



StreetNet News

No. 3 April 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

Contents:

- **First International Congress of StreetNet International, Seoul, Korea**
- **Conference: Organising in the informal economy: "Combining our efforts"**
- **Ahmedabad Conference PRINCIPAL RESOLUTION (extract)**
- **Street Vendors speak out at World Social Forum (WSF)**
By Arbind Singh, Co-ordinator of National Alliance of Street Vendors of India NASVI
- **Indian Government Adopts National Policy for Street Vendors**
By Arbind Singh, NASVI
- **Alliances needed between municipal workers and vendors**
- **Virtual Forum on the Informal Economy**
By Guillermo Perez Herrera, Co-ordinator Informal Economy Project CIOSL/ORIT
- **ILO puts spotlight on street vendor organisation**
- **Meeting with street vendors in Mexico**
By Pat Horn, StreetNet Co-ordinator

First International Congress of StreetNet International, Seoul, Korea

On 16 and 17 March 2004, StreetNet's first International Congress was held in Seoul, Korea, hosted by the National Federation of Street Vendors of Korea (NFSVK).

Delegates from the following affiliates of StreetNet attended the Congress:

- ASSOTSI (*Associacao de Operadores e Trabalhadores de Sector Informal, Mocambique*)
- AZIEA (*Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations*)
- CNTG (*Confederation Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinee*)
- Eastern Cape Alliance of Street Vendors (South Africa)
- FEDEVAL (*Federacion Departamental de Vendedores Ambulantes de Lima y Callao, Peru*)
- Ghana StreetNet Alliance
- IBF (*Informal Business Forum, Gauteng South Africa*)
- KASVIT (*Kisumu Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders, Kenya*)
- NASVI (*National Alliance of Street Vendors of India*)
- NFSVK (*National Federation of Street Vendors of Korea*)
- SEWA (*Self-Employed Women's Association, India*)
- SEWU (*Self-Employed Women's Union, South Africa*)
- USYNVEPID (*Union Syndicale des Vendeurs, Vendeuses des Pieces Detachees et Divers du Marche Dantokpa, Cotonou Benin*)

Due to visa problems, delegates from two organizations, Malawi Union for the Informal Sector and SEU (Self-Employed Union, Bangladesh) were not able to attend the Congress.

At the opening session on 16th March, Kim Heung-Hyun, co-President of NFSVK, welcomed delegates and guests. NFSVK's other co-President Lee Pil-Du was not present following his arrest the Saturday before. Attempts to secure his release in time for the Congress were not successful.

Messages of support from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Ghana, Public Service International (PSI), Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), IRENE (Netherlands), Centrale des Syndicats de Secteurs Prive et Informal du Benin (CSPIB) were read by Interim Secretary Elvis Chishala and the International Co-ordinator.

The keynote address was delivered by the respected popular leader Baek Ki-Wan (Research Institute of Korean Unification) and messages of solidarity and welcome to delegates were also extended by the KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions), Korean People's Solidarity and the Korean Peasants' League.

Many delegates had had problems obtaining visas to enter Korea because of the hostile attitude of the Korean embassies in different countries. Several delegates were delayed and not expected until the following day. Although the Congress was already quorate (more than 50% + 1 of all member organisations were present and registered), the Congress adjusted the programme to ensure

maximum possible participation in the proceedings by the delayed delegates, including all seven from India.

In the first session of Congress, the Co-ordinator presented the report covering the organisation's activities since the launch of StreetNet International in November 2002. The audited financial report for 2003 was presented by the International Administrator.

Speaking to the reports, Ghana StreetNet Alliance appealed to StreetNet to build its organisational support along the lines that have been followed in Kenya for the establishment of a national alliance of street vendors, and in Zambia for the formation of AZIEA as a national organisation. In response to the Co-ordinator's report on efforts to bring different groups together in South Africa, the Eastern Cape Alliance of Street Vendors (South Africa) appealed to South African street vendors' organisations at the Congress to overcome their differences and to unite into one national alliance of street vendors.

