



E-mail copy **StreetNet News No. 4 November 2004**

StreetNet News is the newsletter of StreetNet International, an international federation formed to promote and protect the rights of street vendors. Address: N228 Diakonia Centre, 20 St Andrews Street, Durban 4001 South Africa. e-mail stnet@iafrica.com visit the website: www.streetnet.org.za

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International Labour Conference: informal economy organisation meetings chart way ahead

Breaking new ground as the first organisation representing street vendors to be accredited by the International Organisation (ILO), StreetNet delegates attended the annual International Labour Conference in Geneva, between 1-7 June 2004.

StreetNet delegates, Pat Horn (Co-ordinator), Shin Hee-chul from the National Federation of Street Vendors of Korea (NFSVK) and Mishack Musondo of the Cross-Border Traders' Association (an affiliate of the Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations), participated in the committee on "International Labour Migration: Challenges and Responses".

The Committee on Migrant Workers started its work in the 1st June and completed it with the adoption of its report and "Conclusions on a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy" on the 16th June. StreetNet International used the opportunity that was given to NGOs to address the Migrant Workers Committee, to put on record that own account migrant workers, such as cross-border traders, should not be excluded. Mishack prepared a written submission for incorporation in the conclusions. The final conclusions are broad, and include irregular migrants and workers in the informal economy. StreetNet, hereby had the opportunity to train members of two affiliated organisations to understand how the ILO works and how political decision-making takes place at the ILC.

While in Geneva, StreetNet and members of the International Co-ordinating Committee (ICC) on organising workers in the informal economy: "Combining our efforts", took forward the decision made by the Ahmedabad Conference, December, 2003, to increase the discussion on and representation of informal economy workers at the ILC.

ICC members Renana Jhabvala and Manali Shah of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) India, Kofi Asamoah of the Ghana Trade Union Council (TUC) and Pat Horn of StreetNet participated in several important meetings with the ILO in Geneva. StreetNet delegates from Korea and Zambia, a representative of the Indonesian Migrants' Union, Jose del Valle of CROC Mexico and Dan Gallin and Chris Bonner of the WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Organizing and Globalizing) Organisation and Representation Programme worked with the ICC members.

A well-attended workshop was held by the ICC on the 7th of June and the following programmes were discussed for 2004 and 2005:

- an International Conference in December 2005 in Ghana;
- a series of regional workshops prior to this;
- collect and document information on organisations in the informal economy and creation of a data-base (WIEGO's Org. & Rep. Programme);
- collect and document information on labour laws and other laws affecting workers and organisations in the informal economy (WIEGO);
- exchange visits between unions or other worker organisations organising in the informal economy, to learn from each other;
- an education manual on organising workers in the informal economy to be developed and available for organisations.

Participants from Benin, Chad, Hong Kong, Liberia, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Zambia and OATUU (Organisation of African Trade Union Unity) exchanged experiences and stressed the importance of organising workers in the informal economy on a greater scale. There was general consensus on learning about new ways to organise in the informal economy and on working to make governments get rid of legal barriers to organising informal workers.

AFRICA – Kofi Asamoah spoke about the informal economy in Africa and the challenges faced by unions to organise workers in the informal economy and to protect the unprotected. The Ghana TUC has been organising workers in the informal economy since the early 1990s.

ASIA – Renana Jhabvala explained the extent of the informal economy in parts of Asia. In East Asia over 50% of workers are in the informal economy, and in India it is over 90%. In Nepal, GEFONT has been instrumental in ensuring that self-employed workers have rights to organise under labour law. In Bangladesh, homeworkers have been recognised as workers and their union registered. In Hong Kong, there are active domestic workers' unions. In Thailand, the Thai Workers' Solidarity Committee brings together nine union centres which are organising workers in the informal economy. In the Philippines,

many unions are organising in the informal economy.

LATIN AMERICA – Regional meetings have been held in Mexico to build solidarity and share experiences. CROC has created a federation specifically for informal workers, FNOTNA, with one million members. The General Secretary of FNOTNA announced a law protecting workers in the informal economy in the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon which could be used as a model for other unions to work with.

