



StreetNet News No. 1 February 2003

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 visit the website: www.streetnet.org.za

Contents:

- **Street traders from 17 countries gather for the StreetNet launch**
- **Interim committee elected**
- **Our international struggle takes root**
Address by Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
- **City welcomes StreetNet International**
Address by Deputy Mayor of Durban, Logie Naidoo
- **Korea: Street vendor driven by officials to takes his own life**
By Kim Heung-Yeon: Chairman of the National Street Vendors' Federation of Korea
- **Message from Bombay Hawkers Association**
By Suresh Kapile, General Secretary
- **How to register as a member of StreetNet International**
- **Colombia's informal sector under the spotlight**
By Cristobal Camargo, Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores del Comercio (FENATRAC, CGTD)
- **Zambia: New Alliance formed**
By Kashiwa Lameck, general secretary Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA)
- **Sidewalk clearing operations in Manila**

Street traders from all over the world gather for Streetnet International's founding conference

The StreetNet International launch at the Coastlands Hotel, Durban, South Africa, was opened on the evening of 12 November 2002 by Ela Bhatt, the founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of India. Bhatt said the occasion heralded an important step forward for organisation of the informal economy and the achievement of their economic rights. She traced the progress that had been made since the groundbreaking meeting of street traders in Bellagio, Italy where it was recognised that street traders face similar problems in most of the world's cities (see full report in this issue) and need to forge alliances.

The opening dinner was attended by participants and 72 invited guests who included local government representatives, researchers and organisations that worked in co-operation with StreetNet during the three-year preparations for the launch from 2000 - 2002.

Mbu Mchunu, StreetNet Steering Committee member, reported to guests and participants on the work of the organisation and that it had achieved the goals it had set since January 2000. In his address, Durban Deputy Mayor, Logie Naidoo, told guests and participants that Durban was committed to a policy on the informal economy where street traders are recognised as valued economic actors and citizens of the Unicity. He warmly welcomed the international street trader organisations' delegates to Durban.

Constitution

At the start of proceedings on Wednesday 13th, 54 participants from 17 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America briefly introduced themselves and their organisations. The next session was on the adoption of the constitution. The draft constitution had been circulated prior to the conference and revisions based on comments and suggestions from participants were the basis of the discussion. The conference decided that the name of the organisation will be **StreetNet International**, and the entire constitution (with some amendments) was adopted unanimously.

Logo

Participants inspected the different logo designs which had been prepared. Some organisations sent suggestions for the specifications for a logo. One design was clearly popular among most participants and a long discussion took place on how to adapt it. It was agreed to develop the logo in line with the ideas agreed upon and to present it to the first International Congress for final adoption.

Policy resolutions

Delegates adopted three policy resolutions put to the floor on questions that were identified as important in guiding the organisation at StreetNet regional workshops in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A resolution was passed extending condolences to the family of Kasuba Mwamba, the vice-president of the Alliance

of *Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA)*, who passed away in a motor accident in Zambia on the way back from the airport on Tuesday 12 November after seeing off the *Zambian delegate* to the launch.

Party Political policy

- StreetNet International will retain a position of neutrality in relation to all political parties in all the countries where StreetNet has member organisations.
- StreetNet will support policies which are favourable to street and market vendors and hawkers only on the basis of the issues.
- StreetNet will pressurise and lobby all political parties and governments in all countries to support the policies on the regulation and development of services and facilities for street and market vendors and hawkers which StreetNet is promoting.

Class and Gender Organisational Policy

- StreetNet will focus primarily on the needs of the poorest street and market vendors and hawkers, including the particular needs of women vendors.
- StreetNet is committed to building strong leadership among the poorest and most disadvantaged vendors, particularly women.
- StreetNet will continue to work in alliance with the international trade union movement and its affiliated national organisations, the international co-operative movement, credit organisations and other organisations which are promoting the collective self-empowerment of the poorest workers in the formal and informal economy through democratic accountable membership-controlled organisations.

Policy on Sustainability and Financial Self-Sufficiency

- StreetNet International aims and seeks to become financially self-sufficient, for the sake of accountability and commitment of member organisations, who will be required to pay affiliation fees; other means of fundraising will also be identified and pursued.