FEDEVAL (LIMA) appealed for more StreetNet activity in Latin America, especially in Argentina and the Andean region, and welcomed the decision for the StreetNet International Co-ordinator to work from Lima in July and August 2004. NFSVK (Korea) appealed for StreetNet to expand into more Asian countries and was requested to assist StreetNet do so by providing contacts in other Asian countries to make this possible. NFSVK also raised the issue of StreetNet's dependence on donor funding which could become problematic in the long term. It proposed that StreetNet establish an international distribution network for trade between members of affiliate organisations to build financial sustainability.

Ghana StreetNet Alliance suggested that StreetNet adopts policies on HIV/AIDS and its effects on street vendors, labour practices in relation to the employees of street vendors and international resolutions on world trade.

AZIEA (Zambia) suggested that StreetNet needs to address the gap often present between leadership and membership by promoting leadership education and training, and that regional structures should be established to run leadership education programmes. KASVIT (Kisumu, Kenya) suggested that StreetNet should not try to be too ambitious but should start small with manageable projects which can be implemented easily, and then expand. Both organisations agreed that fighting and advocating for the rights of street vendors should be the priority.

FEDEVAL (Peru) stressed the importance of working in co-operation with the trade union movement in order to mainstream workers in the informal economy and work against exclusion and marginalisation. They also said that street vendors face marginalisation in the growing competition from multinational supermarket chains, and that international co-operation is needed in facing this problem.

Congress adopted resolutions:

- for the Development of Promotional Policies for Street Vendors by National States;
- for the Promotion of Informal Women Workers of the World;
- for our Continued fight against Harassment and Government Crack-downs;
- on the Vulnerability of Foreign and Migrant Street Vendors;

- on Child labour;
- on the Situation of Street Children.

Resolutions were also passed to form a fund-raising sub-committee and on the financial regulation of StreetNet.

Elections

The Electoral Officer, Sharith Bowmik of Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising, (WIEGO) conducted the StreetNet elections and office bearers elected for the next three years are:

PRESIDENT: Kim Heung-Hyun from NFSVK

VICE-PRESIDENT: Manali Shah from NASVI

TREASURER: Fundile Jalile from the Eastern Cape Alliance of Street Vendors

SECRETARY: Elvis Nkandu Chishala from AZIEA

MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL:

1. **Teresa Ak'ongo** from KASVIT
2. **Fatoumata Bah** from CNTG
3. **Clarisse Gnahoui** from USYNVEPID
4. **Gloria Solorzano Espinoza** from FEDEVAL
5. **Lameck Kashiwa** from AZIEA
6. **Jacob W.K. Otum** from the Ghana StreetNet Alliance
7. **Arbind Singh** from NASVI
8. **Manuel Sulca Escalante** from FEDEVAL

Due to insufficient nominations of women candidates and the StreetNet constitutional requirement that at least 50% of the members of the International Council should be women, there are three vacant positions to be filled by women. The procedure for filling these three positions will be discussed at the first meeting of the International Council in May 2004.

Policy Dialogue

It had been decided to convene a Policy Dialogue between Korean local and national government representatives on the one hand, and representatives of street vendors in different countries, on the other, in order to try to promote a culture of dialogue and negotiation between Korean street vendors and their government authorities. At present a very confrontational relationship exists between them. There has been a long struggle over the restoration of the Chonggye-Chong street in central Seoul, which necessitated the removal of a large number of street vendors, most of them members of NFSVK. The

restoration of Chonggye-Chong is now going ahead despite the resistance of NFSVK and its members, but the Seoul City Council has temporarily made available a stadium until 2005 in the city, where the relocated vendors are operating in an open-air market.

Instead of the proposed Policy Dialogue, another sort of public discussion was held in which street vendors from different countries related the situation in their countries and what policy and other measures have been adopted by their government authorities to improve the situation of those earning their living by selling on the streets or in informal markets. The dialogue was chaired by Sharith Bowmik (representing WIEGO) who participated in the development of the recently-adopted National Policy on Urban Street Vendors in India, and who has facilitated dialogue between street vendors and local authorities in some of India's cities. Ideas on the Korean situation were presented by Ho Young-go (KCTU), Shim Jae-ok (Seoul City Assembly-woman), Choi In-Gee (NFSVK) and Ryu Jung-soon (Korean Research & Consulting Institute on Poverty).

