyes on street" in enhancing public safety and sense of community (Jacobs 1961), the dependence on motorcycle taxi drivers as feeders into mass transportation systems in Bangkok's poorly connected urban fabric (Ratanawaraha and Chalermpong 2015), and the role of street vendors in a functioning urban food system (Roever and Skinner 2016, Nirathron 2006).

Informal workers and the "formal economy" are interdependent: Chen (2012) describes four historical perspectives on the informal economy. While the Dualist school has long depicted informal enterprises and workers as operating distinctly and independently from the "formal economy," the Structuralist school views informal workers and enterprises as "subordinated economic units and workers that serve to reduce input and labor costs" (Chen 2012, 5) for the benefit of larger, formal firms. The structural role of homeworkers in the global supply chain is already well documented.

In contrast, the current discourse among Thai politicians reflects a Voluntarist approach particularly toward street vendors, who are described as greedy private businesses destroying public space. But this is misleading: it is clear that informal workers provide benefits to formal businesses and agencies and their employees. Focus groups illustrate the extent to which formal workers utilize the services of motorcycle taxi drivers and street vendors. Domestic workers themselves highlighted their structural contribution to the economy by allowing their bosses — particularly their female bosses — to devote their time and energy to their *formal* jobs. In this sense, it is clear that formal and informal do not simply operate alongside each other independently; rather, the formal economy depends on services provided by informal workers.

Their informal status, however, is a source of social, economic, and legal vulnerability. Workers themselves describe the stigma attached to their professions and experience various forms of neglect or insecurity, such as social stigma and invisibility, evictions, financial exploitation by local government or law enforcement agents, or denial of credit. The Thai government and BMA have clearly recognized the critical role of motorcycle taxi drivers, for instance, with new rules issued in 2014 allowing an unlimited supply of drivers to operate while nevertheless imposing fare caps. Meanwhile, their informal status excludes many workers from financial services that would support homeownership, which in turn prevents them from exercising full rights and entitlements as citizens of Bangkok. This was evident in the case of domestic workers and motorcycle taxi drivers. The suddenness and swiftness of the new vendor clearance policy indicates "the ever-shifting relationship between what is legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized" (Roy 2009). In these ways, informal workers' roles are characterized by "indispensability, marginality, and invisibility" (Sopranzetti 2013, 65, as described in his study of motorcycle taxi drivers), vulnerable to shifting interests and priorities of the state.

Organizing: Achievements, Challenges, the Road Ahead

Workers see benefits to organizing: Although participants were not asked specifically about

MBOs or representation, many did raise the importance of organizing or working collectively. Motorcycle taxi drivers in one group noted that organized drivers were less likely to experience harassment from law enforcement officials. Leaders from Muubaan Nakila shared their history of struggle to gain recognition as a market, to counter forced relocation, and to build a positive rapport with community members that mitigates social stigmas associated with their informality. For home-based workers, the cooperative structure and networks are important for obtaining new orders.

Nevertheless, they face a number of challenges to organizing that are distinct to informal workers: Bonner and Spooner (2011) and Kabeer et al (2013) describe a number of obstacles that frequently stymy organizing among informal workers. These include legal and regulatory frameworks that exclude union registration and collective bargaining by employees without a clear employer relationship; workplaces that are scattered or mobile; workers with multiple jobs, little time for organizing, or who perceive themselves to being direct competition with one another; lack of resources to pay membership dues; and lack of a worker identity that serves as the basis for "claims making."

Indeed, many of these issues were reflected in focus groups in Bangkok. The same group of motorcycle taxi drivers who emphasized the importance of organizing also described conflict among group members as the most significant barrier to their livelihoods — more important than either health or housing. Home-based workers complained that community leaders did not share information or consult with them, while leaders expressed frustration that members behaved so passively and did not make a strong effort to engage in group activities. While domestic worker leaders shared their satisfaction with HomeNet's support, they did not propose any responses to market barriers that could be undertaken at a group level. Street vendors in Pradit Torakan did approach their district office through their community committee; however, such local efforts have been unsuccessful in the face of a citywide campaign, and in the absence of a citywide network of vendors.

Worker identity is strongest among worker leaders, but the concept of community may be a stronger group identity in some sectors: As described by Kabeer et al (2013), the presence of a worker identity among informal workers is important for organizing, but often challenging to build. This is particularly the case among isolated women workers like home-based and domestic workers, for whom worker identity is frequently unfamiliar or uncomfortable, compared to other potential collective identities.