Another six policy resolutions were handed in from the floor, on the following topics:

1. Encouraging mergers into national alliances (*WEAZ, Zambia*)
2. Circumstances under which member organisations could be expelled from StreetNet (*ASOMIVAN, Costa Rica*)
3. Promoting the rights of street vendors (*Alternativa, Peru*)
4. Promoting subsistence and development of street and market vendors (*Alternativa, Peru*)
5. In protest of the Korean government's driving of a street vendor to his death (*NFSVK, Korea*)
6. Partnership-building (*KATINIG, Philippines*)

As there was not sufficient time left to discuss these resolutions, it was agreed that they would be typed and circulated to all participants after the launch, with the purpose of tabling them for adoption by the Interim Committee or the International Congress.

Three-year Plan

The draft 3-year plan for 2003-2005 had been circulated prior to the launch. During discussion there was agreement on the following:

New regions

StreetNet should gather information about areas outside of Latin America, Asia and Africa, particularly the developing world. Work in these areas, particularly Central America and the Caribbean, should start based on the information gathered.

Affiliation fees

It was agreed that member organisations of StreetNet should pay a joining fee of \$50 on registration, and thereafter an annual fee which should be proportional to the size of membership. This annual fee should be determined by the Interim Committee and finalised by the International Congress at its first meeting, due in early 2004.

Law, litigation and the informal economy

Information should be gathered on legislation and constitutional provisions in different countries/cities on livelihood rights, human rights and other provisions, to assist organisations taking up legal battles. This is something StreetNet could ask the Law & Informal Economy project of WIEGO's Organisation and Representation programme to do.

In many countries there are legal clauses regarding the right to work and the use and recovery of public space, which are contradictory in the case of street vendors and their experience, and which need to be challenged.

In the Philippines there is a very good law on the rights of street vendors to earn and develop their livelihoods on the streets - Ordinance 452 - but it is not implemented. In fact, we have been receiving regular reports about harsh crackdowns on street vendors in Manila. It was agreed that StreetNet should pilot a campaign for the implementation of Ordinance 452 in the Philippines.

International forums

StreetNet needs to ensure the representation of street vendors' organisations in international labour forums such as the International Labour conferences of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICFTU), and other forums such as international conferences of Mayors, etc.

Policy dialogues

There have been policy dialogues in India and Ghana, and as a result in Ahmedabad street vendors are being harassed less than before. It was agreed that policy dialogues should be arranged in more countries.

New street vendors' Code or Declaration

The Bellagio Declaration needs to be revised and updated to produce a new Code, or Declaration, which could be used with municipalities, and parts of it even incorporated into law.

Social security

StreetNet needs to meet with WIEGO's Social Security programme about work on the social security needs of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers specifically. The focus should be on social protection for mothers, children and the elderly, as well as business insurance.

Specific projects

Member organisations wishing to put forward specific proposals for adoption as StreetNet projects, should send detailed proposals. The International Council would have to consider such proposed projects, and if it is agreed that it should be taken on as a StreetNet project, StreetNet would have to allocate existing funds if there are, or try to raise funds for it. Such projects would include the following types of activities:

- marketing projects, including import-export trade between member organisations;
- technical assistance on trade issues;
- reform of laws and regulations;
- organising projects (organising street vendors);
- fights against corruption;
- empowering vendors not to be dependent on intermediaries.

Organisational support

StreetNet would probably not be able to raise much funding for the expenses of member organisations. However, the best way to build the capacity of member organisations to support themselves would be by StreetNet arranging fundraising training, and providing contact details of donors for member organisations to approach directly for funds. Member organisations will then develop their own independent relationships with donors.

Plight of Korean street vendors

It was agreed that the story of Park Bong-Gyu, who had immolated himself in protest as a result of the poor treatment received at the hands of the Korean authorities, should be published in the StreetNet newsletter and the website (see this issue for full report). StreetNet member organisations should hand letters of protest to their Korean embassies and consulates, as requested by the National Street Vendors' Federation of Korea (NFSVK). It was pointed out that there are many countries where street vendors are being viciously oppressed, such as in Colombia where large numbers of people are regularly being assassinated, and agreed that details of such oppression should be forwarded to StreetNet for similar publication in the newsletter and website. StreetNet will circulate these reports to member organisations and appeal for international support.

The first properly constituted International Congress is scheduled to take place in March 2004.

The full three-year plan and constitution, as adopted by the conference, are available on StreetNet's website - <http://www.streetnet.org.za>

INTERIM COMMITTEE ELECTED TO OFFICE

An Interim Committee was elected to office. The members of the committee will hold office until the first StreetNet International Congress in March 2004.

