



**STREETNET
INTERNATIONAL**

**African
Regional
Platform of
Demands on
Social
Protection**



StreetNet resolution on Social Protection

As proposed and seconded by StreetNet Congress Delegates at the 7th International Congress, held in March 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda:

NOTING

That informal economy employment and activities has grown the world over, and that more than 80 per cent of the world's population survive through economic activities in the informal economy either in planned or unplanned areas.

The insecurity, precarious working conditions, and lack of access to appropriate risk management tools which helps in cushioning the impact of working and living conditions.

The importance of social protection to the lives of every citizen now and in the future which may also improve the economy of the world.

OBSERVING

Governments' bias in the application of social protection instruments with concentration on formalized workers, but acknowledging informal economy economic contributions to national economies and that informal economy workers are workers like any other workers.

APPLAUDS

The UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights on the application of Social Protection to all, Article 22 and 25 which states as follows:

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to its realization through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 25

Everyone, has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

HEREBY RESOLVES

That StreetNet engage the UN especially the ILO to mainstream Social Protection coverage to all its member states by domesticating the Social Security Convention (No. 102), the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202) and the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation (No. 204).

That each StreetNet affiliate advocate and petition its government to extend Social Protection coverage to the workers in the informal economy with technical and all necessary support from StreetNet International.

Demands

I. Legal frameworks

1.1 **Workers** – whether employees or self-employed – should be recognized and included within the ambit of labour law. The focus should shift from the employment relationship as the basis of regulation and towards the regulation of “work” and “workers”. Legal frameworks should be reviewed and revised to this effect, ensuring that social protection is extended through labour law to all workers despite their employment relationship.

1.2 **Governments** must ratify and domesticate global and regional legal frameworks related to the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy in the African region, including ILO Convention 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards), ILO Recommendation 204 on the Transition from Informality to Formality, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security.

1.3 **Reforms** must not remain as legal certainties alone. Shifts towards more supportive legislation must be accompanied by realistic and actionable plans for implementation which include the participation of membership-based organizations’ representatives of workers in the informal economy.

Market in Accra, Ghana, 2022. Picture by StreetNet Media.



2. Financing of social protection

2.1 The financing of social protection should be based on **solidarity principles** – from each according to her ability, to each according to her needs; those who earn relatively more in society should contribute more in order to subsidize access for those who are less able to contribute.

2.2 Government budgets must include **specific targets for spending on social protection programmes** which include workers in the informal economy, so as to enhance the adequacy of benefits to all workers.

2.3 To ensure sufficient financing for social protection, **the tax base must be bolstered through progressive mechanisms which do not include placing a heavier tax burden on poorer workers in the informal economy.** These include, but are not limited to, interventions such as increases in sin taxes and taxes on luxury goods, wealth taxes, including social protection in climate change and disaster risk reductions strategies and financing, halting illicit financial flows, and ensuring that corporate taxes are fair and proportionate.

2.4 **Additional taxes or increases in taxes which are likely to impact workers in the informal economy, especially poorer workers, should be negotiated with representatives of membership-based organizations prior to implementation.** Such interventions should be carefully designed to minimize regressive impacts. Increases in consumption taxes such as Value Added Tax should exclude basic goods and services, and taxes on digital transactions should be limited to taxing large transfers.

2.5 Contributory social protection schemes should set **realistic contribution rates which are commensurate with earnings in the informal economy.** Recognizing the heterogeneity of the informal economy, contribution rates must be flexible to allow for greater or smaller contributions depending on income status. Mechanisms such as subsidies and matching contributions must be in place to ensure that poorer workers especially women, who spend time outside of the labour market due to care responsibilities receive adequate benefits despite their smaller or interrupted contributions.

2.6 Mechanisms such as the Global Social Protection Fund must be adequately financed by OECD countries to **facilitate global redistribution since redistributive financing is equally important within and between countries.**

2.7. **International solidarity financing** must be promoted as critical to ensuring that poorer countries are better able to extend social protection.

3. Governance of social protection schemes

3.1 **Social dialogue must be the basis for all social protection reforms** and must directly include representatives of organizations of workers in the informal economy, including organizations of self-employed informal economy workers.

3.2 **Representatives of workers in the informal economy across sectors must be included at all stages of the process of developing and implementing social protection programmes.** They must be consulted in the design phase, must have a position in the governance of the scheme, and must be actively involved during the implementation phase. The principle of “Nothing for us without us” must be observed.

3.3 **Governance of social protection schemes must be professional, accountable, and transparent.** For contributory schemes, workers must have access to all information regarding their contributions. Easily accessible and functional feedback mechanisms must be integrated into the scheme for all workers to communicate with scheme officials about their concerns.

3.4 Social protection programmes aimed at workers in the informal economy should be **managed through inter-ministerial coordinating platforms which means that stronger and weaker ministries work together.**

4. Design of social protection schemes

4.1 Contributory social protection programmes must use **graduated contribution models to allow for flexibility in both the amount and the timing of contributions.**

4.2 The administrative requirements of all social protection programmes, whether contributory or non-contributory, should be simplified to allow for the **easy registration, contribution, and benefit receipt processes.**

4.3 **Digital tools** should be used to facilitate the payment of contributions and receipt of benefits. However, these **tools must be user-friendly, inclusive, and accessible to everyone;** manual options should be available and additional support must be provided to those who might need help to use digital tools.

