

# Street traders and their organisations in South Africa



CASE



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## A message from the International Labour Organisation

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) forms part of the United Nations family of organisations. In every country, the ILO encourages the government and the social partners – employers and workers – to come together to find ways to promote *decent work* – work which gives enough money for the working person and their family to live decently. And work where all people – women and men, black and white, young and old – have equal treatment and equal opportunities.”

The ILO has also developed labour standards for governments to apply in their countries. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in 1998 said that all member countries must promote and respect the principles and rights contained in the eight ILO fundamental Conventions. (See the back of the booklet for more details.) These eight Conventions cover the following principles and rights:

- freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining;
- the elimination of all forced or compulsory labour;
- the abolition of child labour; and
- the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.

The first right – the right to freedom of association – is especially important because it allows workers and employers to fight for their interests and influence policy. However, many workers in the informal economy do not have this right. Sometimes there are problems with the law. Sometimes there are problems because the law is not properly enforced. The lack of strong organisations for workers and small business owners to fight for their rights is one of the reasons that people who work in the informal economy are often among the poorest and most exploited.

The International Labour Conference of the ILO in June 2002 discussed the situation of informal workers and passed a resolution on decent work and the informal economy. Paragraph 17 of this resolution noted that unless informal economy workers organise, they cannot bargain or lobby policy-makers effectively.

This booklet describes how street traders have started organising in Johannesburg and Durban. The booklet is based on research done by Shirin Motala in 2001. Shirin’s research was part of a bigger ILO research project on the informal economy in different parts of the world.

The main aim of the research and booklet is to help build strong local and national organisations so that street traders can speak with one voice and influence policy makers. We also want to make sure that the needs of poor women are addressed by these organisations.

*Many people helped make this booklet happen. Shirin Motala did the research. Pat Horn of StreetNet provided information and guidance. Debbie Budlender of Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) wrote the booklet. Stacey Stent did the drawings. Gaby Cheminais did the layout. From the ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Giovanna Rossignotti and Manuela Tomei gave support in many ways throughout the process. The Royal Government of the Netherlands provided the money for the research and booklet. Finally, we must thank the ILO Office in Pretoria and all the other South Africans who contributed time and information to make it all possible.*

This booklet describes how street traders have started organising in Johannesburg and Durban. The booklet is based on research done by Shirin Motala in 2001. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva gave money and technical support for the research.

The ILO supported research in several countries – Bolivia, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru and South Africa. In South Africa, researchers looked at four sectors: clothing, construction, street trading and kombi taxis.

Street trading was chosen because:

- It is one of the biggest sectors of the informal economy in South Africa.
- Many street traders, and especially women traders, have special problems in organising.
- For many women, street trading is an important source of feeding themselves and their families.
- Organising in street trading is different from many other sectors, because the main negotiating partner is local government, not employers.

The booklet focuses on organisations in Durban and Johannesburg. Both Durban and Johannesburg are large cities which have many street traders. But there are important differences in how the city governments have dealt with street traders.



In Durban, local government has tried to address street trading for many years. The city has spent a lot of money on building markets. It always tried to talk to street traders and their organisations when making and implementing its street trade policy. Government's main negotiating partner in Durban is the Informal Trade Management Board (ITMB). Government also talks to the Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU). We look at these two organisations in this booklet.

In Johannesburg, government has not planned as carefully for street trading. There have also been many violent fights between South African and foreign street traders. But Johannesburg's government has also talked to street trader organisations. Its main negotiating partner is the Gauteng Hawkers Association (GHA). We also look at the GHA in this booklet.

The booklet is divided into six parts.

- Part 1 is the introduction.
- Part 2 gives some facts and figures on street trading in South Africa.
- Part 3 describes government policies on street trading.
- Part 4 gives some economic facts and figures.
- Part 5 describes how ITMB, GHA and SEWU have organised and bargained with local government and others.
- Part 6 is the conclusion.

## 2.

## Some facts and figures

Street traders are the most visible part of the informal economy. They are there on the street for everybody to see. They are also visible because there are lots of them. And they make up a big percentage of informal workers in South Africa.

Some traders earn well, but this booklet concentrates on the many who earn only a little money which helps them and their families survive. Most of the 'survivalist' traders are women.