In Bangkok, a sense of worker identity was evident among leaders from all sectors, who described their participation in trainings and workshops, policy advocacy campaigns, or on worker committees. At the same time, for home-based workers and street vendors the identity of "community" appeared to be primary. Home-based workers made many mentions of their contributions to their communities and community-based strategies to market barriers. During the feedback workshop, one leader of a home-based worker cooperative described how they usually approach local government as community leaders, rather than as worker leaders. The leaders of Muubaan Nakila place substantial emphasis on building community recognition and identity as an organizing principle.

Identification as community members has a number of advantages in Thailand, where many social programmes provide support at this level and through the community structure. Community-based organizing is also strategic from an urban perspective; one community leader for instance described the need to mobilize as community to demand better transportation services, to improve their supply chain connectivity. For the Federation of Informal Workers, it will be important to leverage this identity and the doors it opens, particularly with local government, while also building a stronger worker identity, communication, and solidarity between MBOs and between workers and leaders.

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Market vendor Areerat Chullathip at Muubaan Nakila market. Photo credit: Paula Bronstein / Getty Images Reportage

Annex 1:

Participatory Research Methodology (Tools)

6 December 2016

Sampling Framework

Four Sectors:
- Domestic Workers
- Home-Based Workers
- Motorcycle Taxi Drivers
- Street Vendors

Ten Focus Groups, ~6 to 8 participants each:
- Domestic Workers: 1 leaders, 1 members
- Home-Based Workers: 1 leaders (self-employed), 1 members (self-employed), 1 leaders (sub-contracted), 1 members (sub-contracted)
- Motorcycle Taxi Drivers: 1 leaders, 1 members
- Street Vendors: 1 leaders, 1 members

THEME 1. SECTOR CHARACTERISTICS

General information on characteristics within the sector

Question 1.1. What type of work do you do as a (domestic worker/home-based worker/ motorcycle taxi driver/street vendor)?

Tool 1.1: Card Sorting of Livelihood Activities

Cards/ drawings of what focus group members do within the sector; grouping of cards

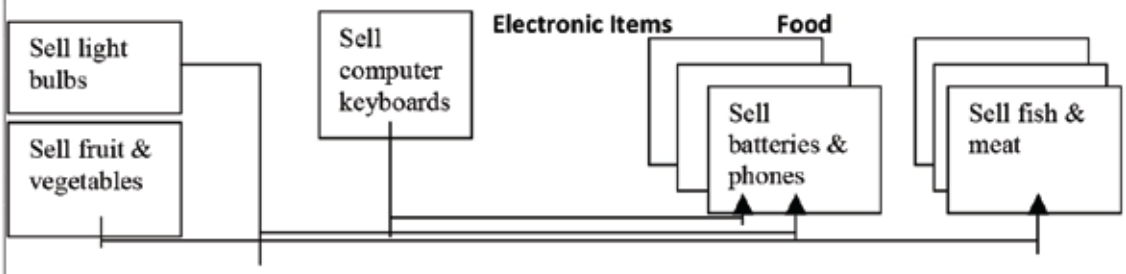

Figure 1: Example of a card-sorting icebreaker for the street vending sector

-- Entry point to all tools = work/occupation of FG participants
-- Ask FG participants to group them as they see fit (the facilitator should not do the grouping or tell the participants how to group them)

Question 1.2. Thinking of the activities you described in the cards, what do you think are the biggest barriers to increasing your earnings?

Tool 1.2: Card Sorting of Livelihood Barriers

Cards/ drawings of what focus group members see as livelihood barriers; grouping of cards

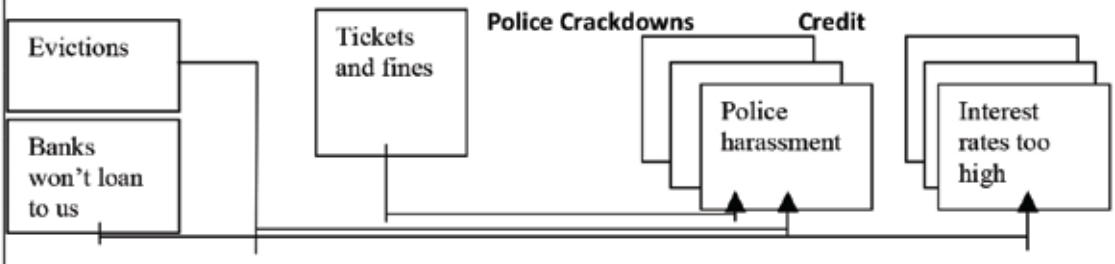

Figure 2. Example of card sorting of livelihood barriers for street vendors

THEME 2: ACCESS TO BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Barriers to accessing good quality health care and housing

Question 2.1. What are some of the barriers that prevent (domestic workers/home-based workers/motorcycle taxi drivers/street vendors) like you from accessing good quality health care?

