



## StreetNet News

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*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](mailto:stnet@iafrica.com) visit the website: [www.streetnet.org.za](http://www.streetnet.org.za)

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## **STREETNET INFLUENCES GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

***By Mike Chungu, Lou Haysom, Pat Horn, Lameck Kashiwa***

One of StreetNet's major objectives is to help improve the lives of street vendors. One way of doing this is to persuade governments to adopt progressive policies for the regulation of street vending and informal trade, and provide support for street vendors and other informal traders to assist them earn a better income for the work they do. We are already having success in some countries, where organisations of street vendors which are affiliated to StreetNet are playing a major role in getting their governments to develop new policies on street vending and informal markets.

### **INDIA**

There are thousands of street vendors' organisations in India, and each state in India has different laws about street vending. It has always been difficult for street vendors to speak with one voice and to influence the national government of India. However, after the establishment of the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) the government of India was prepared to negotiate with NASVI as the united voice of street vendors of India. NASVI is the biggest affiliate of StreetNet International, with 389 affiliated organisations of street vendors in different states of India. The Ministry of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation of the Government of India formed a Task Force on Street Vendors to develop a national policy on street vendors, and NASVI has been an active part of this Task Force.

NASVI held many meetings with its member organisations in different parts of India, to find out from the street vendors, what issues they wanted to see in the national policy. Now a first draft of the National Policy on Street Vendors is ready. Compared to the traditional approach to street vendors, which regards them as a nuisance, the draft policy has adopted a refreshingly different approach that regards street vendors as citizens with the right to an adequate means of livelihood, deserving a supportive environment for earning their livelihoods.

The policy deals with all the following aspects of street vending:

- Planning norms - spatial planning, natural markets, norms on the amount of space to be provided for vendors' markets in towns and cities, and facilities which should be provided by civic authorities;
- Regulatory processes, involving registration of street vendors and "non-discriminatory regulation of access to public spaces in accordance with planning standards", revenue and how it should be collected, and establishment of democratically constituted committees for implementation of agreed regulatory measures.
- Monitoring mechanisms.

Additional issues addressed in the draft policy document are access to credit for street vendors, social security, training and skills upgrading to help street vendors "increase their income as well as to look for alternatives".

The Prime Minister of India sent a letter to the Chief Secretaries of all the State Governments in India, informing them of the process of development of a national policy on street vending, and requesting them to identify a nodal officer through whom the Department would liaise with the State on matters affecting

street vendors, and to suspend any punitive actions against street vendors until the national policy is finalised.

## **ZAMBIA**

On October 24, Zambia will celebrate 39 years of independence from the British Empire, but ironically, the Zambian Market Act which goes back further and which has long outlived its usefulness, is still to be repealed. The question being asked by market vendors is why, with its colonial legacy, is the act still in use under a democratic dispensation? There is now at least a broad consensus that the act in its present form is inadequate to provide a transparent and accountable regulatory environment for market vending in the country.

There are two major areas of concern with the Market Act. Under the Act, new markets can only be established with the approval of the Minister of Local Government and Housing, and local authorities have total control over the management of markets.

The council markets built in the 60s no longer have the capacity to accommodate the number of vendors, and markets are filled to capacity. Local authorities are also failing to manage the markets by maintaining the infrastructure and providing services such as water and sewerage, garbage collection, sanitation and security.

Due to lack of space, in some cities including Kitwe, local authorities have allocated sites for trading where market vendors have constructed makeshift stalls. Market vendors are providing services through their committees and associations, yet levies are still collected on a daily basis by the councils.

Using the archaic Market Act, some councils have unilaterally increased the market levy. Recently, the Kitwe City Council increased the levy by 100 percent. Given the intense workers' education programmes in the informal economy, the market vendors organised by Zambia National Marketeers' Association (ZANAMA) and the Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) have gained more confidence and competence in facing the council head on. They refused to accept the increase and demanded that the issue be resolved through negotiations with market vendors.

The Council would not agree to negotiations and resorted to enforcing the collection of the new levy from the market vendors at gunpoint by the state police. This caused market vendors into street protest and subsequently 27 key leaders, including AZIEA President, Elvis Nkandu, were detained.

