

Resolution 31: Inclusive organising

This Sixth International Congress of StreetNet:

NOTING that

1. In relation to StreetNet’s founding policy on Class & Gender Organisation, which says “StreetNet will remain committed to focus primarily on the needs of the poorest street and market vendors and hawkers” a basic contradiction is emerging in the behaviour of some of StreetNet’s affiliates. After many years of fighting for their members to be authorized or permitted to trade, those who have succeeded in securing their permits sometimes lose interest in those new entrants to the market who do not have permits, and some of our organizations find themselves (intentionally or unintentionally) supporting attacks of the authorities against those new entrants without permits, who are the poorest and most vulnerable in the sector.
2. Many street vendors, especially those who have more entrepreneurial aspirations, are caught in what is sometimes called a “*petit-bourgeois* dilemma” of not really being sure whether they want to be in the working class or the *bourgeoisie* (middle class). Those who are driven more by their individual self-interest often try to side-track their organizations from their mission to fight for the whole class which they represent, to focusing on their own more narrow interests. This is what we call class capture (i.e. by the entrepreneurial class).
3. While all StreetNet’s affiliates believe in the mantra “Unity is Strength” – at the same time, many of them succumb to the tendency of trying to keep other organizations out once they are in. In the formal trade union movement, this is known as a “closed shop”. It is a contradictory and undemocratic tendency which may secure the short-term interests of the “in-group” but is very much against the longer-term interests of the organisation as a whole.
4. Like in many other workers’ organisations, the following undemocratic trends have been noted in some of our affiliates:
 - Leaders who act as sole spokespersons for their organizations;
 - Gatekeeping by affiliates’ leaders;
 - Tardiness in convening elective conferences as constitutionally required;
 - Appointment of leaders instead of democratic electoral processes;
5. Any practice of male leaders removing strong independent women leaders needs to be opposed wherever it emerges in affiliates – as well as any practice of male leaders bringing their spouses and/or partners when women representatives are required to attend StreetNet meetings in order to comply with StreetNet’s women’s quota in the absence of strong independent women leadership;

HEREBY RESOLVES

1. to strengthen our fight against class capture which is driven by personal self-interest;
2. to increase our efforts to work with and bring into StreetNet the most representative organisations of the poorest and most marginalised street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers in each country;
3. to increase unity among the affiliates/non-affiliates existing in one country who represent street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers;
4. to establish a rigorous culture of self-analysis and self-criticism in StreetNet affiliates, with a transparent practice of mutual frankness between affiliates, for the strengthening of internal democracy by means of the elimination of the abovementioned undemocratic trends and practices;
5. to ensure that all aspects of StreetNet’s Code of Conduct are fully understood by all, widely publised and explained, and fully complied with by all.

PROPOSED: USYNVEPID Benin

SECONDED: FTUEU Ukraine