Extracts from some of the resolutions adopted:

Foreign and migrant street vendors:

StreetNet resolves:

1. to oppose xenophobia and to discourage member organisations from adopting xenophobic policies or practices in relation to foreign nationals from other countries;
2. to encourage informal market vendors, street vendors and hawkers in different countries to develop suitable terms and conditions for trade between them to their own advantage;
3. to attend the International Labour Conference of the ILO in June 2004 in order to participate in the Committee on Migrant Labour with the objective of gaining recognition in the wording of its Conclusions about the situation and problems faced by foreign street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers in particular.

Child labour:

1. 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. supports the rights of all children to attend school and encourages street vendors and hawkers to ensure that their children complete their schooling;
3. supports 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 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 close to their places of work,

operating appropriate hours for them. Where possible, such child-care centres should be integrally linked to town or market plans.

Harrassment and government crack-downs:

StreetNet resolves:

1. to fight tirelessly for and initiate international campaigns against all forms of harassment of street vendor throughout the world;
2. to pressurise local and national government authorities to engage in social dialogue with street vendors and their organisations and elected representatives in order to avoid the approach of harassment or engaging in crack-downs.

Organising in the informal economy:

“Combining our efforts”

Forty five organisations that organise informal economy workers assembled at the international conference on “Organising in the informal economy: Combining Our Efforts” held in Ahmedabad, India, from 3th – 5th December 2003.

Most of the 60 delegates assembled were from practitioner organisations in Africa and Asia. There were also a few organisations from Latin America, North America and Eastern Europe present. Several international organisations, including global unions, attended the conference.

The conference was hosted by the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) and organised by a committee comprised of HomeNet Thailand, Nigeria Labour Congress, SEWA India, StreetNet International and Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Ghana.

Speaking at the opening of the Conference, Namrata Bali, General-Secretary of SEWA emphasised the importance of strengthening informal economy organisation within the international labour movement. She said:

We have come together to share, develop strategies, identify existing and new partnerships and the process of representation at international forums such as the ILO – but what is most important is to see how together we can take the informal economy into the mainstream of the workers’ movement.

Dan Gallin, Director of the Global Labour Institute and former General Secretary of IUF (International Federation of Food, Agriculture and Allied Workers) who was not able to be present, said in a recorded video statement to the conference that:

for the foreseeable future we can expect more deregulation and a further growth of the informal economy. The issue is therefore not “formalising” the “informal” but protecting the unprotected.

The first day of the conference was devoted to the visual presentation by different organizations, of the work they are doing. On the second day, Renana Jhabvala

presented a synthesised report of the similarities and differences between the approaches of the different organisations. It was clear that instead of being put off by all the obstacles, the organisations had all “taken the plunge” to organise workers in the informal economy, and then faced the obstacles as they arose.

Types of organisation

Some organisations have been organising informal workers for many years, while others had started doing so recently because they lost many members due to retrenchments and casualisation. Organisations that had recognised the importance of the organisation of informal workers grew as a result of liberalisation. Organisations were found to be a mixture of:

- trade unions organising informal workers;
- national federations or trade union centres;
- international networks or federations.

Strategies

From the presentations it was clear that the strategies of each level of organising is different. Unions are focused on particular issues and are usually smaller, while national federations or centres are concerned about structures and policies and international federations are concerned about how to highlight informal workers and their organisations internationally.

Issues

All the organisations were found to be equally concerned about the following issues:

- the identity and recognition of workers (eg the issue of ID cards);
- to increase the bargaining position of informal workers;
- legitimacy and access to institutions and resources;
- to effect policy and/or legal changes;
- capacity-building of members and/or member organisations.

Some of the organisations are actively trying to find or create alternative employment and develop skills, while others are more focused on protection and bargaining. Many offer services such as access to credit, housing and various social services. Migrancy is an issue for many of the organisations (eg Hong Kong Domestic Workers Union).

There were different approaches to globalisation among the organisations. Some are trying to create or use new markets (eg SEWA), whereas others are actively focused on opposing neo-liberalism.

Structures

Most of the organisations had democratically elected decision-making structures. Some organise both formal and informal workers, such as trade unions that follow their members into the informal economy and create new structures. Some organise informal workers separately, and co-operate with unions working with mainly formal workers. There are also interesting combinations of structures such

as associations as part of unions, and unions sponsoring co-operatives. All the organisations organise by sector, either integrating workers from different sectors into one organisation or federation (eg national centres like Ghana TUC) or uniting workers in particular sectors only.