In 2000, there were about half a million street traders in South Africa. In the Durban metropolitan areas there were about 20 000 traders. In the central business district of Johannesburg there were between 3 000 and 7 000. In Greater Johannesburg, there were between 12 000 and 15 000. More than 70% of all street traders in the country sell food. More than 70% of the traders are women.

Most street traders are the main breadwinner for their family. Many do not have any other people earning money in their household. The majority of the 'survivalist' street traders are African.

The number of street traders has increased a lot since the end of apartheid in 1994. The number has increased for two main reasons. Firstly, the new government is less repressive, and does not prevent street trading in the same way as the apartheid government. Secondly, the shortage of other jobs has forced many people to try to earn money through street trading.

### 3.

## Government policy

What has national government done?

During apartheid, government tried to prevent African people living and working in urban areas unless they were working in the white-owned factories, mines, offices and homes. Local government passed bylaws which made it difficult for street traders to operate. For example, there was a 'Move On' law which said that traders must move their position every half hour.



In the 1980s, more and more African people came into urban areas and the government could not control this movement like it did before. Slowly government started to relax the laws on street trading.

In 1991, national government passed the Business Act. This national law recognised that street traders were business people. It said that they were important for the economy and must get assistance from government. Before the new law, street traders could only trade if they had a licence. The new law said that licences were not necessary.

In 1993, the government made some changes to the Business Act. These changes gave local government more power to limit street trading. Municipalities were not allowed to prevent street trading. But they could make bylaws and regulations about where and how the street trading happened.

In 1995, national government published a White Paper on small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs). The White Paper spoke about the 'survivalist' business people. It noted that most of them are women. But it did not suggest many ways in which government could help survivalists.

## What has local government done?

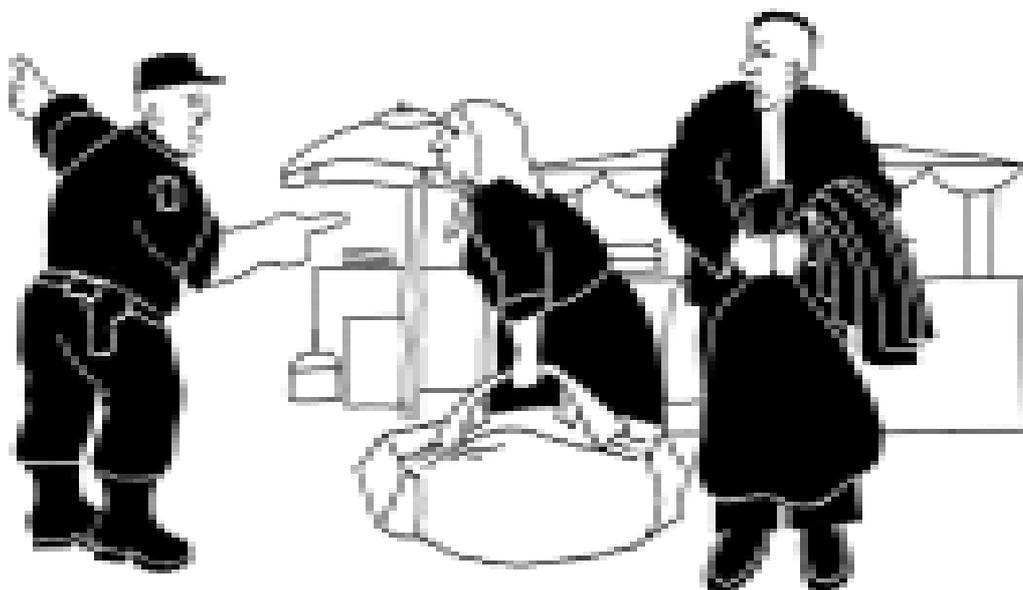
The Constitution of South Africa says that local government is responsible for local economic development. It says that local government must work together with citizens and groups in communities to find ways to meet their social and economic needs.

Most municipalities have paid more attention to street trading than to other parts of the informal economy. They have paid attention to street trading because it is very visible. And it uses streets which are needed by many other people for other purposes.

Local government regulates street trading through bylaws. All the bylaws are based on the Business Act, so there are many things that are the same in different towns and cities. Most of the bylaws say:

- traders must not get in the way of traffic and pedestrians;
- traders must not get in the way of delivery vehicles;
- traders must not use gas, electricity or other equipment in a way that is dangerous for the public;
- traders must not get in the way of fire hydrants and road signs;
- traders must keep their sites clean.

