

**StreetNet International meeting**  
**on**  
**World Trade and informal traders**  
(13/14 August 2010)

**Overall Aim:**

This international meeting is aimed at empowering StreetNet International to develop an informed position on global trade issues – and the aim is to do it from the bottom up dictated by the needs of the constituency, rather than merely as an ideological exercise.

**Objectives:**

1. Understand the dynamics of international trade and global trends, and the workings of the WTO from the perspective of workers in the informal economy;
2. Develop a tangible idea of exactly how this links with the everyday reality of street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers;
3. Using the discussion of the StreetNet Congress Commission on “World Trade & the Informal Economy”, develop a clearly nuanced consensus position on the following:
  - how world trade issues affect street vendors and informal traders;
  - how should StreetNet react;
  - how could these issues be used to the advantage of street vendors, or for organizing ?
4. Emerge with an enhanced StreetNet policy resolution reflecting the position developed.
5. Emerge with some plans (issues, allies, activities) to propose for WSF 2011 in Dakar.

**GROUP WORK – What do participants think world trade is about, how do world trade issues affect street vendors and informal traders ?**

**Latin America Group**

WTO is an instrument to unite the capitalist countries for distribution of products and services favouring the richest & most powerful countries. Consequence is reduction of labour-intensive work and loss of employment, loss of quality production which used to come from informal economy.

We have arrived at a globalisation which brings destruction of formal employment, dependence and persecution. In the face of imposition of neo-liberal policies, we must not allow ourselves to lose our national identities. StreetNet should get involved with WTO – introduce informal workers and push for inclusive policies at WTO.

**Anglophone Group**

World trade means buying of goods and services between member countries – however there are serious imbalances. There is lack of reciprocity. Trade is regulated through quality control, standards, tariffs and taxes – leading to unequal access to products and markets, affecting street vendors.

Understanding of world trade is based on understanding of globalisation, whereby the agreements reinforce inequities. Governments of the South are victims of oppression as well as oppressors—e.g. in trade with China and India.

#### Effects on vendors:

Unequal access to markets (exacerbated by formal sector workers entering informal economy but having better access)

More street vendors being evicted from workplaces.

More competition between informal economy operators for fewer buyers.

Indian and Chinese importers of sub-standard goods puts informal economy out of business.

Political leaders influenced by big businesses doing world trade in the country—they get political support based on this.

Governments need to be patriotic and have the interests of their citizens at heart.

Need to follow example of Latin Americans, build strong network against the inequities of world trade.

Unity and international solidarity—participants urged to sign the Korean petition.

Regional networks should be strengthened.

Rather than StreetNet going into WTO, we should destroy WTO.

#### **Francophone Group 1**

North-South dynamics dominate WTO, which is a copy of the UN Security Council.

Lack of access for countries of the South—exploitation of the weak.

Eviction of street vendors, in order to install MNCs.

Countries of the South are victims of our own greed and lack of unity.

StreetNet must lobby in the South, and local commerce authorities.

Campaigns of denunciation and education to be developed.

Cooperation with ITUC, must develop networks at regional and international levels.

StreetNet's affiliates should participate in WTO (synergy & strong presence needed).

Group created a resolution calling on governments to promote South-South exchanges and direct trade relationships with informal enterprises.

Proposed activities: campaigns and activities in relation to WTO

Conferences in parallel with WTO meetings.

#### **Francophone Group 2**

World trade creates dependence and injustice.

Governments lack political will to protect natural resources.

Links should be forged by forming network for reinforcement of mutual solidarity

e.g. through inter-organisational unity between affiliates.

Problem of intermediaries who buy from the East and make it impossible for street vendors to have affordable access to products.

StreetNet should make an internal policy to struggle against the policies of exclusion, and promote internal change in WTO, and engage through WSF in 2011 with participation of affiliates.

### **Hindi/Nepali/Bengali/Gujarati Group**

World trade is for MNCs, money-lenders, etc.

No place for small traders & informal economy workers, who don't have enough capital to compete.

Governments don't give enough space.

World trade is capital-intensive – more people get employment in small trade.

World trade leads to loss of employment.

We want registration, better laws, better facilities.

StreetNet must develop a policy to assist members to survive better in this context.

**DISCUSSION:** Groups have contradictory positions – do we participate in WTO or destroy WTO?

African continent divided on this, compared to Latin Americans and Asians.