Creating bargaining structures

Most of the organisations face the challenge of creating new bargaining structures since these rarely exist for workers in the informal economy. There were a range of interesting approaches to this:

- Creating an “employer” where an obvious one does not exist eg SIEU in the state of California, USA.
- Creating a regulatory board, eg different tripartite boards for headloaders in Maharashtra, India.
- Creating a multi-partite structure in a municipality eg in the case of street vendors.

There was general consensus that charging membership fees is important, even if it has to be small – and most organisations have difficulty collecting fees on a regular basis. There were many examples of savings schemes and pooling funds (eg co-operatives, credit unions, etc.). Some organisations obtain funding from their country’s labour movement or from donors, sometimes via global union federations (GUFs).

Plan of Action

Five important areas of concern were raised at the conference, (summarised in the extract from the principle resolution below): organisational sustainability and capacity building, labour laws, collective bargaining, social protection, and employment creation and skills development.

The conference asked the International Organising Committee to continue to act as the co-ordinating committee to take forward the plan of action adopted at the Conference, and to include representation from the Americas and Europe. The conference agreed to strengthen alliances with other organisations working for the informal economy and raise financial resources to take forward the adopted plan of action. It was resolved:

- to set up regional committees;
- to launch campaigns on the basis of the decisions taken;
- to bring together and hold international meetings on industry-specific groups of informal workers in collaboration with Global Unions and National Trade Union Centres. Agricultural workers need special attention in this regard;
- to strengthen and consolidate the organisation of workers in vulnerable sectors such as waste-collecting, domestic workers, etc;
- to document and disseminate the experiences of organising the informal workers and to continue to exchange experiences;
- to build linkages by exchange visits, exposure tours and other means.

- It was agreed that the process started in Ahmedabad needed to be taken forward and to continue to hold such conferences in coming years and to ensure increased discussion of issues and the representation of workers in the informal economy at the International Labour Conference.

PRINCIPAL RESOLUTION (extract)

The Ahmedabad Conference focused on the following five major themes and developed a set of conclusions and recommendations for each, as follows:

1) **Organisational Sustainability and Capacity Building:** *Many organisations of informal workers are new and small and, therefore, require significant capacity building in order to become organisationally sustainable. To build and strengthen sustainable organisations, we recommend:*

- *Organisational structures that are democratic, transparent, and member-based.*
- *Capacity-building of various types, including: organising, leadership, technical and managerial skills.*
- *Stable funding, preferably from members' dues, payment for services, savings and credit, production and marketing or other innovative financing methods.*
- *Participation and representation of informal workers in policy formulation and implementation.*

2) **Labour Laws:** *Labour legislation in many countries has not been reviewed for some time, remains fragmented, and does not cover informal workers. More fundamentally, labour legislation in most countries is premised on an employer-employee relationship and, as such, does not encompass the full range of employment relationships. To address these weaknesses in the law, we recommend:*

- *Review of existing labour laws involving all social partners, including organisations of informal workers, with a view to harmonising laws and to extending laws to cover as many employment relationships as possible.*
- *Development by organisations of informal workers of a common position – and model laws – of what core legal provisions and protections they would like to see in labour laws.*
- *Documentation of innovative laws that have been introduced to cover various categories of informal workers.*
- *Documentation of how organisations of informal workers have used law to protect their membership.*
- *Documentation of how employers have used loopholes in the law to casualise or informalise employment relationships.*

3) **Collective Bargaining:** *Not many statutory bargaining forums exist for workers in the informal economy. Therefore organisations have to create them – in the short-term they have to pressurise authorities to negotiate with them in ad hoc bargaining arrangements. However, the urgent need is to create statutory bargaining structures. Therefore, we recommend:*

- *Documentation of existing collective bargaining structures, both statutory and ad hoc, for informal workers.*
- *Creation of collective bargaining forums, such as tripartite and multi-partite Boards.*
- *Reform of existing laws as needed with involvement of Trade Unions and informal workers' organisations.*
- *Development of strong organisations of informal workers to create pressure for collective bargaining.*

