

## **THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM**

**NAIROBI, KENYA, 20 – 25 JANUARY 2007**

### **Background**

#### **January 2003, Porto Alegre**

Pat Horn, International Co-ordinator of StreetNet, was invited to participate in a panel discussion on the relationship between the trade union movement and the new social movements.

#### **January 2004, Mumbai**

StreetNet's Indian affiliates, NASVI (National Alliance of Street Vendors of India) and SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) organized a very successful event, attended by many Mumbai street vendors who had been experiencing very harsh crackdowns at the hands of the BMC (Bombay Municipal Corporation). This event was attended by the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, and many interested observers – and ultimately resulted in the government of India adopting a national policy on street vending, which they had been discussing with NASVI for some time, soon afterwards.

#### **January 2005, Porto Alegre**

StreetNet took a three-person delegation to the WSF and organized a small event on "The situation of street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers – giving attention to the situation of women hawkers and vendors – and opportunities for co-operation with municipal workers and their unions in relation to local governments". StreetNet delegates also participated in another panel on the informal economy organized by the ICFTU, WCL, Solidar, IFWEA and other organisations.

#### **November 2005, Zimbabwe**

StreetNet's Zambian and Zimbabwean affiliates AZIEA (Alliance for Zambian Informal Economy Associations) and ZCIEA (Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations) and their affiliated Cross-Border Traders' Associations participated very actively in the Zimbabwean Social Forum.

#### **November 2006, Malawi**

AZIEA again sent a delegation to Lilongwe to participate in the Malawi Social Forum the following year, their participation facilitated by War on Want.

#### **August 2006 – preparations in Nairobi**

In August 2006, an extended Executive Committee of StreetNet met in Nairobi, together with the Executive Committee of StreetNet's new Kenya

affiliate KENASVIT (Kenya National Alliance of Street vendors and Informal Traders) to prepare to participate on a more meaningful scale in WSF2007 in Nairobi in January 2007.

### **Decent Work for a Decent Life campaign**

In late August 2006, StreetNet joined the international campaign on "Decent Work for a Decent Life" which was started in 2005 by the ICFTU, WCL, Solidar and the Global Progressive Forum. This enabled us to start building some alliances through the internet, at the same time as indicating to our allies our intention of making a contribution to the Decent Work discussion through adding content on Decent Work and the Informal Economy in general, the street and market vending sector in particular, and related issues such as the problems of women, migrants and cross-border traders, disabled street vendors and child labour in this sector of the informal economy. As a result of joining up to the Decent Work for a Decent Life campaign, we made a lot of allies through the internet even before reaching Nairobi.

### **StreetNet's programme at WSF2007**

In 2007 StreetNet had a larger delegation, and a more extensive programme, than in previous World Social Forums. There were 13 international delegates (*see Annexure A* for their profiles) and a large number of Kenyan delegates (80 from outside Nairobi and an unknown number from Nairobi itself) organized by the following urban alliances which make up KENASVIT:

- EASVIT (Eldoret Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders)
- KASVIT (Kisumu Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders)
- MISVESTS (Migori Street Vendors and Small Traders Society)
- MTSVJSHG (Machakos Town Street Vendors Joint Self Help Group)
- MUSTA (Mombasa Urban Street Traders Alliance)
- NASTHA (Nakuru Street Traders and Hawkers Association)
- NISCOF (Nairobi Informal Sector Consultative Federation)

The members of KENASVIT and its urban alliances, and their banners, were in evidence everywhere, in the marches from the slums to Uhuru Park for the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as other events which they participated in with enthusiasm. StreetNet is particularly proud of the way in which KENASVIT members from the different urban alliances made their presence felt, drew attention to the issues facing street vendors in Kenya, and participated with their other allies such as the Kenya Land Alliance and the Pamoja Trust in other events to add their voice to a range of other socio-

economic struggles as well. All this they did with a small budget from StreetNet and they had to raise further funds from other sources.

Our Ugandan affiliate, NUIEWO (National Union of Informal Economy Workers' Organisations) also independently brought a delegation of 11 mainly informal market and street vendors to the WSF. They also participated actively in a wide range of activities and spoke on many of the panels about the challenges of organizing workers in the informal economy.