#### In favour of destroying WTO:

StreetNet should destroy WTO through AU and regional blocs

Need to form an African bloc.

Poor and rich cannot compete.

Destroy WTO and create a new one – “our own system”.

Forward ever, backward never !!

#### In favour of changing WTO from within:

World trade is already happening without us.

We should not exclude ourselves – rather mainstream ourselves.

NLC position does not mean physically destroying WTO but the values and principles it stands for.

Issue of fair trade – is our vision an open market where we can compete with big business, or something based on solidarity?

Key principle is – Nothing for us without us!!

### **NLC presentation by Denja Yaqub on joint position of NLC, Ghana TUC and COSATU.**

EU is trying to keep developing countries out. NLC got Nigerian govt. to refuse to sign EPA bilateral agreement. There is need to strengthen cross-border solidarity.

Look forward to building network from North to South – also civil society organisations, to struggle jointly against WTO.

One strategy is to declare one day in support of informal economy workers around the world – in Nigeria they have tried this and it works. Nigeria is rich in petroleum resources, and ruling class has used this to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. NLC decided to fight the govt. together with informal economy workers and civil society organisations – and govt. fought back. So Govt hasn't been able to increase the price of petroleum products since 2007.

They participate in Nigerian Social Forum and West African Social Forum.

Now we need the north to build global solidarity.

COSATU, NLC and Ghana TUC are lobbying civil society to not let WTO get away with new agreements.

## DISCUSSION:

### 1. What are the elements of World Trade ?

There was a discussion about USA's duplicity – they claim that jobs have gone to Mexico, but on the other hand they are trying to keep Mexicans out of USA while calling them “illegal immigrants”. Did USA unemployment REALLY create jobs in Mexico ? New law in Arizona excluding Mexicans, looks like will be extended to other states in USA. Unequal relationship between Mexico and USA.

Capitalism has brought in robots to replace workers (e.g. in Fiat in Turin)  
One of the few advantages of globalisation is internet.

### 2. Reference to unfair competition between formal & informal.

Textile industry in Nigeria used to be biggest employer (after govt) in Nigeria until WTO. Now textile factories have been replaced by churches. People are using the name of God to make money – govt. should tax the church. Import of Chinese textiles which are cheaper than locally produced textiles. Also street vendors and taxi operators are chased out of cities when there are AU and other big meetings.

Trade protection (under Abacha) existed until 1997 when Nigeria signed agreement with WTO to liberalise. This affected manufacturing base. Union's membership dropped from 130 000 to 20 000. More un-unionised workers. How does this link with informal economy ? Garment sector is very developed in informal economy (no formal garment sector). So big market for garments & second-hand clothing opened up, creating drop in local textiles industry. Problem is that other (francophone) African govts are signing EPA agreements.

NAMSTA (Namibia) complained about lack of commercial exchanges between StreetNet affiliates. It was noted that Trade Unions already have regulated platforms for discussing these issues – how far have they tried to help access by informal economy workers ?

How far have informal workers researched the available spaces for engaging on this ?

SADC (Southern African Development Community) Protocol talks about free trade for informal cross-border traders – how far has this space been utilised ?

CNTS (Senegal) congratulated NLC for defending the interest of the people, all West Africa is aware. Necessary to create an alternative to globalisation – like is being done in Ghana and Nigeria.

If we create South-South alliances the West can come towards Africa.

StreetNet must take a position on globalisation.

Ramon Mercano proposed special tax which should go towards social protection for poor.

NLC replied that low tariffs are one of the problems.

But we don't have to be experts to have views on issues that concern us.

United North-South front can confront identified enemy.

Ghana TUC has experience in integration of informal economy in TUs, but still working on this in Nigeria. Mainly working on protection for informal workers under workers' compensation, e.g. domestic workers – new draft Bill which NLC influenced.

StreetNet Draft Resolution on World Trade should be used as a campaign document, and to form alliances. StreetNet affiliates should join protests against WTO meetings.

## **DISCUSSION – how should StreetNet react on World Trade ?**

### 1. Policy

Radical changes needed to WTO and its values, principles, operation.  
WTO should operate on basis of solidarity rather than competition.  
What is the alternative ?

### 2. Practical activities

More info needed – exchanges of info.  
Challenge our own governments – how can StreetNet help ?  
Alliance-building and networks, including TU movement and civil society.  
South-South solidarity and North-South solidarity – StreetNet can assist.  
Build and work in regions, including trade links.  
StreetNet regional structures (regional focal points) can be used.  
Protests, campaigns, advocacy – StreetNet can co-ordinate.  
Need to strengthen StreetNet in order to do all this.