4) **Social Protection:** *Most informal workers remain unprotected and do not have access to affordable, appropriate and timely social security services. Unions and other membership-based organisations are deeply committed to ensuring that informal workers obtain social protection, as a basic right and entitlement. Based on our experiences, we recommend:*

- *Linking and partnering with the state as the main promoter of social protection.*
- *Organising informal workers for social protection through their own workers' organisations in a sustainable manner, based on worker, state, employer and/or other contributions.*
- *Promoting insurance as a necessary service and as a way to organise informal workers.*
- *Building alliances with and between unions, co-operatives, other membership-based organisations, and NGOs for pro-worker social protection policies, regulations, legislation and programmes.*

5) **Employment Creation and Skills Development:** *Employment and employment opportunities are diminishing due to processes that include restructuring of industries and the economy, rapid changes in technology, as well as natural and social disasters. Further, working people, especially women, do not have ease of access to skill development possibilities due to social and resource constraints. Consequently we recommend:*

- *Greater access to workers in the informal economy, especially women, to opportunities to diversify and enhance their skills.*
- *Setting up of Vocational Training Institutes and programmes by unions and government to enable workers of the informal economy to diversify and enhance their skill levels.*
- *Regular consultations between organisations of workers in the informal economy to share best practices within countries as well as at the regional and international level.*
- *Greater access to resources for workers in the informal economy to set up their own livelihood possibilities through co-operatives and other structures.*
- *Support to institutes and processes like global and regional Global Trading Networks for employment creation and market access.*
- *Development of a clear policy at national and international levels regarding employment creation and skills development for workers in the informal economy.*

The Ahmedabad Conference further calls upon:

- *Governments to provide conducive macroeconomic, social, legal and political frameworks for the large-scale creation of sustainable, decent work; to place decent employment at the centre of economic and social development policies; for poverty alleviation and to extend protective legislation and social protection to all workers independent of their status.*
- *Multilateral organisations to place informal workers at the centre of their policies and programmes as a means to eradicate poverty.*
- *Trade unions to intensify organising in the informal economy and adapt their structures or create new structures taking a holistic view of each industry bringing together the formal and informal workers to encourage participation and representation of informal workers, in particular women, to accommodate their specific needs. And to provide services including education, legal aid, provision of medical insurance, credit and loan facilities and establishment of co-operatives in addition to the primary responsibility of collective bargaining.*

Street Vendors speak out at World Social Forum (WSF)

The National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) organised a seminar during the fourth World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai on 17th January 2004, to highlight the economic and political concerns and problems of street vendors. The chief guest was Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Juan Somavia.

Representatives from 15 states of India participated in the seminar. Arbind Singh, co-ordinator of NASVI, told the gathering about NASVI's activities. He said that NASVI had registered in November and was no longer a forum. It now had 132 member organisations and many more were expected to join soon.

The WSF seminar heard that with the initiative taken by NASVI on 31st May 2000, the process of forming a National Policy Task Force on street vending had been started in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The policy had been finalised in September 2003 and its approval by Government was imminent.

Sharith Bowmik of Mumbai University, and a member of the policy Task Force, said that in 1999, a workshop organised in Mumbai decided to organise a survey of street vendors in seven cities of India. The survey highlighted the condition of urban street vendors. Bowmik said that other surveys came up with similar findings on the physical and psychological problems that result from poor work conditions, long hours, low incomes and harassment by police. Bowmik added that 20% of street vendors' small income is pocketed by police and municipal authorities.

He highlighted the fact that the implementation of the new policy by all states was now the important question.

Surveys found that the informal sector holds a substantial proportion of the population, 38% in Mumbai and 50% in Calcutta. Only 2% of the total population

of these cities are in the formal economy. Statistical surveys have counted 250 000 vendors in Mumbai, 100 000 in Patna and 150 000 in Ahmedabad.

Several members of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) who had fought cases in the Supreme Court for the recognition of vending as a fundamental right, spoke at the WSF seminar about their struggles. One, Gokul Prasad, a street vendor for 25 years in Lucknow and Aminabad, said she used to pay money to the police, local administration and city municipality. Under NASVI she had filed a case with the Supreme Court to stop the eviction of street vendors. She said that neither the payments made to local government nor the contribution made by street vendors to the economy was recorded.