The ICC programme at the ILC included the following meetings:

JUAN SOMAVIA, Director-General of the ILO: Somovia is very supportive of the work of the ICC. He had attended the meeting on street vendors organized by NASVI and SEWA at the World Social Forum in Mumbai. He wants the ILO to be more involved in supporting organising work in the informal economy, and believes that co-operatives are important in this regard.

LEROY TROTMAN, Chairperson of the ILO Workers Group: Trotman was supportive of the ICC and its initiatives. He sees organising workers in the informal economy as important in assisting with poverty alleviation/eradication. He expressed an interest in work on the informal economy in the Caribbean region, and organising an orientation workshop on organising techniques and leadership strategies.

JIM BAKER, Head of ACTRAV (ILO Workers Bureau): He made the following points in his meeting with ICC members: ACTRAV is focusing on governance and democracy, law and social protection:

- ACTRAV works with national centres rather than individual unions;
- Representation should be through national tripartite structures where possible;
- New country studies are being carried out, and law will be on the agenda of the ILC, 2005.

ANNE TREBILCOCK and the ILO's Policy Integration Department: This department is charged with promoting inter-office follow-up (a very difficult task in the ILO) on Decent Work and the Informal Economy. ILO staff from different departments reported on the work they have been doing. ILO staff and the ICC will continue to consult on areas of work which could be pursued to mutual benefit - particularly any "best practices" identified by the ICC.

ASSANE DIOP, Deputy Director-General and Head of ILO Social Protection: He suggested that the ILO should support an African regional workshop on organising in the informal economy, to be jointly organised by the ILO and the ICC in Dakar, Senegal. The workshop, "Organising for decent work in the informal economy: the way out of poverty", will be held in the last week of March 2005. Prior research will be done by means of a questionnaire to be sent in advance to organisations in countries which will be considered for participation.

SEWA defends pedal and handcart vendors' rights in Ahmedabad

The Police Commissioner of Ahmedabad announced a notification banning slow vehicles from moving during specific times in the city in June. Manali Shah, SEWA vice-president, reports that as a result, 7 000 Hand Cart puller members and some 3 000 vendors were unable to earn a living between 8am and 8pm.

Shah says: "We were trying to negotiate with the Police Commissioner, but even after 12 days of continued efforts, the commissioner did not change his decision. We held a rally which more than 4000 members attended and we also demonstrated in front of the Police Commissioner's office. Although he assured us that he will make relevant changes in the notification he did not make any changes which would enable our members to work."

As a result, SEWA then had to do a road map survey, to count the number of slow vehicles at different hours of the day. They brought to the attention of the Commissioner the number of slow vehicles and the people whose livelihood is affected by the ban on slow-moving vehicles. Shah met the Police Commissioner and the Labour Secretary to discuss the alternatives to the ban on slow traffic on 14th August.

Shah reports that, "The meeting went very well. The Principal Secretary of the Labour Department, along with the Police Commissioner and myself, were present. Both the officers are very positive about the whole issue." The Police Commissioner informed SEWA that a petition had been filed in the High Court regarding the slow vehicles and the nuisance they allegedly caused. As a result, the Police Commissioner said he had seen that it was necessary to take the step of controlling slow traffic during certain times.

Shah continues, "It was agreed that we need to review the alternatives to this decision." SEWA has asked for the help of the Professors and Students of the School of Architecture and Planning, Ahmedabad, to devise a solution that will enable vendors to continue to earn a living at the same time as alleviating the traffic congestion problem. (Source: Message to Marty Chen, WIEGO [Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organising] from Nidhi Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Research Academy, India, July 10th 2004: Manali Shah, message 5th and 14th August, 2004).

Building alliances in Latin America

Pat Horn, StreetNet Co-ordinator

As StreetNet Co-ordinator, I spent July and August in Latin America developing contacts and building StreetNet's organisational base with street vendor and informal economy organisations.

During the two months, StreetNet held a regional workshop and contacts were built and renewed with organisations during country visits to Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela and Brasil. StreetNet was based in Lima, Peru and ISCOD, the development project of the Spanish trade union centre, UGT, generously provided me with office space and internet facilities.