ZANAMA and AZIEA applied for a court interdict that called for the Council to cancel the levy increase as it was not providing any services commensurate with the levies it collected.

The State President resolved the deadlock when he instituted an all stakeholders' task force, including the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, to review, among other things, the management of markets.

The Task Force has gathered submissions from market vendors, their associations and concerned citizens. The report detailing recommendations is now under study by the President and Cabinet.

The process is not without flaws. Firstly, the submissions were obtained mainly from the urban areas, and the output is likely to lack a rural perspective which is very important, given the role some chiefs play in rural public places including markets.

Secondly, the focus of policy review on market management was narrow and did not include macro-economic and social policies that would enable market vendors to secure stable incomes and alleviate poverty. Thirdly, while the Task Force was gathering submissions, there were instances of some local authorities demanding increased levies and this made the market vendors lose confidence in the taskforce. It seemed the process was merely academic and not a serious social dialogue to address the problems of market vendors.

The market vendors and their associations have been fighting for recognition from local and national government for a long time. It is a good sign that the state is now opening up and seeking solutions to the predicament of market vendors through negotiation and dialogue and reviewing law that has been outdated for many years.

## **GHANA**

Ghana StreetNet Alliance reports that work has begun in gathering information on informal trade in the Ghana economy in preparation for a policy dialogue process with Government.

The need for policy discussion arises partly from the problems that have been identified as a result of the effects of trade liberalisation. One of these problems is the rapid expansion of the informal sector, estimated to employ 80% of Ghana's labour force. Official estimates put trade as the occupation of 18.3% of the population, second only to agriculture. A recent government study on the problems of small farmers and traders in the informal sector highlighted that they are not consulted in the designing or implementation of policy that affects their business and well being, even though they make a significant contribution to the economy. There is a call for the informal sector to design and lead a food marketing strategy to distribute local produce.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

The municipality of Durban has developed an integrated policy on the informal economy. This policy deals with street vending, but also goes beyond street vending to other areas of work in the informal economy, including the more invisible home-based work, which need planning, regulation or support. Street vendors were consulted by means of focus group discussions, meetings with different organisations representing street vendors in Durban, and a big public meeting in the City Hall to which all street vendors in Durban were invited to put forward their views, concerns and suggestions. StreetNet was consulted in an advisory capacity at various stages of the process.

The outcome was a very impressive Policy on the Informal Economy, which has become widely known as something of an international best practice. Understanding that the policy would be worthless without effective implementation, an Implementation Working Group (IWG) was formed to bring on board more officials and Councillors of the entire Durban Unicity, extending the reach of the policy beyond the two central districts where it originated. This has been a long process, with many ups and downs. But the basic commitment to making the policy work has been sustained even through changes in the

personnel responsible for the policy. This in itself makes it an exceptional achievement.

Following these developments, the Provincial Minister of Economic Affairs and Tourism of KwaZulu-Natal (the province within which Durban is situated) decided to initiate a process to develop a policy on the informal economy for the province. A Steering Committee on the Informal Economy was set up, consisting of representatives of street vendors, formal businesses, local government associations, traditional leaders, officials of the Department of Economic Affairs, etc. to advise the Minister and steer the process. StreetNet was asked to be part of the Steering Committee to bring in an element of international expertise. Terms of Reference were prepared by the Steering Committee, which also participated in the selection of consultants and supervised their work. A draft policy is now ready (in the form of a "Green Paper" which is a discussion paper in preparation for the development of provincial policy and the necessary provincial legislation) to be presented to the Provincial Legislature of KwaZulu-Natal.

Both the policy of the Durban Unicity, and the draft policy for KwaZulu-Natal, reflect a change from the traditional outlook towards street vendors, and regard them as part of the economic life of the province and the city. Instead of being seen as a blight on the tourism potential of the city or the province, they are seen as a part of the economic landscape which could even attract tourists and investment with the proper support and facilities. In Durban, regulation has for some time now, been done through a steady process of ongoing negotiations with street vendors through their organisations' elected representatives, without the resistance and violence which continue to characterise relationships between authorities and street vendors in some other South African cities.