President: Churchill Mrasi, Informal Business Forum, Gauteng, South Africa

Vice-president: Rashim Bedi, SEWA, India

Treasurer: Sara Mungia, Union Feminina de Floristas 1936, Bolivia

Secretary: Elvis Nkandu Chisala, Alliance for Zambian Informal Economy Associations

Additional members: Fatoumata Bah, CNTG, Guinee; Jacob Woods, Ghana, Trade Union Congress; Fikiswa Sifika, Eastern Cape Alliance of Street Vendors, South Africa.

OUR INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE TAKES ROOT

Speech by Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA

Ela Bhatt, internationally-renown founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, opened the launch of StreetNet. Founded in 1972, SEWA now has 420 000 members and is the largest trade union in India. This organisation was the inspiration for the founding of the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in Durban, South Africa, many years later in 1994.

A lawyer by training, Ms Bhatt is a respected leader of the international labour, co-operative, women's and micro-finance movements. She has won several national and international awards. She was one of the founders of Women's World Banking and served as its chair from 1980 - 1998. She currently serves as the Chair of the SEWA Co-operative Bank, has received an honorary doctorate from Harvard University and is a Trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Ela Bhatt and SEWA have gone on to initiate a whole family of unique international organisations promoting the organisation and development of workers in the informal sector, including HomeNet (international alliance of home-based workers), the international research coalition WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment, Globalising and Organising) and now StreetNet.

Below is the address made by Ms Bhatt at the opening preceding the launch of StreetNet International on the 12 November 2002 in Durban.

The cause of street vendors and our struggle of liberation from oppressive controls has a common thread, seeking what I call the 'second freedom', or economic freedom.

There are many connections that are reaffirmed today. The connection between SEWA and SEWU built by the women of India and South Africa is one. Mahatma Gandhi is a very important connection between the past and present that is present here as well. Gandhi in South Africa could be seen doing his apprenticeship in the freedom struggle. Today, we street vendors, through Streetnet, are struggling for our freedom/liberation, in a peaceful way, also starting from this unique place called Durban. This connection I feel so fulfilling! StreetNet's journey has been a long one, from Manekchowk (India) via Bellagio (Italy) to Durban. It is befitting that it is here in Durban that our struggle is taking roots as a global entity.

In Bellagio, on Lake Como in Italy, street vendors from the 11 largest cities in the world met for five days to discuss their legal status and then proclaimed a declaration. The cities present were: Accra, Ahmedabad, Milan, Manila, Durban, Nairobi, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Cruz. Each city was represented by two vendors (men and women), organisers, and a lawyer. All the vendors present, except from one city, had been jailed more than once.

They all felt that vendors, amongst all occupations, are the most regulated and least protected by law. The legal issues are similar around the world: they do not have licences, space or supportive policies to vend their wares. Police harassment is a daily affair. City planners do not take them into account. Access to credit facilities is almost absent. As a trade they are mostly unorganised. They are used as a tool at the time of elections in their respective countries and then left under worse conditions. The representatives present at Bellagio informally formed the International Alliance of Street Vendors. That was the beginning of vendors organising and internationalising their cause.

We are busy organising at local, regional and, more recently at the global levels. We have a long agenda. We have to resolve the wrong perceptions and prejudices. Why do we have confrontations every time? We do not want to waste our energy mindlessly. Our demands need a fresh look and municipal regulations and laws that pertain to us need to be revised from the perspective of the political economy of our cities.

City spaces are valuable and highly coveted. Operating on a street corner involves not only civic authorities but also the local 'goons' and political protectors. The rate of 'hafta' (illegal gratification) is rising. While most of the vendors are poor, surviving somehow, they want a better future and different prospects for their sons and daughters. How do we integrate the vendors and citizens' interests together in the city's economy?

There are reasons why the vendors should be positively perceived as part of the market system. It is simple. They create their own employment; they reduce poverty through their own employment. They provide an important distribution service to the common citizens; they contribute to the economic growth; they are part of our culture and tradition.

A formidable task faces StreetNet. The great hope is that we are not struggling alone anymore, in our own city. We are associated with other organisations in many cities of the globe. We have our own partners - WIEGO, HomeNet - to make new allies. The times are difficult but we shall overcome.