StreetNet's regional workshop, held between 24-26th of August in Lima, was organised by PLADES. The purpose of the workshop was to find out about organising initiatives in the informal economy of the region, to discuss and debate different ongoing strategies and ways of co-ordinating work in the Latin American region. Participants from over 20 trade unions and organisations working in the informal economy, attended from the following countries:

- **Andean Region:** Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela;
- **Central American Region:** Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua
- **Southern Cone (Mercosur):** Brazil, Uruguay

PERU

I visited district federations and organisations in different districts of Lima which are a part of StreetNet's affiliate, FEDEVAL, and also met members of the women vendors' network, Red de Mujeres, which is very active. On 11th August a one-day negotiations workshop was held for leaders of FEDEVAL. Leaders of other informal economy organisations were also invited and attended.

Meetings were held with three trade union centres, CUT, CATP and CGTP. The CGTP is the most prominent trade union centre in Peru, and has recently formed a union called Federacion Unica de Trabajadores Ambulantes. The CUT has three unions of own-account workers affiliated to it: FEDEVAL, FETTRAMAP, a national union of market porters, and FEDAMPI, an organisation of micro-entrepreneurs. CUT's strategy is to organise the three sectors of own-account work, and to create a national alliance in the street vendors' sector.

ECUADOR

I attended the Social Forum of the Americas in Quito, and resumed contact with the organisation Asociacion Mujeres Tahuantinsuyo. The trade union movement consists of five different trade union centres and one has a vendors' organisation, Federacion de Trabajadores Autonomos de Quito. There are two other major vendors' organisations in Quito – Frente de Defensa and Paz y Justicia.

BOLIVIA

Carlos Camargo of LABOR, an IFWEA (International Federation of Workers Education Associations) affiliate, is willing to assist us with co-ordination between different street vendors' organisations in co-operation with PLADES. This is possible in terms of our regional working agreement with IFWEA, ORIT-ICFTU (International Confederation of Trade Unions, Americas region) and WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing).

I also met the local co-ordinator of the ILO's Programa Regional de Empleo Sostenible (PRES) who reported that in the first phase of the programme, it has assisted the municipality of La Paz in a process of social dialogue with street vendors' organisations. In the second phase, the ILO will organise a seminar between the municipality and the organisations. However, they may have to wait until after the La Paz municipal elections which are due to take place in December 2004, to avoid problems of continuity.

COLOMBIA

I travelled to Colombia and Venezuela with Guillermo Perez of ORIT-ICFTU. In Bogota, Colombia, we met with the three trade union centers, CUT, CTC and CGTD, and independent street vendors' organisations. All the centres have street vendors organisations affiliated to them and all participate in negotiations with the municipality of Bogota. They agreed to participate in the formation of a united structure such as a city alliance and/or a national alliance.

In Medellin, the Andean regional co-ordinator of PSI (Public Services International), Juan Diego Gomez, has been working with a group of fast food vendors who are forming a co-operative, COOMIRAPID (see report in this issue). The local PSI affiliate, ADEM (Asociacion de Empleados Oficiales del Municipio de Medellin) is ready to work with street vendors' organisations and assist them to negotiate with the municipality.

VENEZUELA

We were in Venezuela on the day after a historic national referendum about whether President Hugo Chavez should continue as President. The General Director of ORIT-ICFTU Programmes and the representative responsible for the informal economy from CTV, one of the country's trade union centres, met with us. We learnt that CTV and ORIT-ICFTU have been working to build and restructure FUTRAND, a union of autonomous workers affiliated to CTV. We met with FUTRAND and discussed affiliation to StreetNet.

Maritza Chirenos, the Regional Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean structure of the World Council of Labour, CLAT, also met with us.

BRAZIL

In Sao Paulo there are 770 associations of street vendors, mostly run by mafia-like leadership. Since the Workers Party (PT) won the national elections and Lula da Silva became President two years ago, a new approach about organising workers in the informal economy has developed under the banner of the national trade union centre, CUT. In Sao Paulo, CUT has organised a union called SINTEIN (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores na Economia Informal). Although there is a progressive local government in Sao Paulo under the popular mayor Marta Suplicy, there are many differences of

opinion between them and the union about the regulation of street vending.

