

Gender

85% Informal workers poor in urban centres

— Research findings

By Joshua Bediako Koomson

A RESEARCH finding by the Women in Informal Employment Globalisation and Organisation (WIEGO) has found that majority of informal workers in urban centres including Accra live in poverty or near-poverty conditions.

The research indicates that majority of these workers, who constitute about 85 per cent of the working force in the urban centres, operate under precarious conditions, with limited income, social security and access to financial resources.

The study also emphasised that the rising cost of living exacerbate these challenges, pushing workers to allocate more than half of their household

income to food.

This financial strain, it said, had led to reduced food quality and consumption, directly affecting their health and overall well-being.

The study revealed how deeply the cost of living crisis affected vulnerable populations, shedding light on the urgent need for policy intervention to improve their living and working conditions.

The findings were revealed at a policy dialogue on use of public space and cost of living crisis which was organised by the WIEGO in Accra last Friday.

WIEGO is a global network dedicated to improving the working conditions of the working poor – especially women – in the informal economy.

The policy dialogue brought together participants from the informal sector, the various assemblies and other policy making bodies to identify solutions to bridge the poverty gap.

Informal workers

A Senior Research Fellow at the University of Cape Coast, Dr Owusu

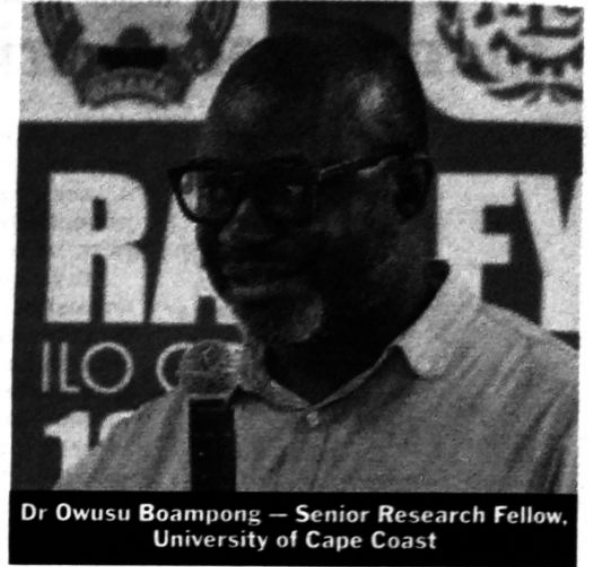
Boampong, who presented the findings, noted that informal workers played critical roles in supply chains.

For instance, he said, street vendors, market traders and kayayei provided affordable goods and services, forming the foundation of Accra's commercial life while waste pickers reduce greenhouse gas emissions through recycling waste that would otherwise remain on streets and landfills.

However, he said those workers, primarily women, had limited access to financial resources, social security and sustainable income, thus subjecting them to significant economic hardships.

The global living condition indicates that to be able to meet your basic needs in an urban area in Ghana, one should earn at least GH¢2,722 monthly.

Dr Boampong said comparing the figure to how much the informal workers earned, it was obvious that there was a



Dr Owusu Boampong – Senior Research Fellow, University of Cape Coast

large disparity.

“Currently, kayayeis are earning around GH¢500, food vendors are also earning GH¢1,200; waste pickers earn around GH¢1,300 and market traders earn around GH¢2,200. It means that none of the workers that we spoke to during the research was able to earn what has been determined as the standard monthly living wage and that means they are not able to meet their basic needs,” he said.

As a result of the situation, he said a lot of them were compelled to take loans from informal lenders which came with interest rate as high as 36 per cent.

Dr Boampong suggested that there should be a further stakeholder engagement to deliberate seriously on how to address some of the challenge and reduce the vulnerability of the informal sector workers.