Our contribution does not come into picture. From this forum we demand our rights and that our contribution should be accepted in National income.

Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General, said he recognised the problems experienced by street vendors and their struggles for the right to sell on the street, and welcomed the drafting of a new national policy. He said:

You are organised at local and national levels and this way only you have maintained your self respect. NASVI, StreetNet and Footpath ki Aawaj have really highlighted your voice. It's my work to make people understand and from International Labour Organisation, I want to acknowledge that each and every problem of street vendors should be properly discussed.

Indian Government Adopts National Policy for Street Vendors

On January 20th 2004, the Central Cabinet of the Indian Government adopted the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors that NASVI has been pushing for since its formation. Some highlights of the policy include:

- Prepared by representatives of all stakeholders, it is a balanced policy and critics cannot find fault with the elements of the policy.
- Calls for the setting up of Town Vending Committees with representation of Street Vendor Organisations and other stakeholders to regulate street vending.
- Instead of licensing, there will be a simple registration process.
- Based on decisions of the Town Vending Committee, a Ward Committee shall allocate specific places for selling.
- A list of how masterplans can accommodate street vendors has been given.
- Street vendors can be evicted only if the land is needed for explicit public purpose and not just for beautification. Rehabilitation should restore their livelihood to previous levels.
- Access to credit and insurance has been stressed as has water and sanitation.
- Emphasis has also been given to self-governance and organising.
- Requires amendment to police and archaic laws misused by officials to harass street vendors.

Alliances needed between municipal workers and vendors

Local government and municipal workers and street vendor association representatives met to discuss their common work problems and areas of possible alliance at a one-day workshop in Kenya hosted by Public Services International (PSI) on 21st September 2003.

Women representatives from PSI-affiliated public and commercial trade unions in Benin, Senegal, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda met with women representing street vendor organisations in Benin, Guinea, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Uganda that are either affiliated to or associated with StreetNet.

Participants identified many common work problems as women. These included low incomes, long hours, not enough time to participate in union meetings, nepotism in allocation of resources, low or (no) representation in collective bargaining, discrimination, victimisation, sexual and political harassment, lack of health care and HIV/AIDs.

The workshop saw potential conflict between street vendors and municipal workers in situations where municipal workers (in their capacity as enforcement officers) chase away street and market vendors from their places of work, confiscate vendors' goods and collect levies. Further areas of conflict arise when municipal government does not accept clear responsibility for cleansing/hygiene and does not do enough to fight crime on the streets.

It was agreed that strategies to resolve conflicts require women workers in the formal and informal economy to adopt a united front. It was proposed that joint approaches by municipal workers' unions and street and vendors' organisations be made to national governments on local government policy. Joint publicity campaigns about municipal services were needed that involved consumers as well to highlight the need for adequate sanitation and hygiene in the markets. Negotiations between union leaders and leaders of informal economy organisations, and local governments should discuss urban planning issues and the allocation of revenues in local government budgets and find solutions to the poor regulation of street trade and informal markets.

Examples from Tanzania and Guinea were shared where formal economy unions have started production co-operatives and are organising street and market traders around health and safety, micro-credit and hygiene. In Ghana, unions have helped to resolve the problems experienced between street and market vendors and in negotiating on regulation.

Participants agreed to develop areas of alliance in their countries and resolved to find ways to tackle their common problems through a unified approach.

Virtual forum on the informal economy

By Guillermo Perez Herrera, Co-ordinator Informal Economy Project CIOSL/ORIT

The CIOSL/ORIT (International Confederation of Trade Unions, Americas region), is launching an electronic or Virtual Forum on the Informal Economy. The Forum

is an initiative that seeks to encourage the participation of trade unions, social organisations, specialists and others in understanding the problems of the informal economy. The Forum will be in Spanish, Portuguese and English.

We invite discussion to clarify concepts, definitions and discuss determination of measurements and size of the diverse economic and social classes that are actors in this sector. The forum will also be a means by which information can be exchanged on work experiences, in relation to organisation, to the state, social security and social protection, education (in its triple dimension: regular professional and union), gender and the empowerment of the women worker, access to economic and financial services and social alliances, being the most important priorities.