REGIONAL

Victor Baez, regional secretary of ORIT-ICFTU, met with StreetNet in Quito. He is interested in developing a strategic approach on the informal economy to give more substance to the working agreement between StreetNet and ORIT-ICFTU – with particular interest in the theme of negotiations training. The relationship between StreetNet and ORIT-ICFTU needs to be developed further. However, discussions conducted during this visit with Victor Baez and members of his office in Caracas have taken us further than before.

The relationship between StreetNet and PSI in the region was also strengthened. Jocelio Drummond (PSI Co-ordinator Sao Paulo, Brazil) set up meetings for the day I passed through Sao Paulo on the way back to South Africa. We discussed the possibility of organising a joint event with PSI at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre in January 2005. SINTEIN in Brazil is enthusiastic about participating in the WSF and hosting a visit by StreetNet to work with them for a couple of weeks.

The work in Latin America deepened our knowledge of the organisation of street vendors and other workers in the informal sector in the Latin American region. We now know about more organisations in the informal economy and about trade union dynamics in the region – and strengthened our working relationships in the trade union movement.

In two countries, Colombia and Uruguay, we have laid the basis for a continuing relationship with organisations who are willing to work towards forming national alliances. In five other countries, Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela, we have identified national organisations which we have invited to affiliate to StreetNet.

COOMIRAPID “for an organised informal economy”

By Ana Maria Agudelo Escobar, COOMIRAPID

Colombia is a country in which socio-economic conditions do not offer a guarantee of decent employment for most of its people. According to statistics from the National Administrative Department for Statistics (DANE), of the approximately 20 million people who are economically active, 61.7% are part of the informal economy and 14% are unemployed.

For example, in the city of Medellin, there is no information available on the current socio-economic condition of the population who earn a living in the informal economy. The last census was carried out by the municipality, as part of the "Security and Coexistence Social Program for the Recovery of Public Space". This ended with the relocation of informal markets. After eight years, there are new problems with infrastructure, organisation and contamination, and furthermore, the space which was vacated has been taken by other informal vendors.

There is a very high rate of unemployment, few work opportunities and a group of honest and hard working people who need to sustain their families. Informal traders sell cigarettes and sweets on buses, pirate copies of music and books, clothes, electrical appliances and other items. The most common is the sale of fast food.

A conflict arises in connection with the informal economy: On the one hand, the municipal authorities must look after the maintenance and good use of public space, and on the other hand, there are the informal vendors who resolve their economic situation by working as street vendors in the public spaces and streets. There is a lack of public analysis of the difficult situation that families who earn a living in the informal economy face. There are no proposals or solutions to replace the policy of confiscating vendors' working tools and goods.

COOMIRAPID, a fast food cooperative, is being formed in this context in Medellin. The members will

provide a service by selling food that is affordable and of the sort that is popular. The co-operative aims to provide an answer to the need for organisation and a socio-economic alternative to improve the vendors' life. The objectives of the organisation are to provide a means of improving vendors' stalls, consultancy to obtain credit, support in obtaining permits to operate, social security for members, marketing and recreation according to the needs of the members.

One of COOMIRAPID's objectives is to act as an intermediary to facilitate dialogue with the local authorities to achieve solutions that are beneficial to both the authorities and street vendors. COOMIRAPID informal vendors are determined to look for joint solutions with the authorities, for the development of the city, and to reach an agreement on recognition of the informal economy as a valid means to solve the problem of unemployment.

COOMIRAPID as a cooperative also aims to develop and build informal economy trade unionism. If the organisation of the informal economy can be achieved by unionism, and some agreement reached, the street vendors, the local authorities and all the citizens will benefit.

Formal and informal economy alliances: working with Global Union Federations (GUFs)

By Pat Horn

StreetNet International is co-operating closely with the following two GUFs whose affiliated unions are organising in sectors linked to street vendors:

- **PSI** (Public Service International) which includes municipal workers' unions;
- **UNI** (Union Network International) which includes commercial workers' unions.

