



## **OPENING SESSION**

**BY HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN & KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

## | BACKGROUND

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## | OBJECTIVES

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## Keynote

### Martha Alter Chen

*Associate, the Mittal South Asia Institute*

Harvard University  
United States of America

Martha (Marty) Chen is an Associate at the Mittal South Asia Institute at Harvard University, where she taught for 35 years, and Co-Founder, Emeritus International Coordinator and board member of the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). An experienced development practitioner and scholar, her areas of specialisation are employment, gender, and poverty, with a focus on the working poor in the informal economy.

Before joining Harvard in 1987, she had two decades of resident development experience working in Bangladesh (with the well-known NGO BRAC) and in India (as field representative of Oxfam America) with a focus, in both countries, on the economic empowerment of women from poor households. In 1987, Dr Chen co-founded WIEGO which she then led for 20 years. Under her leadership, WIEGO grew into a global network renowned for its work to improve the status of the working poor in the informal economy, through stronger organisations, improved statistics and research, and a more favourable policy environment.

Dr Chen received a PhD in South Asia Regional Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. She was awarded a high civilian award, the Padma Shri, by the Government of India in April 2011, and a Friends of Bangladesh Liberation War award by the Government of Bangladesh in December 2012.

Currently, Dr. Chen is the Chair of the Boards of BRAC Global and the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU WIDER).