Most local governments have also said that traders can only trade from certain places. They have also put limits on the number of traders in different places. Some of these bylaws make it difficult for street traders to run their business.



During apartheid, the traffic department of the municipality was usually responsible for street trading. This showed that local government saw trading mainly as an obstruction to traffic, not as a business. Over the past few years, some local governments have made other departments responsible for street trading because they now recognise it as a business.

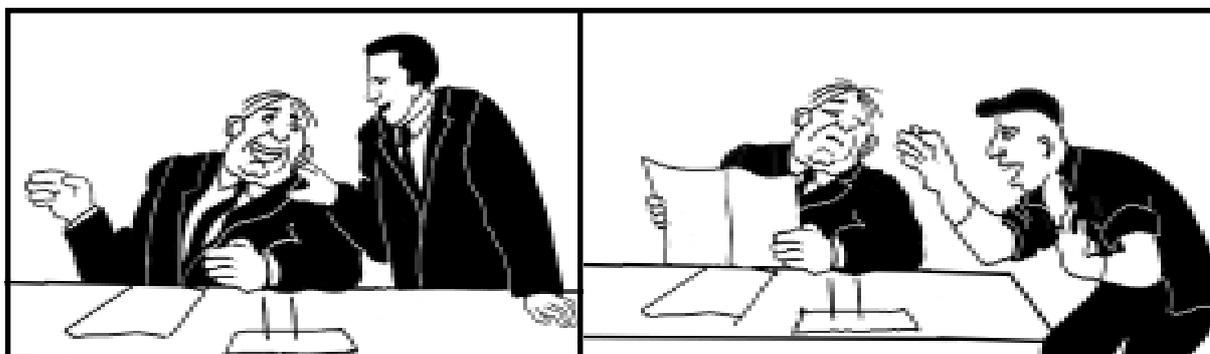
In Durban, the Department for Informal Trade and Small Business Opportunities (ITSBO) is in charge of street trading. Durban is proud of ITSBO and its work with and for street traders.

In Johannesburg, the Local Economic Development Unit in the Urban Development Department is in charge of street trading. But Johannesburg has also handed over some responsibilities to other institutions, such as the Johannesburg Development Agency, the Metro Trading Company and the Central Johannesburg Partnership.

The approaches of the two cities are very different.

Durban Unicity has the most progressive policy on street trading in the country. The UniCity drew up this policy by consulting widely, especially with workers in the informal economy. The City's Informal Economy Policy states loudly and clearly:

“The interests of local government will be best served when there are strong and stable partners to negotiate with.”



Johannesburg Metropolitan Council has listened to the voice of formal business more than to the voice of informal economy workers. The Council's aim seems to be to remove all street traders from the streets of the central business district (CBD). It says that street traders clog up pavements, obstructing pedestrians and vehicles, and make the city dirty and dangerous. The Council wants all traders to operate from markets.

Traders do not agree with this policy. They say that markets do not have enough “passing feet”. They say that the success of their business depends on the number of people who pass by.

## 4.

# Some economic facts and figures

The contribution of the informal economy and street trading to South Africa's economy can be measured in two ways. The first way is to measure the number of people who have jobs in street trading. We saw above that there were about half a million street traders in South Africa in 2000. The second way is to measure the value of the goods that traders sell. Some people might think that the economic contribution of street trade is not big in terms of money because most street traders earn so little. But in Durban alone, street traders sell about 28 tonnes of cooked mealies per day. This is equal to sales of about R200 000 per day, or R1 million in a five-day week! And this is only Durban, and only the mealie sellers.



Some street traders are self-employed – they work for themselves. Some street traders work for family members, sometimes with payment and sometimes without. Some street traders work for a wage. The *'bambelas'* in Durban are an example of street traders working for a wage.

Some street traders are employed by an agent or a shop to sell their goods on the street. Whether street traders are self-employed, or whether they receive some sort of wage or other payment, if they receive all their supplies from one place they may have very little power over what they pay for the goods and the profit they make. Most street traders also lack power because they depend on someone else for equipment and trading space.

Sometimes the interests of the different types of street traders are the same. Sometimes they are different. Organisations for street traders have to decide which types of street traders can be members, and whose interests they will promote. Sometimes the interests of one group of street traders can conflict with those of another group. For example, the interests of the *'bambelas'* can conflict with the interests of the street traders who employ them. There can also be conflict between different groups of traders over access to licenses and space.