Through our joint work we are building closer links and alliances between formal workers and informal workers. Practical work on the ground seems to be the best way of building up solid alliances between workers in the informal economy and workers in the formal economy.

PSI

In September 2003, StreetNet and PSI held a joint women's workshop with participants from women in the informal economy and PSI affiliated in six African countries. At this workshop, women street vendors shared experiences with women municipal workers. They discovered that they had many common problems, and realised that they could work together in facing municipalities, rather than continue to be divided by municipal workers blindly following their employers' policy on street vending – often by means of instructions to remove street vendors from the streets.

Following this workshop, the Zambian municipal workers' union, ZULAWU, and the Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) have started to work more closely together. They are preparing for a joint workshop where they will jointly prepare demands for negotiation with the municipalities of Lusaka and Kitwe on how to deliver quality public services by means of a participatory budget in which both organisations will be stakeholders.

In July and August 2004, the International Co-ordinator of StreetNet, Pat Horn, met PSI co-ordinators of the Americas, the Andean American countries, of Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Ecuador, and discussed ways of working together in Latin America (see the story on Latin America in this issue).

In South Africa, StreetNet is working in close co-operation with SAMWU (South African Municipal Workers' Union – affiliated to PSI) on the task of establishing a national alliance of street vendors in South Africa (see the story in this issue).

UNI

Even before the launch of StreetNet International, during the preparatory phase from 2000 to 2002, we started discussions with UNI about how to work together once StreetNet was established. UNI has many affiliates in the commercial sector, and recognised that their own affiliates had not made sufficient progress organising commercial workers in the informal economy.

Then StreetNet's South African affiliate SEWU (Self-Employed Women's Union) started to co-operate with UNI's Lesotho affiliate NULAW (National Union of Retail and Allied Workers) to support the capacity of a national street vendors' organisation, Khathang Tema Baitso'okoli, in Lesotho. SEWU was invited to visit the two organisations in Lesotho, and StreetNet supported this visit. SEWU and NULAW submitted useful recommendations for further capacity-building activities, which will be jointly supported by StreetNet and UNI.

The International Co-ordinator of StreetNet (Pat Horn) and Senior Programme Officer of UNI (Zakari Koudougou), will be undertaking a joint fact-finding mission to eight countries in Francophone West Africa in October 2004, to gain a better idea of the organisations in these countries, which are organising workers in the informal economy in their work sectors. The findings of this mission will inform the joint work programme of StreetNet and UNI for the next three years.

Zambian street vendors fight government harassment

AZIEA, the national Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations, issued a call to the Zambian government to respect and recognise civil society organisations following a threat by government to deregister one of the organisation's strongest affiliates, ZANAMA.

Lameck Kashiwa, General Secretary of AZIEA, told StreetNet that the attack on street trader organisation followed the unilateral decision in June by of the municipalities on the copperbelt, Luanshya, to increase market levies by 150%. ZANAMA responded by calling all members not to pay the increase until they were able to discuss the increase with the local authority. Subsequently, the media reported that local councils were calling for the deregistration of ZANAMA in submissions to the parliamentary sub-committee of local government.

In response, public meetings were held in the five districts where AZIEA is established to protest against government attitude to civil society organisations. AZIEA also issued a press statement requesting the parliamentary committee to clarify the local government submission, because it ran counter to the spirit of negotiation and consultation. AZIEA has repeatedly denounced the continuous harassment of street vendors and urged the government to act on the Market Task Force recommendations which are awaiting implementation. Kashiwa says government ministers of local government and housing, as well as local government officials and police departments, were invited to attend public meetings to put across their views in the spirit of open dialogue.

The Market Task Force, comprising a wide group of stakeholders, was formed last year following the demand by AZIEA that the government intervene to resolve the problem of arbitrary local government increases in market levies and replace outdated colonial market regulation.