ITUC Africa is already opposed to WTO – StreetNet should take same position.  
It is not in interests of informal economy for formal workers to become unemployed.  
WTO is increasing poverty. But not everything is bad about WTO – so we must campaign for changes.  
Awareness campaigns – when StreetNet staff travel to countries they should do advocacy with affiliates.  
StreetNet must campaign for more unions to accept informal economy organisations.  
StreetNet's duty is to convince labour centres on anti-EPZ policy, and distribution of information across regions.

It was noted that the position of the meeting on WTO remains contradictory.  
StreetNet is unique in position of representing street vendors - how is StreetNet going to destroy the WTO – if StreetNet is its affiliates ? Affiliates have to decide what is it we are going to do.

StreetNet should reject EPA agreements which kill informal businesses in poorest countries, urge informal workers to join unions in their countries, and should form a bloc about how to replace/transform WTO. We must make WTO more equitable and more human.  
StreetNet must participate in WTO meetings, backed by mass demonstrations.

We have to form alliances and agreements with our governments. Every country where StreetNet has affiliate should invite their government and give them a set of demands. Workshop should be rolled down to members in countries about WTO. We can build coalitions with TUs to stop governments from signing EPAs. We need to open protocol desks in regional structures SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, etc. then AU. Same thing with MERCOSUR, Andean region, etc.

We need to look at access to markets for people in informal economy.

**LABOUR & GLOBALISATION** – presentation by Abdou Faye, L&G Network.

The relationship between L&G (Labour & Globalisation) Network and StreetNet originated at the World Social Forum WSF2007 in Nairobi, and continued in WSF2009 in Belem when StreetNet organised for trade unions of the Global South to participate in L&G Network discussions on the global economic crisis and identifying issues for global network co-operation .

Solidarity relationships have been strengthened with trade union centres of the Global South such as COSATU South Africa, CUT Brazil, GEFONT Nepal, etc.

Abdou was impressed by StreetNet's gender policies & debates.

He felt that StreetNet could do a lot about migrant workers' problem.

Economic crisis has effects on migrant workers in Europe – residence permits depend on being employed (cannot stay for more than 6 months without employment).

**DISCUSSION – follow-up work to be done**

### **CAMPAIGNS**

Nora Wintour (StreetNet Campaigns Co-ordinator) suggested:

(1) launch of publication on street vendors in Dakar

(2) street vendors' march in Dakar – international day of street vendors

GUFs are already preparing to participate, such as PSI – StreetNet should partner with them.

A notice could be circulated to ask participants which World Trade alliances they may already be involved with in their countries – for example “Our World is not for Sale” network dealing with fair trade issues and WTO.

New manifesto campaign – Campaigns Co-ordinator proposed common theme for International Women's Day could be women and fair trade .

### **WORLD SOCIAL FORUM**

To carry forward the discussions at WSF2009 in Belem, it was agreed that there is a need to discuss participation in WSF2011 in Dakar. Annie Diouf (CNTS Women's Committee) reported about their plans from the WSF organising committee in Senegal.

She appealed to affiliates to try to organise their own means to attend WSF.

Many participants stressed the need to use openings and spaces, and form alliances – with TUs, women's orgs, social movements etc. and make our demands. Affiliates must organise themselves before the forum to ensure the WSF support the people on the ground, e.g. street vendors.

It was agreed StreetNet should make an alliance with CGIL to defend migrant workers' rights.

Workers' education is important – StreetNet & CGIL should cooperate in this.

We should prepare plays about the lives of street vendors.

West Africans (CDAO) must all go to Dakar – West African focal point organisation to ensure.

UGSEIN undertook to organise to participate, even without StreetNet's help.

To ensure our visibility at WSF – good publicity materials must be organised.

PSI stated their readiness to work with StreetNet at Dakar, and suggested panels with women about decent work in cities – the place of informal markets (as workplaces) in urban decentralisation policies. Themes need to be chosen for panel discussions.

Proposed panel topics – relation between informal traders and municipalities, decentralisation and the informal economy, organising strategies & tactics in informal economy, tactics of dealing with harassment & police brutality.