## **FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF STREETNET**

***By Pat Horn***

StreetNet's first International Congress will be held in Seoul, Korea, from 16 - 18 March 2004. StreetNet has a policy of rotating the venue of its international events, to reflect its international character. The National Alliance of Street Vendors of Korea (NASVK) which is affiliated to StreetNet, will be hosting the 2004 conference.

### **WHO CAN ATTEND?**

The Congress will be held strictly in accordance with the constitution of StreetNet International. Only delegates from StreetNet affiliates will be able to attend. The number of delegates from each organisation depends on how many members they have affiliated to StreetNet International (i.e. members who are market vendors, street vendors and hawkers) as at 31 December 2003. Because StreetNet operates according to the principle of proportional representation, those with more members are entitled to more delegates and therefore more votes at Congress - and of course, they also pay higher annual affiliation fees in line with the size of their affiliated membership.

Also, according to StreetNet's constitution, if an organisation is entitled to more than one delegate, at least 50% of their delegates have to be women.

The following organisations were accepted as affiliates of StreetNet in June this year:

- ASSOTSI, Mozambique - 2642 members
- CNTG, Guinea - 5000 members
- StreetNet Ghana Alliance - 5810 members
- NASVI, India - 389 member organisations
- SEWA, India - 39 460 members
- SEWU, South Africa - 257 members
- AZIEA, Zambia - 12 member organisations

The following organisations have now also complied with most of the affiliation requirements (some still need to supply their constitutions):

- Self-Employed Union, Bangladesh - 2580 members
- USYNVEPID, Benin - membership figures needed
- Asociacion de Mujeres Tahuantinsuyo, Ecuador - 58 members
- KASVIT, Kisumu (Kenya) - membership figures needed
- NFSVK, Korea - 3000 members
- Malawi Union for the Informal Sector - 2050 members
- FEDEVAL, Peru - 42 000 members

There is still time for other organisations to affiliate to StreetNet and attend the International Congress, provided that they comply in full with the affiliation requirements by 31 December 2003. They must send in their application on the required form available from the StreetNet office, together with their constitution, and pay a joining fee of US \$50. After joining, affiliates have to pay an annual affiliation fee every year in July, depending on the size of their affiliated membership, at a rate of 1c (one USD cent) per member per annum.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING SINCE THE STREETNET LAUNCH ?**

The Interim Committee, which was elected to steer StreetNet until the election of the International Council at the first International Congress, has met twice - in March and again in June 2003. Its next meeting will be in the form of a teleconference in October 2003.

The International Co-ordinator visited four countries in Latin America after a workshop on "the challenges of organising in the informal economy" which was held in Lima, Peru, in April 2003.

The International Co-ordinator and the Secretary, Elvis Chishala, visited ASSOTSI in Maputo, Mocambique in May 2003. At the end of that visit, ASSOTSI completed their application to affiliate to StreetNet. We also met representatives of the Organizacao dos Trabalhadores de Mocambique (OTM), the national trade union centre which had established ASSOTSI when they realised the importance of organising workers in the informal economy. They also assisted ASSOTSI to enter into negotiations with the municipality of Maputo about the rights of informal market vendors.

The International Co-ordinator and a representative from the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) represented StreetNet at the annual congress of street vendors of Korea, which is organised every year in June by NASVK to

commemorate the struggle of street vendors against the crackdown against them during the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. It was a very well-organised event, organised in conjunction with the political, human rights and other civil society organisations who work in alliance with NASVK on many issues where they have to struggle against government policies and actions.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE CONGRESS ?**

The conference will be held over two days. Reports will be presented about StreetNet's progress since its international launch in November 2002, followed by discussion. Amendments to the StreetNet constitution will be considered and decided upon, as well as resolutions. Finally, elections will be held for the International Council of StreetNet which will hold office for three years. Proposed constitutional amendments, resolutions, and nominations for the elections have to be sent to the StreetNet office at least 60 days prior to the congress, and circulated to all affiliates in advance. Organisations nominating candidates for election to the International Council, including the positions of International President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, will be expected to submit a profile of that person so that all organisations can know about her/his experience with street vending and organisational history.

Then there will be a one-day Policy Dialogue, where Korean municipal and government officials will be invited to come and debate with the conference delegates about street vending policy. Since the Korean laws do not recognise the rights of street vendors, we hope to persuade them to reconsider, change their policies and reform their laws.