## 5.

## Organising street traders in South Africa

Former SEWU General Secretary, Pat Horn, says:

“Working women must be well organised, not only as workers, but specifically as women focusing on the root causes of their oppression as women.”

Organising street traders is easier than organising workers in some other parts of the informal economy because the workers are visible, there on the street. They are not hidden in homes and in small workshops. But organising street traders also faces many of the same barriers as organising other informal workers. Some traders are not at work every day, or not at work in the same place. Most of the traders earn small amounts of money. This means that they cannot afford to



pay a lot of money to the organisation as subscriptions. Traders also may not want to give up any time for meetings because they will lose sales while they are at the meetings. Time is a special problem for women, because most women also have unpaid duties at home looking after their children, their men, and their homes.

South African labour laws are not very helpful for street traders. The main law about worker organisation in South Africa is the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (LRA). This law talks about the rights of ‘employees’. It excludes street traders who are self-employed. This discourages organisations which include self-employed street traders from trying to register under the LRA.

However, this certainly does not mean that street traders cannot organise! The Constitution of South Africa says that every person has the right to ‘freedom of association’, which means the right to join organisations. The 1998 White Paper on Local Government says that local government must be participatory – it must let all the people who live in a municipality have their say. These and other laws and policies mean that informal economy workers have the right to organise to voice their needs.

But research shows that very few street traders belong to organisations:

- A study in Grahamstown found that only 11% of street traders were members of an organisation.
- A study in Durban in 1998 found that only 2% of men traders and 6% of women traders were members of trader organisations.
- A study in Johannesburg in 1998 found that only 15% of traders belonged to organisations.



**Now we look at three organisations which have organised street traders.**

### Informal Traders Management Board (ITMB)

By the mid-1990s there were several organisations for street traders in Durban. In 1995 all Durban street vendors' organisations had a meeting with councillors and agreed that street traders needed 'one voice' to speak to local government about their needs. They formed the Informal Traders Management Board (ITMB) to be this voice.

To join the ITMB you must:

- Be a trader
- Be a South African citizen
- Have a trading site.

Traders who do not have a site can put their name on a waiting list.

There is no joining fee for ITMB. ITMB says that joining fees will create conflict. Instead, the ITMB says that local government should increase the fee they charge for a site and give the extra to the ITMB.

When they join, ITMB members get an identity card. But ITMB does not have updated membership records, so it is difficult to know how many members it has. It is also impossible to know the number of women members. In 2001, ITMB said that the number of members was somewhere between 7 000 and 15 000. ITMB

has used mass meetings, rallies, marches, pamphlets and talking to traders on the street as ways of recruiting new members.

ITMB does not have paid staff. Its office bearers give their time and resources for free. The office bearers are all traders, so they do not have a lot of time to give to the organisation.

In 2001, there were 11 people on ITMB's Executive Committee. Four of the Executive Committee members were women. Women had the positions of chairperson, treasurer and secretary.

The Executive Committee is elected by the Management Board. The Management Board has about 80 members. These members represent street and area committees. More than 60% of the Management Board members are women. There are street committees in all parts of Durban's CBD.

The ITMB has a Women's Task Team. The head of the Task Team says:

"Women are too shy to speak up in meetings. We need to build them up to speak. That is why we set up this Women's Task Team".

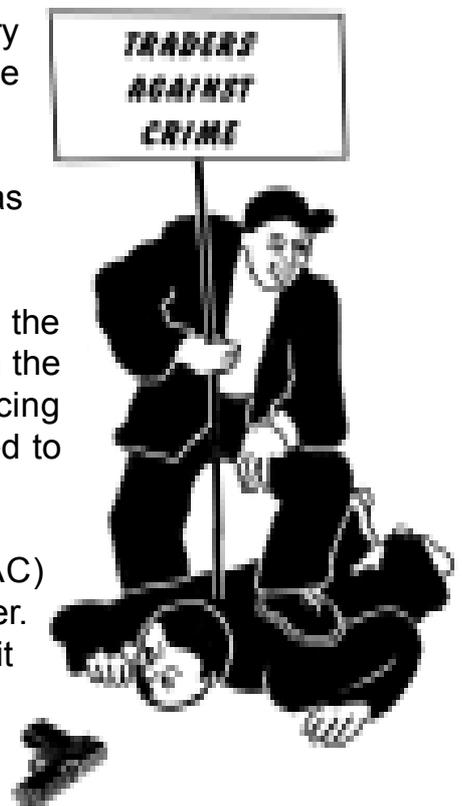
The Task Team also helps women traders to learn new craft skills so that they can make more products while they sit at their stalls. Some men say that the Task Team is not a good idea. They say that a focus on women is 'discriminatory'.