StreetNet convened the following events:

### **Panel on Women Street Vendors and Informal Market Vendors**

*(Kasarani stadium, 8.30 – 11 a.m. Monday 22 January)*

Speakers:           Clarisse Gnahoui (USYNVEPID, Benin)  
                          Bishnu Maya Bastola (NEST-GEFONT, Nepal)  
                          Faith Katanaka (NUIEWO, Uganda)

This panel was held under difficult conditions, as the venue had been reserved for three separate events at the same time, and we decided to allow one of the other organizations to use it while we relocated (as street vendors are accustomed to doing) to outside the venue. However, this meant that we had no interpretation facilities and had to compete with the sound system which the organisation inside the venue was using, as well as the noise of the marches and demonstrations going past on the other side. Despite this, with one or two volunteers doing interpretation, the discussion was extremely lively, and well attended by other interested organizations including PSI and Solidar (apart from our own affiliates from Kenya, Uganda and international). It became clear that the problems facing women street vendors in Benin, Nepal, Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe are very similar. In the discussion it also became apparent that many women street vendors have become sole supporters of their extended families, because of widespread loss of formal employment in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As a consequence, the low incomes earned by women street vendors have to be a key issue to be addressed if anti-poverty programmes are to succeed. Finally, the event was disrupted just before the end by the theft of the bag of our Nicaraguan participant, Orlando Mercado of CTCP (Confederacion de Trabajadores por Cuenta Propia). So we did not manage to draw together the conclusions from this panel.

### **Panel on Migrant Workers in Street Vending and Cross-border Trade**

*(Kasarani Gymnasium, 8.30 – 11 a.m. Tuesday 23 January)*

Speakers:           Violet Mumba (AZIEA, Zambia)

Charity Mandishona (ZCIEA, Zimbabwe)  
Mamadou Fall (SUDEMS, Senegal)

This panel was the only one where we had the interpretation we had requested, but it was also the most poorly-attended one. Most of those present were StreetNet affiliates, including the Cross-Border Traders Association affiliate of StreetNet's Zimbabwean affiliate ZCIEA, with additional participants from the KCTU (Korea) and the Hawkers Sangram Committee of Calcutta. However, this allowed for a very detailed discussion of the issues facing cross-border traders in the SADC region and the informal fish trade in the ECOWAS region. The two main issues which emerged, for StreetNet to strategise around, were:

1. Micro-issue: How to deal with competition in a sustainable way
2. Macro-issue: What kind of policy framework to promote regarding, *inter-alia*,
  - Protectionism or free trade
  - Fight against bribery and corruption

### **Panel on Child Labour in Street and Market Vending**

*(Kasarani Gymnasium, 11.30 – 2 p.m. Tuesday 23 January)*

Speakers: Janet Anum (Ghana StreetNet Alliance)  
Anis Fatima Shaikh (NASVI, India)  
Orlando Mercado (CTCP, Nicaragua)  
Tambake Tounkara (African Movement of Child Workers and Youth)  
Gilbert Onyango (The Cradle children's rights organization, Kenya)

This panel was well attended by a number of participants from a range of children's rights and human rights organizations. Most StreetNet participants (others than those involved in the panel) had gone to Uhuru Park in Nairobi Centre for the Street Vendors' Rally, which had been scheduled to overlap with our panel discussions. However, with the help of one WSF French interpreter, more voluntary interpretation and a power point projector lent to us by the IDS (University of Nairobi) we were able to have very good presentations and a controversial discussion. The position of the African Movement of Child Workers and Youth, while being closer to StreetNet's policy on Child Labour (*see Annexure B*) was controversial to some of the other activists against Child Labour who attended. The Movement's position of recognizing child workers as workers, and campaigning for a platform of rights for them, seemed to undermine the standard abolitionist position which many human rights organizations uphold. This panel could have gone on for another couple of hours to

explore this contradiction and do justice to the issues being discussed, but we had to end on time as we had to rush to Uhuru Park for the Street Vendors' Rally which was already under way.

### **Street Vendors' Rally: No! to Poverty and Inequality!**

*(Tuesday 23 January at Uhuru Park, Nairobi)*

Speakers:

- Nairobi leaders of street vendors
- Eldoret, Kisumu, Machakos, Migori, Mombasa, Nakuru leaders
- KENASVIT leadership
- Municipal and Government representatives
- Representatives of disabled street vendors from Kenya and Tanzania
- StreetNet delegates from Benin, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- StreetNet International Co-ordinator

Keynote speaker:

- Shin HeeChul (KOSC, Korea)

This event was scheduled to take place from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at Freedom Corner, Uhuru Park, Central Nairobi. However, despite being an accredited WSF event, officials from the Nairobi municipality attempted to close it down under the pretext that it had not been reserved with them, alternatively that it had not been paid for. KENASVIT leaders, with the assistance of the IDS, University of Nairobi, spent some hours negotiating, looking for alternative venues, and eventually getting somebody from the National Government to intervene and overrule the objections of the Municipality of Nairobi – whereafter the whole question of bookings and payment disappeared. So for street vendors and informal traders, it looks like there is a possibility that even in “Another World” they may continue to experience harassment from municipal authorities !