## **COMBINING OUR EFFORTS: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGANISING WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

***By Pat Horn, StreetNet International Co-ordinator***

In the Conclusions adopted at the International Labour Conference in Geneva on Decent Work in the Informal Economy in June 2002, it is clear that the best way to promote decent work in the informal economy is to increase and advance the level of organisation and representation of workers in the informal economy.

StreetNet International and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India decided that it would be good if trade unions and other membership-based organisations organising workers in the informal economy could meet and consider how best to take further the organisation of workers in the informal economy worldwide. The co-operation between the few (but growing) existing organisations of workers in the informal economy with the mainstream trade union structures, which achieved such good results in the Committee on Decent Work in the Informal Economy at the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in June 2002, can now be taken further - and it needs the joint endeavours of both these movements to succeed.

As yet, we are not aware of any existing forum in which both trade unions and the organisations of informal workers are both properly represented. A start has to be made somewhere. So StreetNet raised some funds from the Ford

Foundation for such a meeting, and an international organising committee has been established consisting of the following organisations:

- StreetNet International
- SEWA
- Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC)
- Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)
- HomeNet Thailand

We hope, at the conference, to have sufficient representatives of the organisations of workers in the informal economy as well as the mainstream trade union organisations, that an appropriately-constituted steering committee of organisations could be selected to drive and co-ordinate the process of promoting the organisation of workers in the informal economy. We hope that such a steering committee could bring together the organisations of workers in the informal economy with the mainstream trade union movement, and also consolidate the efforts of different sectoral organisations (such as global union federations - GUFs) and international confederations in this area of work. Such a steering committee should provide a focus which prioritises the organisation of workers in the informal economy over all the other more immediate issues which always legitimately take up the time of the trade union movement.

The conference will take place from 3 - 6 December 2003 in Ahmedabad, India. The international organising committee met in Ahmedabad on 9 & 10 July 2003 to start planning and preparations. The objectives of the conference have now been defined as follows:

- sharing of experiences between organisational practitioners, and identifying the issues affecting informal workers;
- development of strategies to intensify organisation in the informal economy;
- identification of existing and new partnerships and alliances;
- identification of processes of representation at international forums (eg. ILO, World Trade Organisation [WTO], etc.)
- discussion about co-ordination between organisations of workers in the informal economy, and development of mechanisms for such co-ordination.

Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, and the Minister of Labour of India, will be speaking at the opening of the conference. The Chairperson of the Workers' Group of the ILO, Leroy Trotman, has also been invited to speak at the opening.

Unfortunately, the number of participants will be limited by our budget. Although we have a list of over 50 organisations in the informal economy alone, our

current budget only allows us to pay for six participants from each of the three regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and six national trade union centres that cannot pay for themselves.

We are working hard to raise more funds in order to be able to invite more participants.

## **PROGRESS IN LATIN AMERICA**

### ***By Pat Horn, StreetNet International Co-ordinator***

From 24 - 26 April 2003, I represented StreetNet at a Latin American regional workshop on "Challenges for Workers in the Informal Economy" organised by Dan Gallin of the Organisation & Representation Programme of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing's (WIEGO), with the assistance of PLADES (Programa Laboral de Desarrollo) in Lima, Peru.

This workshop brought together trade unionists, researchers, International Labour Organisation (ILO) representatives and organisations of workers in the informal economy from the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, El Salvador, Uruguay, Venezuela and of course the host country, Peru. Action plans were developed on organising workers in the informal economy, on social security for these workers, and on social dialogue. At this workshop we were able to make great progress in expanding StreetNet's contacts in most of these countries, and we have been in further contact with many of them by e-mail.

We also met members of the Latin American regional office of the ILO in Lima, and discussed further co-operation between WIEGO, StreetNet and the ILO in the region. Already, the ILO has followed up by arranging a workshop on decent work in the informal economy for the Andean region.

We also met with representatives of PLADES and ORIT, the inter-American regional organisation of workers of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and discussed how to work more closely together in the Latin American region. Our talks resulted in a Co-operation Agreement being signed early in August between StreetNet International, WIEGO, the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA - to which PLADES is affiliated) and ORIT-ICFTU.