The ITMB has not held annual general meetings every year. It says that it does not have the money to organise annual general meetings.

The following are some of the things that ITMB has done to assist traders.

The ITMB has built a good working relationship with the South African Police Service (SAPS). It also sits on the Central Business District (CBD) Community Policing Forum. By working with the police, ITMB has helped to stop them harassing street traders.

ITMB organised the Traders Against Crime (TAC) campaign to make the streets of Durban CBD safer. ITMB realised that crime is bad for traders because it puts their life and property in danger, and discourages customers. The TAC campaign won a Durban Local Authorities Mayoral Award for Excellence in 1998.



In the Keep Durban Clean campaign, ITMB worked together with Durban Unicity to reduce dirt and waste in the streets. ITMB asked members to assist by being careful with their waste boxes and mealie leaves, and by keeping the space around their site clean. ITMB realised that clean streets encourage customers to buy from street traders.

In 2000, the council's ITSBO set up a Trader Representative Forum. ITSBO invited ITMB and other trader organisations to be part of the forum. ITMB has used the forum to bargain about trading sites, storage facilities, and patrolling sites to monitor crime.

ITMB has also tried to provide services and benefits for workers. It has lobbied the Council to provide toilets, shelters, and storage facilities. Some of the office bearers are also providing services – for which they charge – in their personal capacities. One of the office bearers runs a fruit and vegetable wholesale scheme for traders at Warwick Junction. Another office bearer is renting council premises which he rents out to traders for storage.

ITMB has plans about other things they want to do for traders. They want to:

- develop a Micro-Business Bank to help with credit;
- help street traders negotiate for more trading sites;
- train traders on good record keeping to help monitor stolen goods;
- help traders get insurance if their goods are lost or damaged;
- find a way to deal with too many people 'flooding the market'.

## Gauteng Hawkers Association (GHA)

In 1992 traders in Johannesburg attended a mass meeting to discuss foreign traders. They felt that foreign traders were competing for trading sites. The traders decided to form the Greater Johannesburg Hawkers Planning Committee. In 1997 the name was changed to Gauteng Hawkers Association so that it could cover the whole province. By 2001, GHA had seven branches – in Pretoria, East Rand, West Rand, Johannesburg Central, Vaal Triangle, Soweto and Randburg.

Traders decided that the new organisation must be led by traders. They knew that there were already some organisations for traders. But they felt that these organisations were not properly accountable because they were not led by traders.

In 2000, GHA registered as a non-profit organisation with the Department of Social Development. Registration made it easier for GHA to fund-raise. The Non-Profit Organisations Act also says that registered organisations must hold an annual general meeting, elect office bearers every year, keep records and have audited financial books.

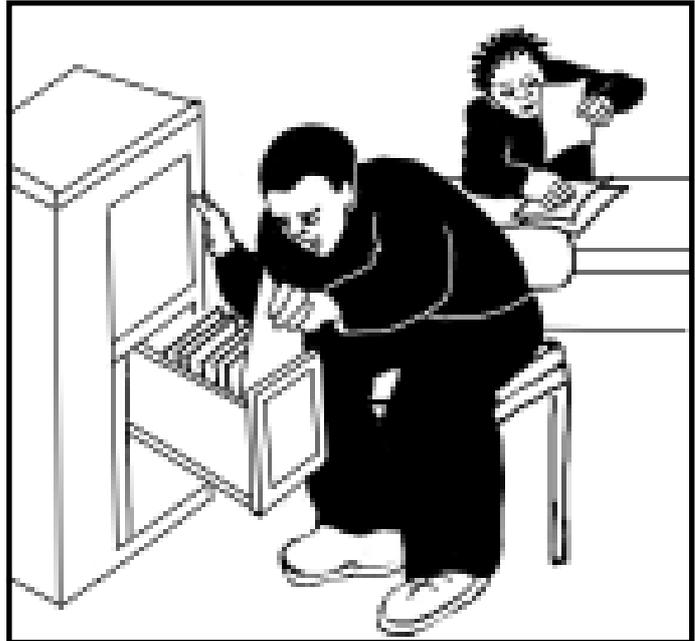
To join GHA you must:

- trade in the street or at a railway station, run a spaza shop, or be a bakkie seller – either as a self-employed person, or as a *'bambela'*
- be South African
- be 21 years or older.