I pray, that God gives us the strength to struggle and develop together for the good of the street vendors and their families. With these words, I feel proud to launch StreetNet to the world. (The address has been edited)

City welcomes StreetNet International

Address by Ethekwini Municipality Deputy Mayor Logie Naidoo, StreetNet Launch November 12, 2002

The fact that you have chosen our city for this important launch is an affirmation of the initiatives our city has taken to promote and develop a well-managed, safe, clean and sustainable street trading economy within the central city and throughout Ethekwini municipality.

In October 2000, the Joint Executive Committee of the North Central and South Central Local Councils, approved and adopted what has since become under the current Unicity administration, Durban's Informal Economy Policy. The policy process was consensual and consultative, comprising interviews and workshops with different stakeholders in the informal and formal business sectors as well as councillors, officials, civic organisations, development forums and members of the public.

This policy for informal economic development is grounded in overall strategic policy set by Durban's local government. Among related initiatives are a Revitalisation Strategy for the Central Business District, a Best Practice City Commission and a Safer Cities project. As a result of Durban's street trading policy, significant progress has been achieved in Warwick Junction and several pilot projects.

Our commitment to the principles and practices which you advocate and promote is clear and a matter of public record. Furthermore, research shows that Durban is ahead of other large South Africa cities in terms of integrating the informal economy and its concerns into appropriate institutions of local government. Our progressive policy is new; it is still in the process of evolving. Organisations like StreetNet will have a critical role to play to ensure that the policies and practices that we undertake regularise, strengthen and expand this important economic sector.

In terms of poverty alleviation and employment, the street-trading sector has already proved to be vital in improving the livelihoods of the previously marginalised segment of our people, in particular, women. In 1996, for example, there were 20 000 street traders in the Durban Metropolitan area, of which 60 percent were women. In 1998, black householders in the Metro area spent more than R500 million in informal sector outlets. There is therefore no doubt that that the street trading sector is contributing its fair share in raising families and educating children, many of whom are today distinguished members of our city.

It is a well-known fact that in our country, the formal business sector has limited capacity to significantly reduce the level of unemployment. Our integrated national, provincial and local government policies therefore seek to supplement the formal economy through the expansion of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in general, and the street vending sector in particular.

Large amounts of resources have been allocated in the past four years to developing satellite markets and providing infrastructure, such as shelter and water in the central city for street traders. A substantial allocation has also been made to capital projects as well as in the provision of annual grants.

Among the attributes of street traders that we in government encourage, value and applaud, is their sense of initiative, their creativity, and self-reliance. The days when the government was the panacea for all the economic, political and social needs of society are over. It is up to the people and their representatives to be part of developmental strategies and processes because they know best their needs, aspirations and challenges which communities across our city face daily. This strategy also seeks to encourage communities to take charge and ownership of their neighbourhoods so that they can develop and protect them against natural disasters and criminal elements.

We therefore applaud your work and together we shall have ability to overcome many critical problems and challenges this sector still faces. Some of these are the negative perceptions held by many in government and formal businesses, the status of foreigners in the sector and the rapid increase in the number of people trading at traffic intersections. We believe, however, that the problems currently faced by the street trading sector are not insurmountable; they are the growing pains. When we all commit ourselves to working together to nurture and grow this sector, it will show its true worth and limitless possibilities as an important member of the family of entrepreneurs. (The address has been edited)

Korea: Street vendor driven to take his life by officials

By Kim Heung-Yeon: Chairman of the National Street Vendors' Federation of Korea

At around 3.20 pm on August 23, 2002, a Korean street vendor named Park Bong-Gyu poured petrol on himself and attempted self-immolation in protest over the government's crackdown on street vendors in the downtown area of Seoul. He died of third-degree burns over 80 percent of his body. Park was a street vendor who sold tools in downtown Seoul to support his five children until the crackdowns by the district administrative office. When his wares were confiscated, first on August 21st and then again at 2pm on the 23rd, he visited the district office to protest.

Park had already sent a protest letter to the recently elected mayor of Seoul - Lee Myung-Bak - demanding to know why the mayor was not keeping his campaign pledge to help the poor. At the district office he asked, "Why are you tramping on poor people?" "Give me back my things!", he added.

The authorities' response was, "Who are you to protest when street vendors are illegal in the first place? Get lost!"

In desperation Park poured petrol on his body and lit the flame that killed him.