### **Field visits**

#### **Peru**

After the workshop, I met with Lima-based and other organisations and NGOs with which StreetNet International has had working relationships since the first StreetNet workshop in Lima in 2001, to discuss how to co-ordinate our work since StreetNet's international launch. I also met with a number of Lima-based street vendors' and informal market vendors' organisations. An interesting development since the first StreetNet workshop is that FEDEVAL, a federation of street vendors' and market vendors' organisations based in Lima, have now affiliated to CUT Peru national trade union centre. This is assisting them with building their

organisational capacity and strengthening their democratic structures - and it is also bringing CUT Peru directly into the world of organising in the informal economy.

## **Bolivia**

In Bolivia I was hosted by the StreetNet International Treasurer, Sara Medina Munguia, of the Union Sindical Femenina das Floristas de 22 mayo 1936, and Fundacion Solon, an NGO which has provided great support to the Union. I visited the flower market for which the Union had successfully struggled in the 1950s. Sara and Fundacion Solon organised a meeting for me with women's organisations and NGOs, as well as a meeting with different street vendors' and informal market vendors' organisations. I also met with some ILO representatives and we agreed that it would be important for StreetNet to try to meet sometime with the Bolivian trade union confederation COB (Confederacion dos Obreros de Bolivia) to discuss ways of working together.

We attended the May Day Parade in La Paz on 1 May. Apart from formal trade unions and political organisations, there were many informal sector organisations (*gremiales*) as well as community organisations, rural people's (*campesinos/campesinas*) organisations, organisations of ex-workers and workers without pensions, participating in the parade - reflecting very much of what has happened to workers in recent years under globalisation and the decline of the Bolivian mining industry.

## **Ecuador**

In Ecuador I was hosted by Rosario Curichumbi and the Asociacion de Mujeres Tahuantinsuyo (one of StreetNet's affiliated organisations). I attended a workshop on the collective rights of street vendors, which had been organised for indigenous street vendors from different organisations. We agreed that in order to be able to improve the lives of street vendors and informal market vendors of Ecuador, it would be important for all the street vendors' organisations to come together and form a national alliance.

## **Colombia**

In Colombia I was hosted by the CGTD (Confederacion General de Trabajadores Democratico) which is affiliated to CLAT (the Latin American regional organisation of the World Confederation of Labour or CMT). The organiser of the CGTD affiliate FENALTRAC, Cristobal Camargo, took me to see the union's organising activities in the informal economy in different areas of Bogota. It is clear that they have been organising for some years in the informal economy.

The municipality of Bogota has been embarking on programmes to remove street vendors from the city centre and relocate them to commercial markets, most of which have proved not to be commercially viable. One market which had been established by the vendors themselves in Ciudad Bolivar, is working well, but the municipality is now threatening to take back the land. However the vendors are ready to fight to keep their market. The CGTD has established a training centre in Ciudad Bolivar for women and youth, in co-operation with the government training body SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje) and are fighting against child labour by educating the children about child labour and childrens' rights.

The CGTD also organised a meeting for me with representatives from the other trade union centres in Colombia, ie. CTC and CUT. There is already co-operation

between the three national centres through a joint women's committee (COMOANDE) which also works with PLADES (Peru).

This trip enabled me to identify more potential Latin American affiliates for StreetNet, and encourage them to apply for affiliation. It has also assisted tremendously in building our contacts and networks in the region, in addition to the signing of the Co-operation Agreement with ORIT-ICFTU, WIEGO, IFWEA, with PLADES as regional co-ordinating organisation.

## **Trade unions work for women in the informal economy**

*By Estela Ospina, ISAT, Peru*

The Institute for Health and Work (ISAT), Peru, believes there is an important opportunity for trade unions to strengthen the organisation of women in the informal economy. ISAT works with informal economy workers on health and safety in Peru and has seen working and living conditions improve as a result of a stronger capacity for organisation.

ISAT asked women workers in the informal sector to share their experience of how trade union organisation has affected them. They gave some answers to the question of what advantages there are for street vendors in belonging to and starting trade unions. Working women in the informal sector in different regions of Peru who have decided to join trade unions, also talked about their impressions.