The joining fee is R50. And membership fees are R50 every year after this. GHA gives members a card when they join. They can use this card when police try to harass them.

In 2001, GHA said it had more than 7 500 members. GHA did not have proper records of members who joined before 2000. But it started keeping proper records after it registered as a non-profit organisation.

At the time of the research, nine out of ten GHA members were African. About seven out of ten GHA members sold fruit and vegetables. More than eight out of ten were women.



GHA does not have paid staff. It has one full-time volunteer who is the Administrative Officer. The Finance Officer manages one of the two storage facilities that GHA owns. The other three members of the Executive Committee still work as street traders. All the officials are men.

At the time of the research the GHA Management Committee had about 30 members. These members represent the GHA's branches. Five of the members were women in 2001. None of the branch chairpersons were women. Each branch has two representatives from every area/block committee. All GHA members belong to the area/block committees.

GHA said that some women do not want to participate actively in the organisation. They said that one reason is that many women members are illiterate. A second reason is that most women do not have a helper to look after their stall while they attend meetings. A third reason is that most women have many household tasks to do as well as their street trading tasks.

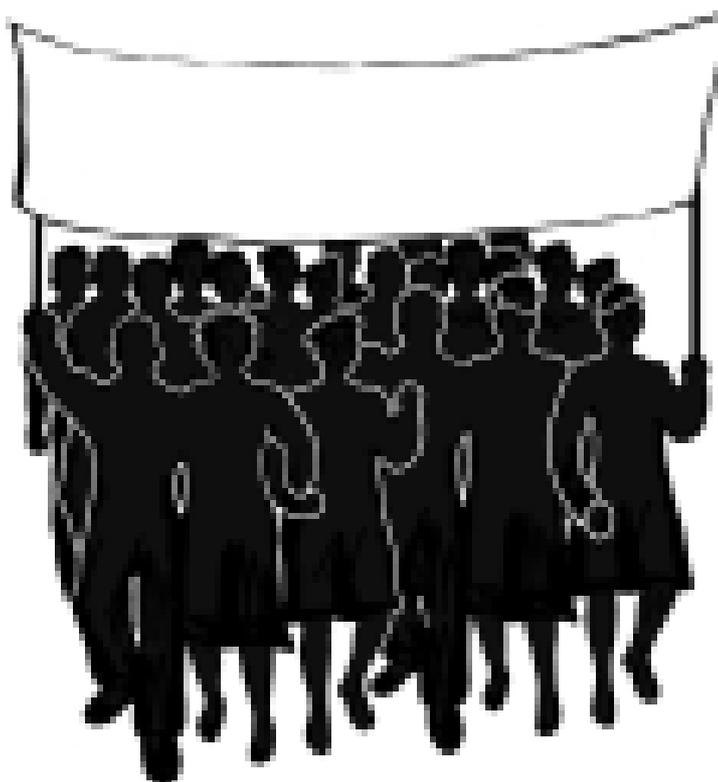
Some examples of the way that GHA has helped traders are:

- it has sent members to the Legal Resources Centre for help with legal problems;
- it has provided storage to members for R15 per week;
- it has participated in the Informal Traders Forum where traders negotiate with local government.

In 2001, GHA made an agreement with the Johannesburg Local Council and SAPS to work together on demarcating trading sites in the CBD. The GHA also negotiated with Shoprite for kiosks in front of their new store in the Johannesburg CBD. GHA manages the kiosks on behalf of Shoprite. This has caused conflict because some traders ask why GHA charges a fee for the kiosks when it gets them for free from Shoprite. GHA says that it charges a fee because it must pay for security guards and other costs.

In 1999, GHA won a big victory against Metrorail, who wanted to evict all traders from the railway stations. 200 hawkers would have been affected by Metrorail's decision. So GHA organised a mass march to protest against 'unjustifiable apartheid-style oppression'. The traders first marched to the Johannesburg Central Police station, where they gave a memorandum to the Station Commander. The memorandum said that the police must not put hawkers in jail overnight for trading on Metrorail premises. Then the traders marched to the Metrorail Head Office. The memorandum to Metrorail said that Metrorail must stop calling hawkers 'criminals' and must negotiate with the traders' organisations.