General public opinion is that Korea's national status has improved, with enhanced national competitiveness and economic growth since

hosting the World Cup. However, the gap between the haves and the have-nots has increased. The anger and discontent of the urban poor grows even greater as more and more of them get trapped in unstable livelihoods and absolute and relative poverty brought on by unemployment and casual employment.

The street vendors in Korea face continuous threats to their livelihoods. The government continues the cruel oppression that ultimately drove Park to his death. This is a clear violation of human rights and the Kim Dae-Jung government and Lee Myung-Bak Seoul administration must be held responsible for the desperation that drove Park to set fire to his body.

Bombay Hawkers Association's message: hawkers are not a 'nuisance'

By Suresh Kapile, General Secretary Bombay Hawkers' Association

For more than a 100 years, hawkers have been doing business on the streets of Mumbai. Records show that in even in those early days the police used to take action against the hawkers.

It is common to find the housing complexes of the rich and upper middle class have a notice at the entrance saying 'Dogs, beggars, hawkers not allowed'. This is symbolic of the position of hawkers even in an under-developed country like India. The central government, the state and local government look at it as a 'nuisance' to the society instead of as a socio-economic reality.

Since the adoption of the so-called 'New Economic Policies', there has been massive closure of major and small industries. Several thousands of workers who have become unemployed have opted for self-employment. Already, self-employment groups such as autorickshaw or taxi drivers, are at saturation point and most have joined the hawking trade.

The leftist government of west Bengal launched what is known as Operation Sunshine through which they removed several thousand hawkers from the streets of Kolkatta forcibly. Later on this was followed in all other mega cities of India.

The central government of India has appointed a Task Force for Street Vendors/Hawkers at the insistence of the World Bank. Being a member of the Task Force, I have taken an active interest in solving the Hawkers' problems particularly in Mumbai. There are 300 000 hawkers/street vendors in Mumbai, who are forced to pay 'corruption money' (known as 'hafta') to police and officers of local government. This is almost half of the earnings of the hawkers/street vendors. Almost 30-35 percent of the hawkers are women selling vegetables, fruit etc. They are not spared physical assault and other harassment by the officials.

In view of the above, we welcome the move of the organisers for the world meeting of street hawkers and vendors. All hawkers and street vendors must unite. The international organisation must actively support the hawkers and

street vendors in the cities of under developed countries. A conference of this type must force the governments of under-developed countries to make hawking a constitutional right. We hope that this worldwide conference will give proper directions to the hawkers' and vendors' cause and help to establish the right to livelihood through hawking/vending.

How to register as a member of Streetnet

Who can join?

StreetNet International is open to the following types of organisations:

1. National alliances of membership-based organisations of market vendors, street vendors and/or hawkers such as unions, co-operatives, and any other type of association;
2. Regional alliances of membership-based organisations of market vendors, street vendors and/or hawkers such as unions, co-operatives, and any other type of association;
3. City-based alliances of membership-based organisations of market vendors, street vendors and/or hawkers such as unions, co-operatives, and any other type of association;
4. National trade unions organising market vendors, street vendors and/or hawkers among their members.

If your organisation fits any of these descriptions, then you may register as a member of StreetNet.

Membership fees

Your organisation will need to pay a joining fee of \$50, and thereafter an annual subscription based on the verified number of members in your organisation. This annual subscription still has to be determined during the course of 2003, in discussion with member organisations and StreetNet's Interim Committee.

How to join?

We will be sending prescribed application forms to organisations, but if we have not sent one to you, please write or phone (tel.+27 31 307 4038) and ask us to send you one. We will send you the application form, on which you will need to specify information about your organisation, and indicate how you will pay your joining fee - by cheque or bank deposit or postal order.

All applications will be considered by the Interim Committee, and you will be notified when your membership has been processed.

Where to join ?

All applications should be e-mailed to stnet@iafrica.com, or faxed to +27 31 306 7490, or sent to the office of StreetNet International at the following address:

P.O.Box 61139, Bishopsgate, Durban 4008, South Africa.

Spotlight on Colombia's informal sector

By Cristobal Camargo, Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores del Comercio (FENATRAC, CGTD)

The informal economy is a phenomenon that is creating new cultural and socio-economic situation at the core of the working class, with a new social relationship between capital and labour in Colombia.