**L&G Network:** Re-committed their commitment to co-operate with StreetNet.

They have also written to all TUs in the world about the migrant workers from their countries, to protect them from constant harassment. StreetNet affiliates should ensure that their national governments put in place proper policies to try to secure the rights of the migrant workers from their countries in the host countries.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

1. StreetNet should participate in alliances / coalitions seeking to transform the unequal nature of the WTO, with the main objective of working towards trade justice and facilitating access of informal traders to international markets.
2. StreetNet should use international civil society spaces such as the World Social Forum to strengthen such alliances / coalitions.
3. StreetNet affiliates should include trade issues in their manifesto demands when working on the New Manifesto Campaign.

*Compiled by Pat Horn  
International Co-ordinator  
StreetNet International  
November 2010*

ANNEXURE I

PROGRAMME

Day 1	Time	Activity
<i>(StreetNet)</i>	09h00-10h00	Introductions
	<b>10h00-10h30</b>	<b>TEA</b>
	10h30-12h30	Group work discussing the questions: -what do participants think world trade is about; -how do world trade issues affect street vendors and informal traders ?  Plenary report-back
	<b>12h30-13h30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
	13h30-15h00	(1) Presentation by NLC (Nigeria Labour Congress) about world trade and workers in developing countries (2) Discussion of draft resolution 10 on World Trade & the Informal Economy
<i>(Monica - Sibailly - organisers)</i>	<b>15h00-15h30</b>	<b>TEA</b>
<i>ITUCafrica</i>  <i>Assisted by WIEGO</i>	15h30-17h30	Plenary discussion on group work and presentations: -how should StreetNet react on world trade;  -how could the issues identified be used (a) to the advantage of street vendors, or (b) for organizing ?



<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<i>(L&amp;G Network)</i>	09h00-11h00	Labour & Globalisation Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions on world trade at WSF2009, Belem</li> <li>- Preparation of issues for WSF2011, Dakar</li> </ul>
	<b>11h00-11h30</b>	<b>TEA</b>
<i>(Nora W)</i>	11h30-13h00	Building solidarity and strategic alliances between informal economy workers and other civil society organisations around World Trade strategies
	<b>13h00-14h00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<i>(StreetNet organisers)</i>	14h00-15h00	Evaluation of the workshop
	<b>15h30-16h00</b>	<b>TEA</b>
		<b>Departure</b>

ANNEXURE II

**PARTICIPANTS**

<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>NAME</b>
KOSC	KOREA	Jin Seon Shin
		Kim Seong Rak
SEU	BANGLADESH	China Rahman
FEDEVAL	PERU	Manuel Sulca Escalante
		Velasquez Luz Maldonado
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		Soumanzey Adele Mundele
NASVI	INDIA	Sinha Indu
		Andhe Pochama
		Ahmed Irshad
SEWA	INDIA	Champaben Runbhai Patani
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		Manjulaben Benjamin Parmar
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		Juan Alberto Jimenez
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KHATANG TEMA BAITS'OKOLI	LESOTHO	Tsolo Lebitsa
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		Winifred Twine
MUFIS	MALAWI	Ken Williams Mhango
		Gladys Maria Mponda
KENASVIT	KENYA	Dorothy Kalunde
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EASTERN CAPE STREET VENDORS' ALLIANCE	SOUTH AFRICA	Tembisa Ngcwabane
		Fundile Jalile
SIVARA	ARGENTINA	Oscar Roberto Silva
		Nancy Sunilda Godoy
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		Neupane Narayan Prasad
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		Chodaton Anastasie Aboh
		DA Pascal Lokonon
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		Mariam Bakari
		Alegninou Amele
		Azouma Kodzo
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		Salamatou Gandigui Mariko
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		Margaret Maximillien Ndagile

## GUESTS

NAME	SURNAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Chris	Bonner	WIEGO	SOUTH AFRICA
Melanie	Walker	GATES FOUNDATION	U.S.A.
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Adwoah	Sakyi	UIF	GHANA
Vicky	Kanyoka	UIF	TANZANIA
Abdou	Faye	L&G NETWORK	ITALY
Kamissa	Dembele	PSI	TOGO
Denja	Yaqub	Nigeria labour Congress	NIGERIA
Ismail	Bello	NUTGWN – NLC	
Mikhail	Ibrahim		
Dele	Hunsu		
Sylvester	Chimezie		
Kola	Ishola		
Abdoulaye	Sylla		
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## STREETNET STAFF

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