After the march, Metrorail agreed to negotiate. They agreed that hawkers could sell their goods on platforms and trains if they had an identity card to show they were registered and wore special clothes.



Also in 1999, GHA won a victory against the Greater Johannesburg Council. The Council had used police to evict 500 street traders from the pavements of Braamfontein. GHA organised a mass protest against the bylaws that said that hawkers could not trade. GHA's memorandum also said that police must give back all the goods they had confiscated in past 15 months.

After the march, the Council and GHA worked together on a fact-finding mission. And they started to negotiate about the rights and responsibilities of street traders and city officials.

In August 2002, GHA joined up with ACHIB, the Yeoville Hawkers Association, the Hillbrow Hawkers Association and the South African Liquor Traders Association to form the Informal Business Forum (IBF). Since then they have operated more under the name of IBF, and it is not clear if GHA still exists as an independent structure.

## Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU)

SEWU was established in 1993. The idea for SEWU came from the Self-Employed Women's Association in India. SEWU's aim is to help self-employed and survivalist women workers in the informal economy to organise themselves to demand their rights. SEWU's founders set up SEWU because they felt that other organisations for informal economy workers do not properly address women's needs.

SEWU's structure and way of working are like those of a trade union. But it has not registered as a union with the Department of Labour. Instead, it is registered with the Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation.

To join SEWU, you must:

- Be a woman
- Be working in the informal economy
- Not fall under the scope of another union
- Not employ more than three people.

The joining fee for SEWU is R10. After that, members pay R8 each month.

A SEWU organiser says:

"It was difficult initially to attract street traders because they have had bad experiences with many fake organisations trying to recruit them. So they are very wary, as they have been exploited before."

At the time of the research, SEWU had 109 branches spread over three provinces – KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. In 2001, SEWU had just over 2 200 members. Most of the members were in KwaZulu-Natal. Since the

research was done, SEWU has expanded to two more provinces – Free State and Mpumalanga.

Most SEWU members are African. However, in Cape Town, there are African and coloured members. In the Stanger branch in KwaZulu-Natal there are African and Indian members.



Until 1998, SEWU collected membership fees by hand, in cash. Then all the organisers and members of the Regional Executive Committee (REC) at a leadership training workshop were robbed at gunpoint and R12 000 was stolen from SEWU. SEWU's Annual Conference then decided that members must pay fees by debit order through a savings account so that organisers and branch committee members do not carry large amounts of money around with them.

The decision caused difficulties. Many members said that they did not earn enough to open a bank account. They also did not understand how banks worked and how the bank fees were calculated. They were afraid that the banks would steal their money.

The banks were also not happy. They wanted to see a wage slip before they opened a bank account, and street traders do not have wage slips. The banks also said they would not open a bank account unless the person deposited at least R250. This was too much for many SEWU members. Because of these reasons, it was very difficult to get the debit order system to work properly, and the number of paid-up members dropped by more than a third in 1999.

SEWU then met with the banks. The banks agreed to accept a smaller amount of money as a deposit to open an account. And they recognised that SEWU



members would not have wage slips. SEWU also ran an awareness programme to educate its members about banks, savings and debit orders. By June 2001, SEWU had 1 650 members with savings accounts in KwaZulu-Natal. But the debit order system is still not working well. Members' fees cover only about 5% of SEWU's costs. The rest of its money comes from international donors, overseas trade unions and foreign governments.

In 2001, SEWU employed 14 staff. The General Secretary is elected, but works full-time, for pay. The General Secretary and other staff report to the National Executive Committee and National Chairperson.

Every SEWU branch must have at least 10 members. Two delegates from each branch attend the Regional Executive Committee meetings every month. Each region can send five delegates to the National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC meets every three months. Each year there is a National Congress. At least one member from every branch attends the Congress.

SEWU has strict rules about transparency and accountability. In 2000, the regional secretary in KwaZulu-Natal resigned after being accused of corruption.

Some of the things that SEWU has done for members are:

- It has lobbied government about policies affecting informal economy workers.
- It has done research to have better information for lobbying.
- It has organised literacy, negotiation and lobbying training for members.
- It has organised workshops on domestic violence, maintenance laws, and disability.
- It has organised training for members in unusual skills for women, such as building, carpentry, welding, and plumbing.

