Webinar: Informal Work – Giving Voice to Workers Beyond the Formal Economy

Wednesday, 11 November 2026 at 14:00 UTC/GMT (90 minutes)
(local time in Colombia 9:00 COT = UTC-5 hours)

Hosted by Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia, in collaboration with the Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW)

Were you planning to attend or participate virtually in the *First International Conference on Informal Work - Health, Safety and Wellbeing*, which was postponed following the extensive damage caused by the recent earthquake in Colombia?

Have you considered the working conditions of the estimated 60% of the global workforce who work without a formal employment contract or outside the scope of established systems of worker protection?

As a preview of the Conference, now postponed to 2027 (dates to be confirmed), Universidad del Valle, together with the Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW)* and its member organisations, will host a 90-minute webinar on 11 November, 2026. The programme will feature selected topics from the planned Conference, together with a moderated round-table discussion involving invited speakers, representatives of participating organisations and an informal worker representative.

The webinar will introduce the local Conference team, the principal organisations supporting the Conference, and the broader theme of informal work. It will also explore how the Conference seeks to create space for the voices and experiences of workers who are often overlooked, underrepresented in policy and research, and viewed primarily as a problem to be addressed rather than as workers whose health, safety, dignity and rights deserve recognition and protection.

Registration is free and open to everyone interested in informal work, occupational health and safety, ergonomics, worker health, social protection and related fields.

The webinar will be in English and Spanish with a translation between the languages.

Register here: https://invessoft.app/responder/76

Registration will enable participants to attend the live webinar and interact with the speakers through the **Q&A facility**.

The webinar will also be **recorded and subsequently made available online**.

Panellists

Each panellist will speak for approximately 13 minutes.

Dr Acran Salmen-Navarro

President, Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW)

Dr Acran Salmen-Navarro is the President of the GCIW. He is an occupational medicine physician, ergonomist and researcher, born in Venezuela and currently affiliated to the New York University Grossman School of Medicine. Dr Salmen-Navarro has a focus on population health for vulnerable workers with a global health perspective. Dr Salmen-Navarro will introduce the GCIW, its purpose, and growing international network. He will discuss the scale and importance of informal work to the global economy and explain why informal workers need to be more fully recognised in occupational health and safety research, policy and professional practice.

Prof. Luis Fernando Rendón

Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia

Prof. Luis Fernando Rendón represents Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia, the host institution for the *First International Conference on Informal Work - Health, Safety and Wellbeing.* Based at the School of Public Health, he currently serves as Coordinator of the undergraduate programme. A physician and public health specialist with a Master's degree in Public Health and specialist training in Epidemiology, he has more than three decades of experience in health services, health administration and public health. Prof. Rendón brings an important public health and health systems perspective to the discussion of informal work, particularly the question of how health services and public health systems can respond to the needs of workers who may fall outside conventional systems of employment, social protection and occupational health provision.

Prof. Rendón will explain why Universidad del Valle offered to host the Conference, the University's commitment to addressing the health and working conditions of informal workers, and some of the work undertaken in Colombia to support and better understand informal workers and their working environments.

Ms Francia Elena Torres Solarte

District (Municipality) Public Health Secretariat, Cali, Colombia

Ms Francia Elena Torres Solarte is an occupational therapist with a Master’s degree in Occupational Health from Universidad del Valle and further studies as an Occupational Health Professional from Universidad del Quindío. As a university-trained professional she is Head of the Occupational Health Division at the Cali Mayor’s Office. She has 15 years of experience as a public servant coordinating strategies aimed at the wellbeing of the district’s working population through the implementation of healthy work environments.

Ms Torres Solarte will address the occupational health, safety and social challenges faced by informal workers in Colombia. She will provide a first-hand perspective on the realities of working with informal workers in Colombia.

Dr Christy Adeola Braham

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)

Dr Christy Adeola Braham serves as Workers' Health Coordinator at WIEGO, where she leads health research, advocacy and movement-building to support and strengthen the health work of grassroots worker organisations and their allies to advance occupational health, safety, and the right to health for all in the informal economy. She has represented WIEGO's global network in successful International Labour Conference negotiations for global standards on biological hazards in the working environment, 2024-2025 (ILO Convention 192 and Recommendation 209); contributed to the Wellcome Collection exhibition Hard Graft: Work, Health and Rights (2024, London, UK); and co-authored Global Health Watch 7 (2025). She is also a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University.

Dr Braham will provide a perspective on the work of WIEGO, an international network dedicated to improving the working conditions and livelihoods of the working poor, particularly women, in the informal economy. Her contribution will help place the Conference within the broader worker-led international movement to recognise informal workers' rights, voices and lived experiences.

Mr Mahinda Seneviratne

SafeWork NSW, Australia

Mahinda Seneviratne is a work health strategist with over 25 years' experience in regulatory enforcement. He is a Certified Occupational Hygienist (COH) and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists and has done extensive field work involving exposure monitoring and hazard control, and investigating workplace incidents and illness in different industries. Mahinda is a Board member of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) and develops strategic approaches to improve occupational health in small-scale enterprises and informal sectors. He conducted several multidisciplinary workshops in Asia and Africa to build capability in basic occupational health services among those engaging with vulnerable workers.

Discussion Panel

Moderator: Dr Maggie Graf, European Ergonomist and Occupational Hygienist, Immediate Past Secretary-General, International Ergonomics Association (IEA), Former Head of Occupational Health Research, Department of Labour, Switzerland.

Dr Maggie Graf will moderate a round-table discussion with the speakers to answer questions from the webinar participants and provide additional background to the Conference, its objectives and its international partnerships, while exploring why informal work requires greater attention and how researchers, practitioners, professional organisations and worker representatives can work together to improve working conditions and worker wellbeing.

Participants:

- Mr Mahinda Seneviratne
- Prof. Luis Fernando Rendón
- Ms Francia Elena Torres Solarte

***About the Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety, and Wellbeing**

The Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW) emerged from a long-standing collaboration between the **International Ergonomics Association (IEA), the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA)**.*

Since 2025, these organisations have worked together to strengthen recognition of the health, safety and wellbeing needs of informal workers and to promote greater collaboration among organisations working in this field.

*The **Global Coalition on Informal Work** was established as an umbrella organisation to help coordinate and expand these efforts. Since its establishment, other organisations with complementary aims and expertise have joined the Coalition, strengthening its international network and its capacity to advocate for better working conditions, health protection and social recognition for informal workers.*

***Global Coalition on Informal Workers' Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW):** gciw.org*

Postponed until 2027
(new dates to be confirmed)