However, to the credit of the organizers of the Rally, KENASVIT and their Nairobi urban alliance NISCOF, they did not give up, and due to their persistence, the rally eventually started around noon at the central stage in Uhuru Park, with a reduced crowd of a few hundred (mainly street vendors) in attendance. It was an occasion for the street vendors of Kenya and the street vendors' representatives from StreetNet's other affiliates from other countries to meet each other and recommit themselves to the struggle for “Another World is Possible” with a better life for street vendors and informal traders. From this point of view StreetNet regards the rally to have been a great success.

The rally was followed by a cocktail reception in the evening hosted by NISCOF to launch their strategic plan for 2007, and was attended by many

of our trade union allies who had been participating in the Decent Work for a Decent Life campaign.

### **Panel on Disabled Street Vendors and Informal Market Vendors**

*(Kasarani, 5.30 – 8p.m. Tuesday 23 January)*

Eventually, unfortunately, this event had to be cancelled because of the clash with the Street Vendors' Rally at Uhuru Park and our inability to get the organizers to reschedule the event to a different slot. Speakers from this panel addressed the rally in Uhuru Park.

### **Participation in other WSF events**

The following speakers from StreetNet and its affiliates participated in panel discussions organized by other participating organizations:

1. **Towards TransNational Solidarity? The reorganization of the global working class – organized by the Arena Group (Sweden) and World Forum for Alternatives' Global Working Class Project:**
  - Pat Horn, StreetNet International Co-ordinator
2. **Organising the Informal Sector: What Role for Trade Unions? and How Should Organising be Done ? – organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)**
  - Namrata Bali, SEWA India
  - Pat Horn, StreetNet international Co-ordinator
3. **Universal Social Protection for Decent Work: What Challenges for Trade Unions? – organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)**
  - Namrata Bali, SEWA India
4. **What has happened to the working class – organized by a research network including Centre for Sociological Research , University of Johannesburg:**
  - NUIEWO Uganda
  - ZCIEA Zimbabwe
5. **ASSEMBLY on Labour and Globalisation**
  - Pat Horn, StreetNet International Co-ordinator
  - Peter Odhiambo, NISCOF (KENASVIT, Kenya)

In addition, Namrata Bali participated in some of the principal panel discussions of the Decent Work for a Decent Life campaign, representing

SEWA as an affiliate of the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation). StreetNet had been invited to convene an event as part of the principal events of the Decent Work for a Decent Life campaign on the challenges of organizing workers in the informal economy – but since that slot was on the same day that all the StreetNet activities had been scheduled, we had to notify them that we could not convene another activity on the same day. There were many other events in which we were invited to participate or collaborate, which was not possible because of time overlaps and other co-ordination problems, e.g.

- Women's march (on the same day as the Street Vendors' Rally)
- Citizens' Global Platform activities
- Decent Work for the World Cup 2010 campaign launch
- GROOTS International activities
- International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)
- International Movement against all forms of Discrimination against

Migrants

- PSI activities
- SSF (Sociologists without Borders)
- Transnational Unity in the Struggle for Migrant Workers Right

(Boston deleg.)

- UBUNTU Forum activities
- War on Want activities
- Women's ASSEMBLY

## **Conclusions**

It is true to say that, through participation in WSF2007, StreetNet to a significant extent met its basic objectives of (1) placing the issues of street vendors and informal workers on the civil society agenda, and (2) building alliances with social movements and strengthening our alliances with the trade union movement on social issues. This was achieved through a widened level of participation including street vendors themselves from Kenya as well as other countries – in the spirit of the most directly democratic participatory principles of the WSF as well as of StreetNet.

However, we did not really succeed in participating in the process of developing and influencing the proposals to come out of the WSF as a programme of alternatives for Another World – one in which street vendors and informal traders will really start to see the difference with the one they have now. This was neglected in the general chaos of the WSF and the time-consuming nature of some of the logistical and administrative crises we had to deal with (e.g. difficulties with accommodation, co-ordination of transport, working with COTU to obtain travel documents for the return travel of the delegate who was robbed of his passport and air ticket). We have learnt that at the next WSF we will need to split the co-ordination of

logistics and administration, on the one hand, and programme activities and development of proposals and conclusions, on the other.

### **Where to from here?**

StreetNet International affiliates will all participate in the evaluation of StreetNet's participation in WSF2007 as part of the organisation's internal evaluation procedures, with a view to planning the next stage of engagement with the WSF processes. At the next meeting of the StreetNet International Council in May 2007, there will also be some discussion about the next steps, and hopefully some affiliates will forward resolutions, to be adopted as StreetNet policy, to StreetNet's International Congress, scheduled to take place in August 2007.