Meeting with President

A very successful meeting was held between AZIEA and the State President, His Excellency Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, on August 28th 2004. Kashiwa reports that at the meeting, the problems faced by marketeers in particular and informal economy workers in general, were raised. At the meeting, AZIEA expressed disappointment that the government had not acted on the Market Act recommendations for over a year now. It re-iterated the issues raised before the Task Force. These included harassment by state and council police, the problem of non-provision of services in trading places, non-consultation with informal economy workers on issues that affected them, outdated regulations and the need for institutionalised forums of dialogue. President Mwanawasa was not aware

that the recommendations were ready, and agreed to deal with the issues raised by AZIEA.

Whether AZIEA's attempt to find a resolution to its member's problems is successful will become clearer after a presidential rally which is being held in Kitwe in October. The president will address the problems that AZIEA has raised at the meeting.

(Source: Compiled from e-mail messages between AZIEA and StreetNet 6th June, 24th June, July 14th 2004, 2nd September 2004. Position paper prepared by Zanama executive for meeting with Zambian President, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa SC, 24th August 2004).

South African vendors meet for unity talks

South African street vendors' organisations gathered in Johannesburg on 11th and 12 of September to discuss the formation of a national alliance. The meeting followed an agreement made by the organisations present at a national meeting held on 18th November 2003 to work towards unity. StreetNet was asked to lead the process, assisted by a small working group. The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) national president, Petrus Mashishi, chaired and facilitated the proceedings.

The process of building a national alliance could create a means for street vendors to negotiate with one voice with municipalities about urban policies and the regulation of street vending. A national alliance could provide the capacity for street vendors to negotiate at the level of national government about national policies on informal work issues.

The unity meeting was attended by the African Council of Hawkers and Informal Business (ACHIB), Eastern Cape Alliance of Street Vendors, Gauteng Hawkers' Association, Informal Business Forum, Informal Trade Management Board (ITMB) Durban, Isolabantu (Gauteng), Johannesburg Hawkers' Association (JHA), Midrand Hawkers' Association (MHA), SA Rail Hawkers' Association (SARHA), Traders' Crisis Committee (TCC) Johannesburg.

The meeting reached consensus on several points on issues of leadership. These included:

- As women form the majority of street traders there should be a quota of 60% women in the leadership.
- Leaders should be street vendors or hawkers themselves, or organisers employed by street vendors to organise street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers; A majority, at least 80% should be vendors themselves.
- Membership of the alliance of foreign traders who are legally in the country will be further discussed. In the meantime the provisions of the South African constitution will be adhered to.
- Foreign traders who are legally in the country will be able to be part of the alliance.
- The alliance should seek to be as inclusive as possible and be open to all organisations of street vendors, not only the organisations who have joined the process.

A draft Code of Conduct was agreed upon and has been taken by all organisations present back to their members for discussion. A number of areas still need to be discussed, including the criteria for organisational affiliation, how to remain focussed on the poorest street vendors, market vendors and hawkers and policy on foreign vendors working in South Africa, and the question of regional balance and representation.

An interim structure was formed with one representative from each province, co-ordinated by the Gauteng representative, Livingstone Mantanga. The interim committee has been mandated to recruit other organisations of street vendors and hawkers to join the process and to convene the next meeting. A constitution will be drafted for the new alliance and circulated for discussion among organisations of street vendors.

Groups at the meeting expressed support for the struggles and demonstrations around the country, including a protest in Johannesburg held recently, in defence of their rights as economic actors contributing to the economy of their cities, struggles for recognition and support, and against corruption, harassment and victimisation.

Nicaragua: organisational advance and development of own account workers

By the National Workers Front (FNT)

Since the 2nd May 2002, after the celebration activities for May Day, International Workers' Day, the National Workers Front (FNT) identified the work of organising the independent workers' sector (informal sector) as a priority. The self-employed are at robots, bus stops and markets, trading. They are money changers, lottery, cellphone vendors, ice cream vendors, car washers, interurban transport conductors, cobblers, motor-cycle taxi and tricycle operators.

Organisational strategy

To achieve this priority set by the FNT, an organisational strategy was defined, based on two components. The first one centred on the promotion, organisation, training, legalisation and institutionalisation of trade unions while the second focussed on the struggle for the stabilisation of jobs in the work place, improvement of sanitation, eradication of child labour, reversal of social disintegration and institutional recognition from the central government, local government, government institutions and society in general.

