



45 Claribel Road Windermere
Durban 4001, South Africa
www.streetnet.org.za

+27 313 011 618

StreetNet's Regional position in occasion of the Southern African Development Community Summit in Harare: Economic development beyond industrial policy

Our communique to the summit of the Southern African Development Community taking place in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 17th to 19th August 2024. This summit is crucial as it brings together leaders from the 16 member states to discuss regional integration, economic development, and security issues. It provides a platform for collaboration and decision-making that can drive sustainable growth and stability in the region. The outcomes of this summit have the potential to shape the future of Southern Africa. Heads of States and Governments of the Member States will gather to discuss a common regional strategy around the theme **“Promoting Innovation to Unlock Opportunities for Sustained Economic Growth and Development towards an Industrialized SADC”**.

StreetNet International the global organization for informal economy workers namely of the sector of commerce, represented in 56 countries with a membership of over 700000 members globally, including in 13 countries of the SADC region, expresses its regional position to be handed to the SADC Secretariat by the StreetNet International President Lorraine Sibanda and other regional leaders.

StreetNet's participation is significant as it ensures that the concerns and needs of street and market vendors who are informally engaged in trading activity are included in the regional economic agenda. By expressing the position with precise needs and demands for its constituency at the summit, StreetNet advocates for policies that support the livelihoods of street vendors, who are a vital part of the local and national economies. This inclusion can lead to more equitable and inclusive economic growth in the SADC region.

StreetNet's membership in the region

StreetNet has affiliates in 13 countries in the Southern and Africa Region. Among the SADC members, the organization is represented in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, ESwatini, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, Lesotho and Zambia. Plus, StreetNet has 3

International Council members

Lorraine Sibanda (Zimbabwe) (President), Alberto Santana (Dominican Republic) (Vice-President), Jamaladdin Ismayilov (Azerbaijan) (Secretary), Jeanette Nyiramasengesho (Rwanda) (Treasurer), Mwijuka Jesca (Uganda), Kashiwa Lameck (Zambia), Gbenga Komolafe (Nigeria), Maya Gurung (Nepal), Anthony Kwache (Kenya), Afiavi Anastasie Chodaton (Benin), Martha Garcia Santoyo (Mexico), Alice Nkunzimana (Burundi), Jose Herminio Diaz (El Salvador), Jorge Antonio Peralta (Guatemala), Tamara Bodnari (Moldova).



45 Claribel Road Windermere
Durban 4001, South Africa
www.streetnet.org.za

+27 313 011 618

affiliates in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is included in the West and Central Africa region, according to StreetNet's regional classification.

In total in the region, StreetNet represents 234.915 informal traders. In addition, 25.209 members are present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Key Regional provisions

#1 No economic development can be achieved without workers in the informal economy

Informal economy represents 85% of the total employment in sub-saharan Africa, according to the International Labour Organisation. Informal traders in the region face numerous challenges, including lack of access to formal financial services, inadequate legal protections, and limited access to social security benefits. Additionally, they often encounter harassment and eviction from trading spaces by local authorities, which hampers their ability to conduct business effectively to survive. These obstacles make it difficult for informal traders to contribute fully to economic development, despite their significant role in the economy.

Economic development of any nation cannot be attained without the complete inclusion of workers in the informal economy in policy development processes. Informal and popular economies represent an unmatched source of social and economic innovation. **Street vending, in particular, represents an opportunity for micro-entrepreneurship and self-support for the urban poor - and for traditionally marginalized groups such as migrants or people with disabilities.**

Women make up the majority of street vendors in many countries: including these workers in regional, national and local development plans also means opening the door to greater gender equity and representation of women in economic life. Recognition and smooth formalization of informal economy workers has the potential for job creation, wealth redistribution and harmonious development beyond traditional industrial policies.

#2 A just taxation and formalization strategy is key for inclusive growth

Inclusion of informal economy workers cannot be achieved without a just formalization strategy for all sectors. Access to social dialogue forums is a key element for just formalization: only by including organizations of street vendors' representatives in a permanent engagement with authorities, all the parties' interests can be respected and the fundamental labor rights respected.



45 Claribel Road Windermere
Durban 4001, South Africa
www.streetnet.org.za

+27 313 011 618

Authorities should contribute to provide a platform for informal economy workers to voice their concerns and contribute to policy-making processes that directly affect their livelihoods. **Through these forums, street vendors and other informal economy workers can negotiate fair working conditions, secure legal protections, and gain access to essential services such as healthcare and social security. Moreover, fostering an inclusive dialogue fosters mutual understanding and cooperation between authorities and informal economy workers, leading to more sustainable and equitable economic development.**

Those who got through the process of formalization should be protected in all cases from arbitrary eviction, police brutality and other forms of violence. Formalisation should not just mean taxation, identification and enhanced surveillance for workers but also **access to social rights, such as social protection, health and pension schemes.**

#3 Street vendors are agents of environmental sustainability and food security

Street vendors are among the **most vulnerable populations to extreme climate events, being them heatwaves, wind storms, and cyclones.** On the other hand, street vendors can act as agents for a more environmentally friendly consumption, as many of them sell recycled goods and promote reuse and a circular economy.

Food security for the urban poor is also a key factor in environmental adaptation policy: thanks to street vendors, urban populations have access to low price quality food within their geographical reach.

Street vendors play a crucial role in reducing food waste by selling fresh produce and prepared foods that might otherwise go unsold or be discarded by larger retailers. They often purchase surplus or slightly imperfect items from markets and wholesalers, which they then sell at affordable prices to local communities. This not only provides access to nutritious food for low-income families but also helps reduce the overall amount of food waste in urban areas.

Overall, climate crisis resilience and sustainable development are not attainable without street vendors.

StreetNet Regional Affiliates urge the SADC Member states to open the door for a constructive and inclusive social dialogue and joint advocacy efforts to tackle challenges hindering the informal economy workers' rights and general prosperity and sustainable development of all Member states of the Region.