Tool 2.1: Listing and Ranking

Good Quality Health Care

Barriers to Access	Ranking	Priority
Doctors visits too expensive	I II I I = 5	4
Clinics are too far away	III III II = 8	2
No time – cannot miss work	II III I = 6	3
Cannot get insurance card	III II III II I = 11	1

Figure 3. Example of listing and ranking of barriers to access for health care

-- Participants brainstorm list of barriers

-- Then each participant assigns one, two or three strokes for ranking the importance of three barriers – three strokes for most important barrier, two strokes for second most important, one stroke for third most important

-- Strokes are tallied to identify group-level result – 1 for most important (highest total strokes), 2 for second most important, 3 for third most important

Question 2.2a. In what part of Bangkok do you live?

Tool 2.2a: **Housing Map**

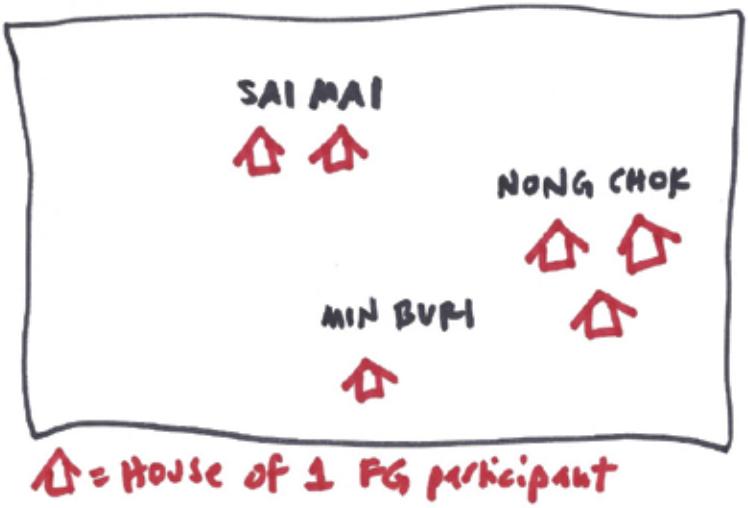

Figure 4. Example of Housing Map
-- In this example, three participants live in Nong Chok, two live in Sai Mai and one lives in Min Buri.

Question 2.2b. What is the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your housing (your housing situation)? [Facilitator – give examples]

Tool 2.2b: **Housing Map with Desired Improvements**

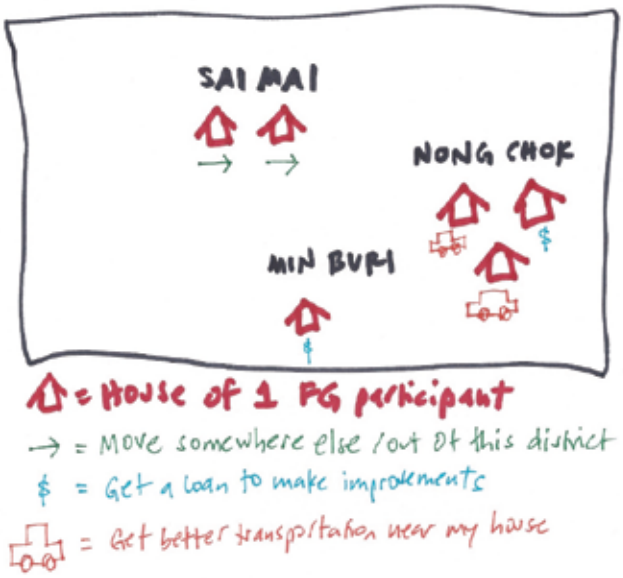

Figure 5. Example of Housing Map with Desired Improvements
-- In this example, the two living in Sai Mai say the best thing they could do would be to move to another district. Of the three in Nong Chok, one says the best thing would be to get a loan, and the other two say the best thing would be to get better transport to their neighborhood. And the one in Min Buri says the best thing would be to get a loan to make home improvements.