4.4 Benefits must be designed so that they speak to both the **immediate and long-term priorities of workers in the informal economy,** even if these benefits fall outside the strict definition of social protection. They must expressly include the specific needs of women working in the informal economy, including maternity benefits and access to childcare services.

4.5 Payment of benefits must be **timely and consistent.** This will enable the building of trust between workers in the informal economy and the social protection system.

4.6 Social protection programmes must be designed so that they **strengthen association and organization amongst workers in the informal economy.** This can be achieved in multiple ways depending on context, including strengthening linkages with social and solidarity economy schemes developed by worker organizations..

5. Implementation of social protection schemes

5.1 Robust and realistic implementation of social protection schemes must be a priority, with clear developed plans for implementation and shared with organizations of workers in the informal economy.

5.2 Implementation plans must be developed in a participatory manner and, recognizing the key role that organizations of informal economy workers play in awareness raising process, should allow for adequate resources to be set aside to support this function.

5.3 Implementation plans must include a clear communication strategy and funding for its implementation, ensuring that informal economy workers understand the scheme, its importance and access to it. This information should be provided in local languages through accesible media platforms to all workers.

5.4 A clear monitoring and evaluation strategy must be in place to ensure that goals are being met, and any problems with social protection schemes have been collected. This should include regular reviews of the scheme to align to current trends and realities as they arise.

Food vendor in Dakar, 2022. Picture by Marta Moreiras



Stakeholder Expectations

Acknowledging that the State has ultimate responsibility for the provision of social protection and the facilitation of participatory processes towards that, **informal economy workers call on other key stakeholders to play a role in facilitating access to social protection for ALL workers.** These include:

A. Trade unions

A.1 Trade unions must strive for the **inclusion of democratic organizations of workers in the informal economy, including at the level of regional trade union confederations.** Trade union constitutions must be updated to allow for full membership of organizations of informal economy workers.

A.2 Trade unions have a key role to play in **building the capacity of informal economy workers to engage in negotiation and advocacy for improved social protection.** This includes the development and implementation of policy-relevant research, training, and education on running democratic organizations, organizing strategies, social and labour protection, opening up opportunities for alliance-building with key social protection stakeholders inside and outside of the workers movement, and magnifying the demands of informal economy workers.

A.3 Trade unions must **actively support the direct inclusion of representatives of informal economy workers in social dialogue, particularly where such organizations are already affiliated as full members.** Representatives of workers in the informal economy must also be represented in all key decision-making bodies of the unions.

B. Civil Society Organizations

B.1 Civil society organizations shall create a **collaborative environment for alliances for social protection, building on the respective strengths of various organizations.** Organizations of informal economy workers must be included in these alliances.

B.2 Civil society organizations may **use their own expertise to contribute on advocacy, networking, research and building partnerships to support resource mobilization,** to be shared with organizations of informal economy workers.

C. Organizations of Informal Economy Workers

C.1 It is the responsibility of organizations of informal economy workers to build a **coherent strategy and agenda on social protection and to ensure buy-in from their membership.** This includes awareness raising and education on social protection, including through the innovative use of media channels.

C.2 Organizations of informal economy workers must **build organizations with an active and committed membership, promoting values of good governance and transparency in the running of their organizations.** They should also strive to develop services for their members, including savings, social protection and other services

C. 3 Organizations of informal economy organizations must be prepared to **become active actors of existing alliances and platforms committed to promote inclusive social protection at national, regional and global levels.** This includes participating in educational activities, learning to engage with elected government officials effectively, and learning how to analyse budgets in order to make the fiscal case for the extension of social protection.

Contributors

1. Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA) Zimbabwe
2. Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) Zambia
3. Association of Vendors and Marketeers in Zambia (AVEMA) Zambia
4. Rwanda's Trade Union for Domestic and Independent Workers in the Informal Economy (SYTRIECI) Rwanda
5. Fatiere Nationale des Travailleurs du Secteur Informelle (FAINATRASIT) Togo
6. Federation of Informal workers organisation of Nigeria (FIWON) Nigeria
7. Confédération National des Travailleurs du Sénégal (CNTS) Sénégal
8. Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT) Kenya
9. Sierra Leone Traders Union (SLeTU) Sierra Leone
10. Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (TUICO) Tanzania
11. Union Syndicale des Vendeuses et Vendeurs de Pièces Détachées et Divers du Marché de Dantokpa (UNSYNVEPID-CSPIB) Bénin

We also thank the technical experts from the International Trade Union Confederation – Africa, the Africa Platform on Social Protection, and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, who contributed to the development of this platform of demands.

 media@streetnet.org.za

 +351 938 291 185

 www.streetnet.org.za

 @StreetNetInternational

 @street_net_international

 @Streetnet1