The CGTD defines the informal economy as a sub-sector; current estimates are that more than 50% of the economically active population on the American continent now belong to it.

During several meetings with workers and experts, this phenomenon is seen as having structural causes, mainly the neo-liberal economic adjustments and policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The impact of these policies in Latin America and the Caribbean has led to diminishing employment, privatisation and a decreased role of the state.

The informalisation of the economy has occurred mainly in the third world countries and is often referred to as the "Underground Economy", "Submerged Economy", etc. Workers in the informal sector include self-employed workers, wage earners in small, medium and micro-enterprises, sub-contractors and micro-entrepreneurs. Sixty percent of informal economy workers are women who are head of the family, a high percentage of children workers, and working hours range from 12 to 16 hours a day.

Obstacles faced by informal sector

There are no legal rights to protect informal sector workers and Government has not introduced economic and social development policy in Colombia. Salaries for informal workers fluctuate between 40% and 50% of the legal minimum salary and there is no social security for most workers. The potential for new employment opportunities resulting from information technology have not been exploited.

Governments choose not to legislate to recover public space for markets. Street traders wares are repeatedly confiscated by Government officials. Agreements reached with Municipalities and District Administrative Offices to relocate traders fail most the time.

Proposals for organising of informal sector workers

The CGTD has prioritised the following:

- Abolition of child workers in the short, medium and long term.
- Legislation for labour protection as an objective of the CGTD and the workers' movement.
- Fighting for policies which involve Government in programs of employment, quality of life, social security, and the reduction of poverty.

Relations with workers and micro-enterprises

It is necessary to form alliances with small and medium enterprises, which have wage earners - who are mainly legally unprotected - to provide mutual support

and to try and meet decent work and social security standards. There is a need to strengthen union organisation and to develop markets at both national and international levels.

Micro-entrepreneurs should work with organisations of small and medium entrepreneurs to enable governments to create and implement policies for technical assistance relating to capital (long-term low interest credit) and access to appropriate and practical technologies in each enterprise.

The informal sector in Colombia

The continual growth of informal work and the reduced capacity of productive enterprises to absorb workers has created a crisis for the work force.

The challenge is to encourage and create a better organisational culture, so that more informal workers find means to become part of unions, and to create new alternatives for professional training.

Economic profile of Colombia

- Minimum income per month \$309 000 - approximately US\$120
- Consumer Price Index, (CPI), 7.65%
- Total population 42 222 582
- Working age population 31 866 815
- Economically active population 19 732 309
- Working population 16 557 582
- Unemployed 3 174 727
- Sub-employed 6 629 084
- Sub-employment exceeded 35%
- Informal sector 65% of employment in the country
- 32% of employees work without social security benefits or social security; 83% have no stability and 80% earn less than two minimum salaries
- 74.31% of workers in the informal sector lack social security and work more than 48 hours
- 27 million people live below the poverty line
- 11 million are destitute
- 2 700 000 are persons displaced by violence

New Alliance to represent informal economy workers in Zambia

By Kashiwa Lameck, general secretary Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA)

The convention to launch the Alliance for Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) was held on 17th-19th October and attended by 60 delegates representing district committees in Mansa, Kitwe, Ndola, Kalulushi, Lusaka and Kabwe.

The convention followed several months of preparation by the interim National Executive Committee who laid the groundwork for the launch of the national alliance. Workshops were held to facilitate the formation of district committees by the participating associations and organisations.

Interim President Elvis Nkandu told the convention that in so far as the informal economy was concerned, the launch of the Alliance was an historical occasion. He said informal workers in Zambia comprise significant numbers, but the government had yet to recognise their existence. He reminded the government of its fundamental responsibility to provide for the needs of its citizens without prejudice. Noting the treatment of street and market vendors by local authorities, politicians and state police, Nkandu said that street traders face acute harassment and intimidation. They are jailed for not paying levies to councils while councils failed to provide services to markets. Government should adopt a more enlightened approach to the informal economy and stop treating it as a problem. He called upon all informal workers to work together to fight injustices.

The growth of the informal economy he said, was as a result of negative global or international trends in which smaller economies struggle to compete. This leads to national debts, structural adjustments, privatisation, liquidations and retrenchments.