Question 2.2c. What is the single most significant barrier you face to make that improvement in the quality of your housing (your housing situation)? [Facilitator – give examples]

Tool 2.2c: **Housing Map with Barriers to Desired Improvements**

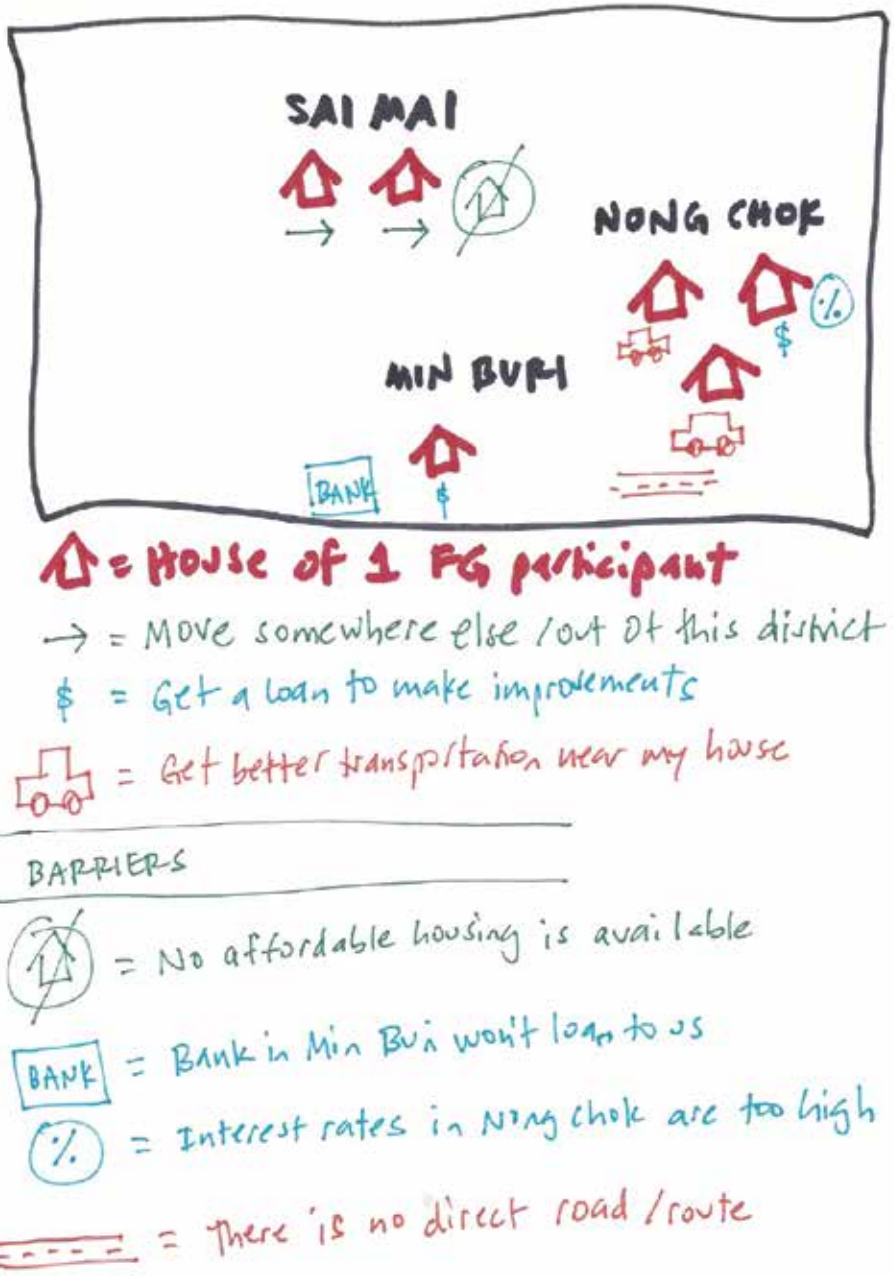

Figure 6. Example of Housing Map with Barriers to Desired Improvements

Question 2.3. Of these two areas – barriers to good quality health care and housing – which has the biggest impact on your work?

Tool 2.3: Ranking (since there are only two options, the simplest way to do this would be to assign one vote per person for the one that is most important)		
Services & Infrastructure	**Ranking**	**Priority**
Health Care	I I I I = 4 first place votes	1
Housing	I I = 2 first place votes	2
Figure 7. Example of ranking between health care and housing *--In this example, four participants thought health care is more important, and two participants thought housing was more important.*		

Question 2.4. Now thinking about the most important area (health care or housing), what are the causes and impacts of insufficient access to (health care/housing/child care – whichever was ranked #1)

Tool 2.4: Casual Flow Diagram

Figure 8. Causal flow diagram of barriers to access to childcare
-- Participants identify how barrier affects their work and how they respond or cope

THEME 3: ACCESS TO MARKETS

Question 3.1. What are the most important markets/customers/clients for (domestic workers/home-based workers/motorcycle taxi drivers/street vendors) like you?