### **The Trade Union Organisation is helpful**

*When I started as a street vendor selling sweets, I did not know anything about organisation.. Slowly the members of [an organisation] encouraged us to form a trade union.. This helps us to know where best to set up stalls to avoid quarrels about the stalls and even to hold discussions with local governments. Julia de Arequipa*

### **Knowing about rights**

*In the beginning my friend used to tell me that we had rights. I used to tell her that we do not have rights, that we are "like third grade potatoes" and nobody cares about us, and that "That is life". After going to several meetings I realised that in fact that is true and that nobody teaches us that we are workers and have rights: to work, to defend our stalls, to work better, and to earn a living. Gema de Trujillo*

### **Study, learn and empower ourselves**

*At the beginning I was afraid to join a trade union, one reason being that all of the members were older men and talked about things that I did not understand. A fellow worker and I told them of the importance of running courses to learn about different things like: What is a trade union and how do you organise one? And about planning work among other things. We went to the meetings and talks and although we were very quiet and hardly asked any questions, we started studying and learning from these experiences and of what was going on around us. In this way we are starting to learn and to lose the fear of participating. One*

*of our colleagues confided in us that she was illiterate; we taught her how to write her name and she decided to go to school to learn although she was 49 years old. Fermina del Callao*

### **It helps to meet with other workers**

*I met Rosa, María and Claudia at a meeting and started talking about our problems. Of the four, three of us are mothers and sole bread winners; we sustain our children with our work, and we get very tired. We have to get up very early, prepare the food to be warmed up later, make sure the children have someone to go to school with; then we have to go to the central market to get the vegetables to sell. Later on we have to close the market stall, to go home to feed the children after school and help them with the homework; then we have to get everything ready again, wash, tidy up, and these are everyday jobs. As we do not have much free time in our hands, at the trade union we always like "to get to the point" to avoid wasting time in discussions and we would rather discuss various solutions for the problems that we encounter. Petronila de Cantogrande.*

These testimonies are important because they show the incorporation of women workers from the informal sector in trade union processes. They found the confidence to say that their rights as women workers must be recognised and heard as well.

Even though they want to change their work conditions, many women workers from the informal sector lack organisational skills. Through trade union participation they are learning these skills.

### **Nepal: Street vendors' leader arrested in mass protest against Government repression**

Narayan Neupane president of the Nepal Street Vendors' Union was arrested on 7th September with many of national union GEFONT's leaders in a campaign of mass defiance led by the Joint Peoples' Movement following the Government's ban of peaceful protest in the country.

Five organisations called for mass defiance of the Prohibition Order because it is unconstitutional. Umesh Upadhyaya, spokesperson for GEFONT, said on September 4th, 100 000s of people from informal and formal sector unions joined with other sectors of the movement in street demonstrations. In the course of the protest GEFONT Chair Mukunda Neupane and Trade Union Dept Chief Binda Pandey and 35 labour activists were arrested with 1 700 political activists in the capital city, Kathmandu.

GEFONT reported on the 7th via e-mail message that during sustained street protest national executive member Krishna Bahadur Ghale had also been arrested with the leaders of seven of its affiliates, including Neupane.

Subsequently, on the 9th of September, Upadhyaya said that under the pressure of sustained mass defiance of the Prohibition Order the government had released all those who had been detained. Protest against the erosion of democracy and the Prohibition Order was continuing.

## **Pakistan: Women vendors support households**

Women street and market vendors are often the major contributors to household income among poor families in Lahore, Pakistan according to research on women vendors in the informal economy.

The research was conducted for the Committee on Asian Women to build information on street vendors in Pakistan. Although women street and market vendors make a significant contribution to the informal economy in which 86% of women are employed, there is little information on their problems or understanding of how legislation and policy could assist them overcome the work problems they experience. The research shows that to support their families, as informal traders Lahore's women have to overcome several obstacles that include getting around gender subordination that discourages women's public participation and social mobility, little or no access to technologies that would increase their productivity and the problem of harassment in market places where they trade.

Among the 40 women street vendors interviewed for the research, it is reported that on average they brought home 63% of their household's monthly income. Ninety percent of the women interviewed were illiterate but all were able to keep their accounts and conduct transactions without confusion or loss. The vendors interviewed for the research included women working as money-changers and fruit, vegetable, cloth, accessories, bangle, ready meals and processed food traders.