Strategy support pillars

The organisational strategy is supported by four principal pillars, namely: the fight against poverty, the improvement of self-esteem, gender equality, and the promotion of the participation of self-employed workers in dialogue on policies for socio-economic development in the country.

There are now:

- 42 organised unions
- 8 registered unions
- 24 unions in the process of being registered
- 16,917 affiliated workers.

Strategic projects

On the 1st of July 2004, "The Co-operative for Multiple Services *New Life R.L*" (La Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples *Nueva Vida R. L*), was established with 27 founding members. An economic viability study to determine the economic and social situation of self-employed workers was concluded in June, facilitating the provision of credit facilities to organised workers by the Co-operative.

Between June and September 2003, an economic viability study was done for the establishment of the Urban Mutua de Salud (Urban Health Fund). The objective of the fund is to treat common illnesses of self-employed workers and their families. In December 2003, the process of administrative and financial organisation and affiliation of their first 518 members was begun.

Progressive eradication of child labour

In the third term of 2003, a survey was carried out amongst 53 boys and girls who sell at robots and bus stops in the city of Managua, to gain some knowledge about the condition of their lives. Subsequently, a meeting with the parents was arranged, and we were able to assess the lack of

resources available to send their children to school. With help from CNEPTI and the ILO, we arranged to send the 53 children to school for the 2004 school year.

In August 2004, a social investigation amongst 494 boys and girls, who are street vendors, was concluded. These results were the basis for a pilot project consisting of four phases. The first phase, a programme of social mobilisation for the prevention and eradication of child labour, has the financial support of the ILO.

Training and education

During 2003, 158 leaders were trained in subjects including: history of trade unions, local government, law, human relations, sales techniques, marketing and introduction to the study of markets, leadership, organisational processes, mobilisation and union negotiation.

Between January to September 2004, we trained 340 members in study circles, 163 in basic courses and 45 in special courses, with a total of 546 leaders and workers being trained. Currently, we have five workers with bursaries studying professional careers at UNAN Managua, and six workers who recently completed technical studies in computers.

The Womens' Committee for the Self-employed Workers' Sector, consisting of more than 6 000 women workers, was launched on 30th of May 2004.

Protest against eviction

On the 9th of June 2004, the National Co-ordinator for the Self-employed Workers' Sector called a press conference to announce a demonstration scheduled to take place on the 10th of June and to let people know the matters to be discussed with the Mayor of Managua, Architect Herly Lewites. The next day, the first march by the Self-employed Workers Sector, from CIPRES to the Municipality of Managua, took place as a protest against the eviction of workers from the Metro Central stop on the 4th of June 2004. Two and half thousand workers took part in this march, but were not met by the competent authorities.

The municipal authorities of Managua refused to look for a negotiated solution. This caused a series of denunciations on the violation of workers' rights to the media by the national self-employed workers' leadership. On 12th of June, we took advantage of a meeting of the Municipal Council to draw public attention to the evictions and to force the Mayor Herty Lewites to meet with the sector. Agreements were signed on 18 June and came into force the same day. To put the agreements signed with the Mayor into operation, a time-table for meetings with the delegates from the different districts of the Municipality of Managua was drawn up.

On the 15th August, the First National Congress took place and the second anniversary of the Foundation of Union Organisation for Self-employed Workers was celebrated.

Korean street vendors gather for 17th annual congress

By Shin Hee-chul, international director of NFSVK

On 13th June the NFSVK (National Federation of Street Vendors of Korea) held the annual national congress of Korean street vendors in Seoul. This was the 17th Congress organised by NFSVK since 1988.

In 1988, Korean street vendors fought against the regime's suppression of street vending under the cloak of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Through these struggles, we confirmed our solidarity with the national democratic movements of Korea and at last organised the national organisation, NFSVK, on October 1988. So every year around 13th June, the NFSVK has held its National Congress.