Tool 3.1: **Market Map**

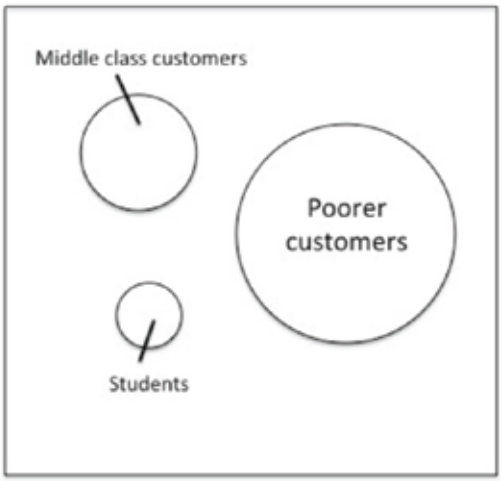

Figure 9. Market Map Showing Key Markets/Clients/Customers
-- Size of circle indicates how big participants think that market is

Question 3.2. What are the key barriers to accessing those markets/customers/clients, and what would you think is necessary for getting better access to those markets/customers/clients?

Tool 3.2: **Matrix of Market Interventions**

Street Vendors – Access to Customers/Clients

Market/Customer/Client	Key Barrier	Recommendation
Middle class customers	Lack of access to middle class neighborhoods	Negotiating permits with neighborhood council
Poorer customers	Keeping selling prices down -- supply prices too high	Collective purchasing
Students	Brand awareness – students biased toward name brands	Training in marketing / logo design / branding

Figure 10. Example of matrix showing barriers to market access and recommendations to overcome them

THEME 4: INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS & EXERCISING RIGHTS

Question 4.1. Which institutions and stakeholders – local government, national government, academic and civil society – does your MBO engage with? Do you engage with these actors occasionally, regularly, or all the time?

Tool 4.1: Institutional Matrix		
Street Vendors – Stakeholder / Institutional Engagement		
Type of Institution	**Name**	**Frequency**
Local Government	Municipal Dept of Economic Development	All the time
	Municipal Dept of Health	Occasionally
National Government	Ministry of Housing	All the time
Academic / Universities	Chulalongkorn University	Occasionally
Civil Society	Neighborhood associations	All the time
	NGO allies	Regularly

Figure 11. Example of institutional matrix showing stakeholder engagements

Annex 2:

Annex 2: List of Focus Groups				
Focus Group	Sector	Affiliation	Location	Date
1	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Members of Thailand Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Thai Volunteer Service Office, Huai Kwang District	9 December 2016
2	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Members of Thailand Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	On Nut 35, Suang Luang District	14 December 2016
3	Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Leaders of Thailand Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers	Office of Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers, Lad Prao District	15 December 2016
4	Self-Employed Home-Based Workers	Members of HomeNet Thailand Association	Tung Song Hong Housing Estate, Lak Si District	16 December 2016
5	Sub-Contracted Home-Based Workers	Members of HomeNet Thailand Association	Chalongkrung Housing Estate, Nong Chok District	11 January 2017
6	Sub-Contracted Home-based Workers	Leaders of HomeNet Thailand Association	Chalongkrung Housing Estate, Nong Chok District	12 January 2017
7	Self-Employed Home-Based Workers	Leaders of HomeNet Thailand Association	Pradit Torakan Community, Chatuchuk District	13 January 2017
8	Domestic Workers	Leaders of Network of Domestic Workers of Thailand	Wat Khachonsiri, On Nut 45, Suang Lung District	14 January 2017
9	Domestic Workers	Members of Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand	Wat Khachonsiri, On Nut 45, Suang Lung District	15 January 2017
10	Vendors	Leaders of Muubaan Nakilla Service Cooperative	Muubaan Nakila Service Cooperative, Saphan Sung District	18 January 2017
11	Vendors	Members of HomeNet Thailand Association	Pradit Torakan Community, Chatuchuk	19 January 2017

About WIEGO:

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce.

About HomeNet Thailand:

HomeNet Thailand was founded in 1999 as a non-governmental organization to support home-based workers across Thailand. In 2008, it became a membership-based organization (MBO) of informal workers and registered formally as an Association in 2013. Today, it has over 4,000 members, consisting primarily of home-based workers as well as street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, farmers, and day labourers. Technical and organizational support for the Association is provided by the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). FLEP also supports the Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand, which was founded in 2008.

About Bangkok Federation of Informal Workers:

The Bangkok Federation of Informal Workers is composed of HomeNet Thailand, The Network of Domestic Workers in Thailand, Muuban Nakila Service Cooperative, and the Association of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers of Thailand. It was established in 2016 to represent a collective voice for home-based workers, domestic workers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and street vendors in Bangkok.