The goal is for workers in this field of labour to be able to fully exercise their fundamental rights, and to therefore have access to development and social and economic justice and integration into the mainstream.

As trade unionist Luis Anderson has said, our challenge: "in addition to imagining and fighting for full employment, was to find answers, to the historical demand that that our societies be capable of providing employment, accommodation, food, social protection and adequate incomes to the people."

We invite you to support this process in solidarity.

Please consult our website <http://www.cioslorit.org>

ILO puts spotlight on street vendor organisation

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) held two ground breaking events jointly with StreetNet in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the 18th and 19th November, 2003.

Street vendors from five major street vendor organisations from different parts of the country gathered on the 18th November for a national workshop with the objective of discussing the possibility of uniting to form a national alliance in order to be able to speak with one voice. The following day, a National Policy Dialogue brought a wide cross-section of municipalities and street vendors' organisations together for the first time to discuss the regulation of street vending. The project formed part of the ILO Programme on Decent Work and the Informal Economy.

On the first day, the national workshop was unanimous on the need for a national alliance of street vendors. It was acknowledged that the lack of unity among street vendors' organisations hampered successful dialogue and effective negotiations with municipal authorities. Agreement was reached on the first steps that needed to be taken in the process of the formation of a national alliance.

Dr E Kenneth Andoh, Director of the ILO Area Office Pretoria, opened the Policy Dialogue on the second day which was attended by representatives from 11 municipalities and street vendors' organisations. Dr Andoh said the policy dialogue was part of a long process, one that needed to have a fruitful outcome even though there were many difficult considerations and aspects to consider. President of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), Mr Petrus

Mashishi chaired the event. He stated that municipal workers in formal economy unions and street vendors' organisations representing workers in the informal economy shared common concerns.

Lameck Kashiwa, General Secretary of the Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA), the keynote speaker, described how the establishment of the alliance of 14 informal trade associations had made it possible for street trader organisations to be involved in Zambian policy formulation for the first time. Following a crisis between local government and street vendors in Zambia, President Levy Mwanawasa formed a policy task force, and AZIEA as a key stakeholder, was invited to take part in the process.

Three municipal approaches to the regulation of street vending were presented, by Sean Dinat (Johannesburg), Diane Abrahams (Mangaung) and Philip Sithole (Durban).

Street vendors' organisations made a plea to municipalities to involve them in the design and implementation of policies affecting street vending. Municipalities showed a clear willingness in principle to do this, but pointed to a number of constraints that had made this difficult thus far. There was an agreement on both sides that ways needed to be found to include street vendors. Participants called on the ILO to facilitate a sustained dialogue between street vendors and municipalities. Other issues discussed at the Policy Dialogue included: street-trade bylaws, application of a developmental approach as part of Local Economic Development (LED) policies, capacity-building both for economic activities and effective representation, and the relationship between South African and foreign street vendors.

A third informal economy workshop, jointly organised by the ILO and the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU), was held between 16th-19th November. The three events were part of an inter-regional ILO project mapping organising strategies of workers in the informal economy. The South African component of the project focused on street trading, construction, home work in the garment industry, the taxi sector and waste management. The South African research has been co-ordinated by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), in co-operation with the Southern African Labour Research Institute (SALRI).

Meeting with street vendors in Mexico

By Pat Horn, StreetNet Coordinator

In January 2004, the Federacion Nacional de Organizaciones de Trabajadores No Asalariados (FNOTNA) of Mexico conducted a seminar on organising in the informal economy for its National Council in the city of Merida. The International Co-ordinator of StreetNet and the Organiser responsible for the informal economy in the Latin American regional organisation (ORIT) of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), Guillermo Perez Herrera, both attended as international guests. Members of the branches of FNOTNA from most of the 32 states of Mexico participated in the seminar.

FNOTNA was founded in 1982, has approximately 750 000 members, and is affiliated to CROC (Confederacion Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos) which

is the second largest national trade union centre in Mexico after the CTM (Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico). Most of the members of FNOTNA are working in the informal economy, and the majority of these are street vendors. We have started talking to the Secretary General of FNOTNA, Carlos Mireles Morales, about the possibility of affiliating to StreetNet.