This year's Congress was held at the Dongdae-mun Stadium and attended by more than 6000 street vendors. Several organisations attended the congress: the Korean Social Solidarity for Solving Poverty, the Korean People's Solidarity, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, the Korean Peasants' League, the homeless, activists from Japan (delegates for the Asia Social & Peoples' Movement Summit held on 14-15th June) and Korean migrant workers who have opposed the Korean government's policy of eviction and arrest at Myeongdong Cathedral in Seoul. Comrades from NEST, the Nepali Street Vendors Union, and representatives from the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India were not able to be with us because the Korean Embassies declined to issue the visas, with no understandable reason.

After the Congress, we marched to the Silla Hotel where the World Economic Forum (WEF) East Asia Summit was being held from 13th to 15th June.

The march highlighted the problems of neo-liberal globalisation that gives more freedom to transnational capital to implement military strategies for expansion of control over the Asian region, while increasing poverty and eroding the rights of Asian workers and people.

In the march against the WEF, we demonstrated our support for the rights of the poor. NFSVK, asian activists and people from many sectors - regular workers/irregular workers, formal workers/informal workers, peasants/small farmers, women/men, the disabled/abled, and poor/students joined hands and united, acted as one.

In the two days following the Congress, NFSVK participated in the Asia Social & Peoples' Movement Summit and encouraged participants to organise informal workers.

NFSVK informed them about StreetNet and the international conference Organising Workers in the Informal Economy: "Combining Our Efforts", held in Ahmedabad, India in 2003.

We participated in thematic workshops on the Poor and Homeless, Irregular/Informal Workers and Labour Rights, Migrant Workers' Labour Rights and the Migrant Workers' Movement in Asia.

Kim Heung-Hyun, the Co-president of NFSVK read the declaration adopted by the Summit, "Asia People and Social Movements Call to Action". It ends:

We are committed to coordinate our actions, broaden and strengthen our struggles in Asia. "Globalise the Hope!", "Globalise the Struggle!"

Uruguay: informal economy shelters masses in wake of economic crisis

By Lucía Melnikov

As a result of rapid deterioration of the Uruguay economy following the failure of the banks and financial sector two years ago, the people find themselves in the streets and in the informal economy, without any economic or social protection.

When there is a war, the effects of the destruction can be measured by the assistance you can seek overseas for food and medicines. In this case, it can only be measured by the damage inflicted on basic human rights, due to the lack of economic resources, eg lack of proper shelter, medical assistance, work and food.

This causes the unravelling of the social fabric; the migration of people looking for work from inland to the capital and the depopulation of the rural areas. As a result, we, the Uruguayan people, are going through the worst crisis we have ever lived through in history.

The industrial crisis that commenced in 1968, with the continuous closing down of different industries was caused, amongst other factors, by the lack of re-organisation and modernisation to meet the needs of regional and global competition. Uruguay has a population of around three million people. The economically active population is 800 000, and it is estimated that 300 000 people belong to the informal economy.

At the same time as the economy has begun to informalise, Uruguay has taken backwards steps regarding labour rights, especially for women. A pregnancy test has now been introduced as a pre-requisite to getting employment. To be a woman and mother is the basis of discrimination for many jobs, and is one of the primary reasons why the majority of vendors at the markets are women.

The bulk of job creation occurs in the informal economy, and street vending is the most visible economic activity. The "outskirts" or markets are situated in the poorest areas and are constantly accommodating more and more people. They are places where some vendors sell what little possessions they have left to get basic food for their families.

People with training or those who can operate machinery, start home businesses, making different products which enable them to carry out honest work. Production co-operatives for the recycling of plastic products have been developed to make bags for produce sold at the markets.

We have made it clear to the authorities that our motivation for organising activity in the markets is to assist people to earn a living, to find a reason to live and reclaim their dignity. This is little solace when one looks at the growth in official statistics that are the tell-tale signs of Uruguay's situation: higher crime and delinquency, suicide and emigration.

In most cases, there is no appropriate labour protection for vendors. The loss of formal employment has created the need for new regulations and laws to safeguard the well-being of the working population.

I believe that the next step for workers in this economy, is to organise themselves into networks and to present proposals for protection and labour empowerment.