

Another World Cup is possible?

“Street vendors in Brazil should act before the World Cup! Here, we only heard about the conditions and what we are allowed to do and not to do, now, today, when it is only a few days before the World Cup. They need to make their voices heard before things get finalized.”

Mama Majola, Nelson Mandela Bay Street Vendors’ Association, South Africa June 2010

The **World Class Cities Campaign** was launched in 2007 by **StreetNet International** and other organizations of urban poor, including shanty town dwellers, migrant and refugee communities, street children’s groups and sex workers, prior to the World Cup in South Africa. Its aim is to expose policies of forcible removals or evictions carried out in order to beautify cities prior to sports mega-events and to help create greater global awareness about the need to rethink urban planning and services so as to actively support the needs and interests of informal economy workers.

StreetNet is an international federation of informal traders’ organisations with membership in 40 countries worldwide. It seeks to promote the rights of informal traders to decent working conditions and to lobby for urban policies and regulations which are inclusive and participatory.

In South Africa, the host cities agreements with FIFA set up wide exclusion zones around both the stadiums and the fan parks where only official sponsors were allowed to trade. These exclusion zones effectively prohibited informal traders from setting up in their usual posts – so, not only did they not benefit, but they actually lost their daily income during the World Cup.

In Brazil, the WCCA campaign was begun early in 2011 and is still in an initial research phase. The campaign has a bottom-up approach and builds on the past mobilizations and struggles of street vendors. Its aim is to support and strengthen existing street vendors’ organisations through leadership training and to establish a broad coalition of informal workers and their allies, to achieve better bargaining conditions for the urban poor as they face evictions and harassment because of urban renewal projects in the context of the FIFA World Cup. The campaign also hopes to contribute to the establishment of municipal bargaining forums in all host cities and an eventual national bargaining structure.

The first step of the campaign in Brazil consists in mapping the main representative organisations of street vendors in the 12 host cities. The street vendors’ scene in Brazil is particularly complex, and the existing street vendors’ organisations are largely informal, fragmented, local and with limited resources. In Brazil, there are few specific public policies or programmes to assist street vendors improve their livelihoods

Most street vendors’ organisations are only just beginning to take into account both the opportunities and the risks associated with the World Cup. There have been incidents with street vendors being moved away from traditional vending sites in order to make way for the construction of new roads. But as was the case in South Africa, it is thought that the major municipal attempts to “clean up” the cities will take place 6-12 months before the World Cup when decisions are made to create exclusion zones around the Stadiums and fan parks where only official sponsors can trade. In South Africa, the level of organisation of street vendors was quite disparate and it was not possible to create any national forum or advocacy body. There are many lessons to be learned to make another World Cup possible in Brazil.