The SEWU General Secretary says:

“Many members would like loans – but we do not have the money available. If we provided loans, we would attract many more members. We are now negotiating with the finance institutions to help our members access credit.”

From its beginning, SEWU has worked at all levels where it can take forward street traders interests – local, national and international. In Durban, it has been part of the Informal Traders Forum which negotiates with local government. But SEWU stopped being part of the ITMB because they said that the ITMB was not serious about promoting women's participation.

Through negotiation SEWU has won sleeping and toilet and washing space for muthi (herb) sellers in Warwick Junction. It has made an agreement with local government that traders will take turns in cleaning the space. It has won an

agreement from local government that they will not give a second site to a trader who already has a site. In 2001, SEWU was negotiating with local government to give space to foreign traders.

By working with international groups, SEWU has given itself a much bigger and louder voice than it would have alone. Its main international partners are Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organising (WIEGO), StreetNet and HomeNet.



Through StreetNet, SEWU helped develop the Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors of 1995. The Declaration says that governments must develop national policies for street traders. It says they must ensure that street traders are recognised for the contribution they make to the local economy. It says that local government must help street traders with their businesses, not hinder them. It says that governments must talk to street traders and their organisations when making policies.

This booklet has described three organisations. All three were created because informal traders did not have a strong voice to negotiate and express their needs. All three organisations have succeeded in negotiating with local government and others, such as police, and winning some victories for members.

But, all of the organisations are still small. And they cover limited geographical areas. Also, none of the three organisations belongs to a national organisation. And only SEWU belongs to international organisations.

All SEWU's leaders are women because it is a women-only organisation. In ITMB, some of the leaders are women. In GHA, all members of the Executive Committee are men.

SEWU has paid full-time staff. ITMB's office bearers do their work unpaid. In GHA, three of the five members of the Executive Committee are unpaid and earn their money through street trading.

All the organisations are weak financially. ITMB does not collect fees because it is worried about causing conflict. GHA members pay an annual fee for a card that helps them avoid harassment. SEWU has monthly fees, but they cover only 5% of the organisation's costs.

All three organisations want to find ways to provide more services for members. For example, they are thinking of cooperative buying, micro-credit schemes, health and social insurance packages, training in business and negotiating skills.

SEWU is the only organisation that has discussed working with trade unions. But it decided not to affiliate to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) because of SEWU's policy of non-party political affiliation.

On the other hand, COSATU has recognised that it is important to organise informal workers. In 2000, COSATU's National Congress decided that each of its affiliates must develop a strategy to organise informal economy workers.

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) is COSATU's affiliate that organises local government employees. SAMWU could be a partner for street trader organisations because, like traders, their main bargaining partner is local government. Street traders could not be members of SAMWU, because they are not employees of local government. But SAMWU and street trader organisations could work closely together. In fact, in 1998 when local government tried to evict

street traders from trading on the pavements, SAMWU joined in the protest.

None of the organisations say that there is conflict between themselves and other organisations. But so far they have not found a way to work together in a regular way so that the voice of street traders can be even stronger. What is holding them back?



## Questions to think about

After reading this booklet, you may want to think about the following questions. You may also want to discuss these questions in your organisation.

- What are the main problems facing street traders?
- Are the problems different for men and women street traders? Are the problems different for foreign and local street traders? Are the problems different for traders who sell different types of goods?
- How can street trader organisations help street traders solve their problems?
- What problems do street trader organisations face in helping street traders? Which problems are common to all street trader organisations? And which problems differ between organisations?
- What do street trader organisations want from local government?
- What is the best way of dealing with municipalities? For example, should organisations hold demonstrations, or should they negotiate?
- How could forming a national South African Alliance of street vendors help street trader organisations?
- What are the best steps for forming a national Alliance? What would be the difficulties in forming a national Alliance?

# ILO fundamental labour Conventions

The ILO's eight fundamental labour Conventions are also known as the 'core' Conventions. These Conventions apply to all workers, no matter where and what sort of work they do, and no matter what form of contract they have.

The Conventions cover four categories of principles and rights at work:

- (1) freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining:
  - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and
  - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- (2) the elimination of all forced or compulsory labour:
  - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and
  - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105);
- (3) the abolition of child labour:
  - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and
  - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182);
- (4) the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation:
  - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and
  - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

