

Research Project Title:

CURBING PRECARIOUS INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT: EMERGING MODALITIES OF REGULATION, WORKERS' PROTECTION AND WORKERS' REPRESENTATION

Proponent:

**Precarious/non-standard employment AARS 2014 research group
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Research objectives

This research project aims to:

1. Provide an overview of the characteristics, categories, employment relations and conditions, and trends of informal (non-standard) employment in the countries and sectors covered by the case studies;
2. Analyze how various types of regulatory frameworks contain the spread of informal (non-standard) employment;
3. Find out the labour and social needs of informal workers vis-à-vis gaps in existing labour and social legislation identified;
4. Through case studies, identify and analyze various initiatives either undertaken solely by trade unions or in partnership or collaboration with other workers' organizations in organizing and representing certain groups of informal (non-standard) workers, with particular focus on the following:
 - a. Modality or structure of organization or representation
 - b. Motivations and triggers of organizing
 - c. Organizing themes, strategies and tactics
 - d. Role of collective bargaining
 - e. Factors that facilitated and constrained organizing and representation
5. Identify strategies and measures taken or implemented by the trade unions and/or trade unions in partnership with other workers' organizations to accord protection to the informal workers they organized;

6. Assess, using a power resources framework that focuses on identifying how any one of the main forms of worker power (structural, associational, organizational, institutional, discursive or communicative, collaborative, strategic or logistical, political/electoral, and mobilization), which forms of worker power are most effective in seeking redress and pressuring for a transition to a more protective working and employment situation; and
7. Identify and highlight good laws and regulations and trade union/workers' organization strategies and measures that have successfully extended protection and representation to diverse groups of informal workers, on the one hand, and that have resulted in favorable outcomes in terms of containing the spread of or curbing precarious informal employment.

The research design and methodology

This proposed research project will largely utilize the in-depth qualitative case study method in analyzing the selected group of informal (non-standard) workers.

The units of analysis will cover the various types of work or workers in the informal economy. Chen (2007) illustrates in a triangle the five categories of workers in the informal sector or informal enterprises, namely: (1) informal employers (at the apex of the triangle); (2) informal employees (including domestic workers); (3) own-account operators; (4) casual wage workers; and (5) industrial outworkers/homeworkers (at the bottom or base of the triangle).¹ As far as this proposed study is concerned, informal employers and (unpaid) contributing family workers are excluded.

The second group of informal (non-standard) workers are those that hold informal jobs in formal enterprises. These are: fixed-term contract workers; casual workers; project-based workers; contract/piece rate workers; seasonal workers; on-call workers; apprentices/trainees; part-time work; and workers involved in triangular employment relations (i.e. outsourced or subcontracted workers, labour contracting; agency workers; dispatched or subleased (sublet) workers, etc.)

In this study, we identified four key variables that could potentially accord protection and representation to workers in the informal economy and at the same time contain the spread or curb the growth of precarious informal employment. These are the following:

1. Legal/regulatory framework

¹ Chen, MA (2007). 'Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment', DESA Working Paper No. 46, New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

2. Economic and social protection measures beyond the labour law (minimum or living wage policy, universal income floor, universal health care coverage, universal social security, etc.)
3. Representation and organization modalities or structures
4. Trade union/workers' organization strategies and measures
 - a. Role of collective bargaining (extending protection to informal workers)
 - b. Legislative or policy-related initiatives
 - c. Building networks and alliances
 - d. Others

The case studies will analyze how these variables could effectively contain the spread or growth of informal precarious employment.

The initiative that will be case studied will involve a successful and/or a good practice in (1) organizing, representing and according protection to a group of informal workers included in the list of informal workers above (except informal employers); and/or (2) curbing or arresting the spread of precarious informal employment.

In the recently concluded AARS in Hirschluch, Germany, 18 GLU alumni and their colleagues from the following countries have expressed interest to contribute a case study: Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, India, Israel, Lesotho, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Korea, United Kingdom, and the U.S.