



International
Labour
Organization



ILO/Japan
Multi-bilateral
Programme

► Promoting Rights and Social Inclusion through Organization and Formalization (PRS) – Phase 2 Project

Advancing decent work and gender equality in the informal economy across South Asia

Members of the SEWA Kerala Skills Collective participate in a training session on assisting persons with reduced mobility. Photo by ©ILO

► The challenge

Nearly 58 per cent of the global workforce was informal in 2024, a figure that has risen over the past decade. In South Asia, the rate is 87 per cent, leaving millions of workers without adequate legal protection, social security, occupational safety and health (OSH), or income security. Women are disproportionately represented in informal work due to structural gender inequalities and sociocultural norms, among other factors.



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► The response

The Promoting Rights and Social Inclusion through Organization and Formalization (PRS) – Phase 2 project supports the transition from informality to formality in the construction, domestic work, and sanitation sectors in India, Nepal and Pakistan.

- Geographical focus: South Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan)
- Timeframe: 2023-2026
- Budget: US\$ 2.1 million
- Donor: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

► Strategic approach



**Strengthening
Policies**

Supporting governments to extend legal and social protection including OSH frameworks and ensure policies are rights-based, inclusive and gender-responsive.



**Strengthening
Institutions**

Building the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations to organize workers in informal economy, expand services and participate effectively in social dialogue and collective bargaining.



**Strengthening
Systems**

Improving service delivery to support formalization through access to skills development, social protection, enterprise support, and effective grievance mechanisms.

Programme partners: Labour ministries and departments, municipal authorities, workers' and employers' organizations, UN agencies, and civil society organizations at national and local levels across India, Nepal and Pakistan

► Key results (2023 – 2025)

The Project played a catalytic role in supporting reforms and policy developments, resulting in five legislative and policy measures adopted since 2023.

India 
(Bihar, Maharashtra, and Kerala)

Domestic workers' minimum wage increased by 16.4 per cent (INR 9,830 in October 2024 to INR 11,440 in April 2025) sanitation workers' wage increased by 36 per cent (INR 11,700 in April 2024 to INR 15,860 in October 2025). The first State sanitation workers' commission established; Provident Fund and Employees' State Insurance Corporation extended to 5,000 outsourced workers.

Nepal 
(Kathmandu Valley)

First-ever guidelines on decent work and formalization in the waste sector launched, including model employment contracts. Sector-wide code of conduct on violence and harassment endorsed by 62 waste management companies.

Pakistan 
(Sindh and Punjab)

Domestic workers' minimum wage set at PKR 40,000/month (~US\$143) in 2025. Social security contribution for domestic workers reduced to PKR 300/month (~US\$1) enabling self-registration with Provincial Employees' Social Security Institution.



Expanding social protection and representation

- 23,208 workers enrolled in contributory social protection schemes
- 20,576 workers benefited from social assistance schemes
- 21,407 workers from construction, domestic and sanitation joined unions
- 3 new unions for sanitation and plastic value chain workers and one federation for domestic workers formed in Pakistan.



Improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

India

Workplace safety improvements implemented at a major construction site in Patna, benefitted 5,000 workers.

Nepal

Gender-responsive OSH standard operating procedures developed and implemented; 80 per cent of participating companies introduced at least one gender-responsive workplace facility.

Pakistan

A major public waste management authority:

- Established an OSH committee
- Provided PPE to 5,000 workers



Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment

Five gender-responsive policy frameworks were adopted by employers' and workers' organizations

- By the Indian National Trade Union Congress on strengthening women's leadership and representation in trade unions
- By the Solid Waste Management Association of Nepal on advancing decent work standards and gender equality in the waste management sector
- By the Employers' Federation of Pakistan on supporting inclusive and gender-responsive workplace practices
- By the Employers' Federation of Pakistan on promoting fair treatment, dignity and protection for domestic workers



Building local and regional capacity

17,310 employers' & workers' representatives and labour inspectors trained in 2025.

Innovative capacity building

15 union leaders in Nepal equipped to develop participatory training toolkits for workers in the informal economy.



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