The biggest problem that they experienced is daily harassment from the Municipal Committee of Lahore. There is a shortage of places where they can safely trade because trading on the streets is not allowed. Although street traders used to pay rent for trading space, this was discontinued due to the misuse of funds collected by the Municipal Committee of Lahore.

Forty two percent identified their dependence on loans as a problem because after they deducted the interest, daily earnings were often very low. Eighteen percent wanted to be part of a pension scheme but knew such facilities were not available. For 28% of the women, health was a serious problem, especially if a family member was ill or if they missed a day's trading and were then unable to feed their family.

Even though the women vendors experience a range of problems, none of the group interviewed said they knew of or had joined an organisation of women vendors. They said that they were not aware of a group where they could discuss their problems as vendors. They were also ignorant of government assistance schemes for women and the poor and of organisations that would assist them to get the working capital that would make it possible to buy goods to trade at a lower cost so they could earn more.

The research report recommends that street vendors in Lahore should unite and organise around their common concerns. This will enable them to use their collective power to solve their work problems and find ways to build their incomes.

**Compiled from the Report by Mehnaz Haider & Misbah Tahir of the Aurat Foundation, Pakistan for the Committee for Asian Women (CAW), "Conditions of Women Street Vendors in Pakistan - A Survey". Visit [Committee for Asian Women](#) website to read the full report**

## **Quito's informal traders contest relocation plan**

***By Rosario Curichumbi, Tahuantinsuyu Women's Association, Arturo León, Amauta Corporation, Quito, Ecuador***

uring May 2003, about 12 000 street vendors were moved from their places of work. According to officials, as a result of the re-organisation, city streets and pavements are less congested and street and market traders can now trade from popular commercial centres, in stalls that measure 1.50 x 1.50 metres.

In reality, only those traders who paid for the stalls, obtained space to trade in the city's commercial centres. Many could not get stalls and can no longer earn a living because no other informal trade is allowed. Metropolitan police have confiscated merchandise and maltreated street traders who try and trade, using tear gas and force. As a consequence, poverty is on the increase and many people are being forced into crime, and into the ranks of the unemployed.

The Metropolitan Municipality is trying to meet the city's needs by developing infrastructure and creating order on the city streets and pavements. However, we question whether any city development should necessitate that thousands of people lose their only source of livelihood.

We have demanded that the Municipality of Quito develop a sustainable plan of relocation that avoids any street vendor losing his/her source of work; on the contrary, it should look for ways to develop and revive the economy of the community.

Quito's street vendors' organisations - among them the Asociación de Mujeres Tahuantinsuyu (Tahuantinsuyu Women's Association), Corporación Amauta (Amauta Corporation), churches, and other groups are supporting the Jatun Ayllu to demand fundamental rights.

We have negotiated with the Quito Metropolitan Municipality and it has agreed to provide suitable space for commercial centres with the capacity to accommodate at least 5 600 street vendors, to be built. We have managed to negotiate and sign a loan agreement but this does not cover all of the costs, and different ways to raise the finance needed are being discussed. The construction of the new centres will take 2 years, and will start in 2004.

In the meantime, the livelihoods of poorer street vendors are at stake because the problem remains that people who do not have stalls in commercial centres, risk arrest and repression by the City's police if they trade. The Quito Municipality must look for a solution that will enable all street traders to continue to earn an honest livelihood.

## **StreetNet needs a motto**

There is a call for a StreetNet motto or slogan which will inspire and motivate the organisation and its affiliates which work internationally, regionally and locally, on three different continents of the planet to work together for a common goal and vision.

The motto or slogan should reflect Streetnet's mission to defend the rights of street vendors internationally and the diversity of its affiliates which come from different regions of the world. It could include the important role of negotiation, democracy and planned use of public space to benefit all people and the legitimate rights of street vendors to earn an honest livelihood in all countries.

An example of a United Nations slogan that is used a lot is "The global is local". Its message is there is an important connection between what is happening at the village, town, city and country level and the international and global level.

The StreetNet motto or slogan should be short and easy to translate into other languages as well.

Please send your suggestions to StreetNet before the end of December 2003. E-mail [stnet@iafrica.com](mailto:stnet@iafrica.com)