We hope to be able to continue to develop StreetNet's participation in creating "Another (better) World" in the same participatory way we have been doing since 2004. We do not know if the WSF structures will ultimately plan along the same trajectory as StreetNet's process – but this will have to be gauged as we continue with this process.

What is clear is that participating in the WSF is very different from participating in the processes of more bureaucratic institutions, such as the International Labour Conferences of the ILO. However, each terrain has its particular space for particular issues which StreetNet and its affiliates wish to influence – and so StreetNet will in all likelihood continue to try to use these spaces to the best possible effect in the interests of the street vendors and informal market vendors of the world.

## ANNEXURE A

### **StreetNet participant profiles**

WSF2007, Nairobi, Kenya

**Anis Fatima Shaikh** (NASVI) National Alliance of Street Vendors of India

- informal trader in Mumbai (*21 years old, trading since the age of 6*)
- member of Azad Hawkers Association affiliated to NASVI

**Janet Adjorkor Anum** (Ghana StreetNet Alliance)

- informal trader in Makola Market, Accra
- member of National Executive Committee (Ghana StreetNet)

**Bishnu Maya Bastola** (NEST) Nepal Union of Street Vendors

- Koshi Zone Joint Secretary (GEFONT)

- Organizer of NEST in Koshi zone, eastern region of Nepal

**Mamadou Fall** (SUDEMS) Syndicat Unique et Democratique des Mareyeurs du Senegal

- Secretaire General (SUDEMS-CSA)
- Tesoriere (CSA central syndicale)

**Clarisse Reine Fandy (ep. Gnahoui)** USYNVEPID (Union Syndicale de Vendeurs de Pieces Vendeuses des Pieces Detachees et Divers des Marches du Benin)

- Tesoriere (USYNVEPID)
- Coordinatrice des activites au Benin du projet conjoint de StreetNet et UNI sur le renforcement des capacites des organizations de l'economie informelle

**Martha Garcia Santoyo** (FNOTNA) Mexico (Federacion Nacional de Organizaciones de Trabajadores No Asalariados)

- informal trader (*since childhood when she assisted her parents*)
- elected leader in her branch of FNOTNA

**Patricia Horn** (StreetNet International)

- International Co-ordinator (StreetNet)
- member of international Steering Committee (WIEGO – Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising)

**Charity Mandishona** (ZCIEA) Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations

- small-scale miner
- Secretary for Gender, Women and Children's Affairs (ZCIEA)
- Territorial President for Harare (ZCIEA)

**Orlando Jose Mercado** (CTPT-FNT) Nicaragua (Confederacion de Trabajadores por su Cuenta Propia)

- Vice Coordinador (CTPT)
- member of union of *cambistas* (street money-changers)

**Gladys Mponda** (MUFIS) Malawi Union for the Informal Sector

- Chairperson for Women Affairs (MUFIS)
- member of the Executive Committee (MUFIS)

**Violet Mumba** (AZIEA) Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations

**Shin HeeChul** (KOSC) Korean Street Vendors Confederation

- International and Policy department (KOSC)

**Yu EuiSun** (Korean People's Solidarity for Anti-Poverty)

- Co-ordinator
- responsible for empowerment of KOSC women leaders, Dongdamun flea market

**Blandina Sembu** (SHIVYAWATA)

- disabled informal trader from Dar Es Salaam
- President of SHIVYAWATA apex organization of disabled vendors in Tanzania  
*(not affiliated to StreetNet International)*

ANNEXURE B

**StreetNet Policy on Child labour**

NOTING

1. that there are instances of children working as street vendors, either independently or assisting parents who are street vendors, informal market vendors or hawkers;
2. that many of these children are working to augment low incomes earned by the adults in their families;
3. that on occasion these children's work keeps them out of school and prevents them from developing their skills and abilities to the best of their potential;

HEREBY RESOLVES

1. that StreetNet supports ILO Convention 138 and Recommendation 146 of 1973 on the Minimum Age, and Convention 182 and Recommendation 190 of 1999 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour;
2. to unconditionally support the rights of all children to attend school, to encourage informal market vendors, street vendors and hawkers to ensure that their children complete their schooling, and to promote opportunities for their further education;
3. to unconditionally support the promotion and exercise of equal rights for girl children, and to fight against any form of discrimination against the girl child;

4. to work for the increase in incomes for adult street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers as the best means of eliminating the need for children to work to augment the incomes of adult family members;
5. to promote the establishment of secure and affordable child care centres for pre-school children of street vendors, market vendors or hawkers close to their places of work operating appropriate hours for them to be able to fully utilise such centres. Where possible, such child-care centres should be integrally linked to town or market plans;
6. to promote urban planning approaches which incorporate facilities for the care of the pre-school children of street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers.