

# CHAPTER 18

## DIGNIFYING OF SELF-WORKERS IN FIVE CONTINENTS

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Dreams of establishing the Street Workers' Association started 10 years ago. It is a very important indicator that the number of single-person enterprises in micro enterprises increase numerically. Most of these one-man initiatives were informal.

Various country or city surveys and emerging literature have already shown the global dimensions of self-workers. It is possible to be informed about the subject through the press releases of academic researchers, industry representatives and professional representatives from various countries like Africa and Asia, from virtual media pages where academic studies take place or from messages shared by various national street vendors' organisations on their pages, public announcements, conference texts and conference announcements.

In some countries, as in the example of the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) in India, street workers can become members of trade unions. Besides, we know that craftsmen and street vendors are organised in different countries as craftsmen chambers and craftsmen unions. Nevertheless, the organisation of this cluster, where the exact number of informal employment and working conditions cannot be known, remains an important problem, except for the workers who have the right to become members of official trade unions and the chambers where officially registered artisans are members.

### SIX BILLION OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IN WORKING AGE

According to International Labor Organisation data, there are around 3.5 billion registered and unregistered employees worldwide. According to world social security data, there are 1.6 billion people in formal employment as dependent or

independent workers; from this, it is seen that 1.7 billion people work informally. This means 3.3 billion employees in total. According to the unemployment data, the number of unemployed in the scope of narrow unemployment, namely the number of unemployed who are currently seeking jobs or registered in the unemployment offices, is around 200 million. But, 6 billion out of the world's population of 7.8 billion is in working age. When we count together 200 million people seeking for jobs with the working 3.3 billion, 3.5 billion people are included in the labor force. In this case, what do 2.5 billion people of working age do? These 2.5 billion people are not looking for jobs according to the unemployment records; neither they are working or looking for work, according to the employment agencies.

### **BETWEEN 1 AND 2 BILLION PEOPLE ARE WORKING AS SELF-WORKERS IN GLOBAL STREETS**

It is seen that millions of people are working in this field which is defined as street economy and street activities which do not enter into any statistics in the world. This number can be 1 billion or 2 billion. What is important is that these millions of people are an integral part of urban life. This cluster meets all the needs of citizens with low income in the most practical, simplest and cheapest cost. The market economy presents this cluster as a worldwide problem. The use of police forces against street vendors is on the agenda all over the world. These informal, unorganised groups working in the streets are being cleaned and thrown away from the city streets with the pressure of local organised trade's organisations. There are even talks of measures and struggles against street workers.

Today, poverty, hunger and unemployment are the three global problems to be solved. The existence of people living on the streets is not a problem; it is a solution that the system produces itself. Hundreds of millions of people seek to meet their needs under conditions of poverty. This quest also provides new job opportunities for the unemployed. As a result of the rapid urbanisation of the last hundred years, the city streets filled with the poor, also bring innovative and creative business opportunities. Street arts, graffiti and street performances are the best examples of this.

### **DEFINING THE LEGAL STATUS OF STREET WORKERS**

These indicators led us to the idea that all formal and informal activities and activities carried out on the city streets, regardless of location, could be handled around a common denominator. According to this view, all activities carried out in public places, such as streets, street corners, etc., regardless of a specific location, should be considered within the activities of the street economy. All the people in the streets playing violin, selling roses, painting, selling toys, selling bagels, all street artisans, artists, and so on can be addressed in the cluster.

Defining the legal status of street workers constitutes the legal basis of their organisations such as trade unions, associations, chambers and cooperatives. This definition of legal status and the possibility of legal organisation and social and health assurance of this cluster is our most important duty.

As these ideas are shared with trade union representatives, organisation and association representatives, academicians, researchers, journalists and media representatives from various countries of the world, they are enriched with different perspectives. In the past decade, the fact that we have received broad support from the mayors and experts from local governments and politicians, especially from the media, is an indication that we are on the right track.

Our propositions are taken in a transdisciplinary approach by academicians in philosophy, art, economy, design, finance, business etc. in Turkey, from north to south, east to west from dozens of universities; and studies and participations continue to increase. With developments in the past eight years in Turkey, both visual and written media approaches and perceptions towards street workers have changed rapidly. Tens of members of the media pay close attention to the issue and start to adopt it positively. In the past eight years, the subject has been handled in hundreds of media, virtual media, television channels and radio programmes; and it has also begun to receive intense interest from local and national government representatives.

### **FIRST NATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR SELF-WORKERS IN ANKARA**

The actual peak was realised in February 2019. In 15 February 2019, with the leadership and the participation of the CHP's leader, a national workshop was carried out in Ankara with the participation of artisans from all over the streets across Turkey.

The street economy declaration presented at the workshop was widely covered in the media and remained on the agenda for months after the workshop. The issue was put on the agenda by the party's president and representatives on a variety of platforms. Moving the subject to Ankara with these dimensions is an indicator of the accuracy of the timing and content of the issue.

With this sound rising from Turkey, the topic has begun to attract wide interest all over the world, from Ghana to India, from Malta to Lithuania, also with the speed impact of social media. These days the issue is handled in much wider and richer dimensions.

### **FIRST INTERNATIONAL STREET ECONOMY CONFERENCE HELD IN MALTA**

The First International Street Economy Conference held in Malta in October 2018 was carried out under the honorary presidency of Dr Justyne Caruana, the Honourable Minister for Gozo – Malta. The main objective of this conference was to contribute to the global unity of street workers. Today, we are gathered here to realise the launch meeting of this union, which was a dream that day.

## FOUNDING OF SELF-WORKERS GLOBAL

Speaking for NASVI at the Malta conference, Arbind Singh emphasised ‘the need to address the issue urgently and to establish a global union for street workers’. Self-Workers Global (SWG) has been established with the participation of representatives of street workers’ organisations from various countries who took action with the proposal of establishing the global union of street workers discussed in the Malta conference. As a result of seven months of intensive work, SWG has been established and announced to the world today.

As a result, the SWG plays the role of the visionary global organisation of street vendors, street artisans, street artists, whose numbers are not fully known worldwide. With this mission, there are tasks waiting for us immediately. We need to provide for the Global Street Workers:

- integration into urban life;
- accreditation and recognition at national level;
- have legal status;
- to be able to organise in appropriate forms of organisation;
- have health and social security opportunities; and
- individual or corporate membership of the Street Workers Global (SWG).

To the extent that this task can be accomplished, human rights and legitimate legal order on the streets of the world and the formal organisation of street tradesmen will be established. The exploitation of disadvantaged groups, migrants, women and children on the streets will be prevented. The living conditions of the street workers who meet the needs of the world’s poor in the most practical way, in all climatic conditions and completely precarious conditions, will improve. They will be secured and in return they become the guarantee for the poor. The quality of the services they provide to billions of citizens will increase. The health and hygiene conditions of the products offered on the street will be of a higher quality, and this will directly contribute to public health.