In the keynote speech, Deputy Secretary General of Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Ian Mkandawire, said the Alliance's leadership had an important mandate: to build an effective representative organisation for informal economy workers. He said organising the unorganised in the informal economy **was** a key challenge facing the labour movement in order for their needs to be taken seriously by government. He estimated that between 70-80 percent of the labour force is in the informal economy, and works outside the normal labour and social security regulations. Mkandawire said the ZCTU has affirmed its commitment to their adequate representation by allowing informal economy associations to affiliate as associate members. He added that, including the Secretary General of Zambia National Marketers Association and the Alliance in the delegation to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference in Geneva in July 2002 was an indication that ZCTU saw the need for informal workers to have representation at the highest level. He assured delegates that ZCTU is ready to work with the Alliance.

Declaring the convention open, the guest of honour, the Deputy Minister of Housing, Songobe Mungo assured the delegates that his ministry, which is a key partner in the delivery of services to the informal economy, welcomed the formation of the Alliance. He encouraged other associations which have not yet affiliated to do so in order to make representation to government stronger for its members. He said that government and its co-operating partners were currently studying micro-finance in order to empower many vulnerable traders to improve their capital base.

At the convention, delegates adopted a constitution and work plan for the Alliance. The mission is to: "promote full recognition and protection of informal economy workers in community and national development." The Alliance's Plan of Action for 2002-2003 prioritises:

- Increasing organisation membership
- Exploring social dialogue with central and local government and building AZIEA's formal recognition and representation
- Building capacity in leadership, negotiations, organisation, management etc
- Women's empowerment - promoting 50% of women in leadership and programmes
- Networking - establish close bilateral and multilateral relationships with other organisations

- Establishing links with micro-finance institutions in order to build the capital base of members.

The interim national executive committee was dissolved and elections were held for leadership for the next 3 years. Elvis Nkandu Chishala (Zanama-Kitwe) was elected President and Johnathon Zulu (Cross Border Traders Association-Lusaka) Vice-President. The General Secretary is Kashiwa Lameck (Zanama-Kitwe) and the Treasurer, Bernard Tembo (Carpenters' Association of Zambia-Kitwe).

Mixed messages from Phillipines Government

Street and market vendors often receive mixed messages from government, as the two reports below on new regulations in Manila, Phillipines show.

The government has introduced new regulations and states it is committed to respecting informal workers' rights. However, a subsequent report, written a year later, states that the officials have embarked on a campaign which involves deploying thousands of police and private security guards to clear obstructions on the sidewalk.

Manila: Street Vendors "legalised" (Source: Philippine Headline News Online - report by Sol Jose Vanzi, June 28, 2001)

Street and ambulant vendors are to be issued identification cards as part of a new Government plan which will allow them to trade in certain areas.

The decision was made after government agencies - including Departments of Interior, Local Government, Department of Labour, Trade and Industry and League of Provinces - signed a memorandum to uphold and protect the rights of the informal sector of society.

According to Interior Secretary Jose Lina, the new regulations aimed to provide protection to street and ambulant vendors and at the same time to address the problem of traffic congestion and garbage.

Lina was quoted as saying "The Government affirms its commitment to uphold and protect the rights of our workers in the informal sector, especially our vendors".

The agreement made provision for the designation of markets, vacant areas near markets, public parks or side streets as officially certified workplaces for vendors.

The Government undertook to relocate vendors who were displaced by the closure or sale of public markets.

A head count and the registration of street and ambulant traders is to be done by Local Government. Unregistered vendors will no longer be allowed to ply their trade.

The agreement promotes the organisation of vendors' associations for their mutual aid, benefit, protection. Associations are encouraged to ensure their members perform their responsibilities, including keeping workplaces clean and

helping to ensure a smooth flow of traffic and compliance with the weight and price tag law.

Sidewalk clearing operations intensified (Source: From Inquirer News Service report by Leila B Salaverria, August 19, 2002)

Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando has intensified his sidewalk clearing operations and revealed his plan to penalise sidewalk vendors.

In a news conference, Fernando said he had met with representatives of the Phillipine association of security guards and the national region police office about deputising security guards in Metro Manila to help fight against sidewalk obstruction.

Fernando said that there were over 100 00 security guards in Metro Manila, and many more around the country who would help in the their campaign against those who illegally sell their wares on sidewalks.

If MMDA plans were approved, security guards would be allowed to issue tickets to vendors selling in front of buildings to which they were assigned.

The MMDA's claims the use of security guards is necessary as part of its bid to ease sidewalk traffic by clearing obstructions.