

**REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGANISING IN THE
INFORMAL ECONOMY: “COMBINING OUR EFFORTS”
held in Ahmedabad, India, from 3 – 6 December 2003**

The conference was hosted by the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, India, and organized by an international organizing committee comprising the following organizations:

HomeNet Thailand – *represented by Rakawin Lee*
Nigeria Labour Congress – *represented by Linus Ukamba*
SEWA India – *represented by Renana Jhabvala and Manali Shah*
StreetNet International – *represented by Pat Horn*
Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Ghana – *represented by Kofu Asamoah*

Opening: 3 December 2003

Guests were welcomed by the General Secretary of SEWU, Namrata Bali, who welcomed the 140 guests and conference participants on behalf of 700 000 members of SEWA. She referred to the difficulty in organizing workers in the informal economy: *“Organising is the key word and SEWA has learnt that struggle and development both help in doing it. The joint strategy of unions and co-operatives with an integrated approach can bring a difference in the life of the poor.”* She went on to describe the purpose of the conference as follows: *“We have come together to share, develop strategies, identify existing and new partnerships and the process of representation at international forums such as the ILO – but what is most important is to see how together we can take the informal economy into the mainstream of the workers’ movement.”*

ELA BHATT

Ela R. Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, opened the conference. She sketched the history of the manner in which the demise of the textile industry in Ahmedabad had given birth to SEWA. Referring to the growing informal economy and the poor conditions under which most of the informal workforce around the world are working, she said *“We are not going to keep on crying over our past conditions. We have begun to become visible, we are getting organized – that is what it is natural for workers to do. And that is why we are here meeting to strengthen ourselves holding each other’s hands This is a historical event, maybe for the first time the informal workers’ organizations, and the national unions with deep concern for the vast number of workers who are left out of the labour movement – both are meeting to strengthen each other. This is the call of the time. This is the future.”*

DAN GALLIN

A televised address by Dan Gallin, former Director of the Organisation & Representation programme of WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) was presented, in which he stated that *“for the foreseeable future we can expect more deregulation and a further growth of the informal economy. The issue is therefore not “formalizing” the “informal” but protecting the unprotected.”*

“For all these reasons, organizing the workers in the informal economy everywhere is now a crucial issue for the labour movement. Without a serious and sustained effort on this issue, it is impossible today to even think of organizing a majority of workers on a global scale – and unless we do that we cannot change the existing global power relationships to our advantage. This is a gigantic task and none of us can do it by ourselves. We must do it together and that requires political skills and the creation of alliances. In the first place between the traditional trade union movement and the unions informal workers have organized by and for themselves. That is what you are about to do in this conference.”

HERMAN VAN DER LAAN

Mr Van Der Laan, ILO sub-regional director for South Asia, described how liberalization and globalization has accelerated informalization of labour market. Therefore the ILO international labour conference addressed this subject in 2002. The Conference shifted the term “informal sector” to “informal economy” to refer to all units in the informal economy which are outside the reach of the law, or the law is not applied to them, or the law is burdensome.

The 2002 conference endorsed decent work – and identified gaps to achieving decent work in the informal economy. Workers lack rights and social protection and are excluded from social dialogue and policy-making. ILO studies show that informal economy workers want to organize where the state is unable to attend their needs.

Mr Van Der Laan stressed the need for an integrated approach to organizing that addresses representation, social dialogue and voice. Upgrading working conditions of workers in informal economy cannot happen without their participation. Therefore they need to be organized in order to overcome restrictions on their freedom of association and address the wide representational gap which exists today.

MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

Pat Horn, International Co-ordinator of StreetNet International, read out messages of support for the conference which had been received from the following:

- John Monks, General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation
- Elsa Ramos, Director, Equality and Youth, ICFTU
- Kitty Roozmond, Vice-President, FNV Netherlands
- Juan Somavia, Director-General, International Labour Office
- John J. Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO United States

Day 1: 4 December 2003

After initial introductions by the 55 participants to each other, the whole of this day was devoted to the visual presentation by different organizations of the work they are doing. The information presented is summarized as follows:

1. AFL-CIO

- Voluntary federation of 64 labor unions representing 13 million workers
- Launched the American Center for International Labour Solidarity to tackle challenges workers face in global economy
- Aim to provide better protection for under-regulated workers, and raise rights and standards of regulated workers, in order to create a social movement for economic rights
- Four approaches used:
 - bring contingent workers under basic labor laws
 - make laws more effective in raising the standard of living and reducing inequality
 - labor law reform
 - change public debate about work and work standards, and make fights over the organization of workers a fight for the whole community to raise standards.

2. CROC (Confederacion Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos)

- Transformed itself in 1979 to adapt to new conditions of the social & economic reality of the country
- Formed the Federacion Nacional de Organizaciones de Trabajadores No Asalariados (FNOTNA) autonomous workers' union in 1982
- Strategy is to organize by building network of workers organizations in unstructured sectors to facilitate economic services and productive projects
- External programme establishes links with international organizations for recognition and protection of workers in the informal economy
- Internal programme includes the following:
 - organizational strategies
 - capacity-building and co-ordination between organizations
 - establishment of co-operatives
 - education and training
 - struggles for representation
- Permanent programme seeks to maintain services for its members to achieve better working and living conditions.

3. GEFONT

- Fought for 1997 amendment to Trade Union Act to provide trade union rights even to self-employed workers
- Formed Garbage Cleaners Federation, affiliated to ICEM; CUPPEC construction sector federation, affiliated to IFBWW; and Street Vendors Union, about to affiliate to StreetNet
- Organisational strategies:
 - study circles

- minimum wage implementation campaign
- workers education programme through GEFONT Education Dept.
- micro-co-op self-help groups
- social security campaign
- mobile health camps and counselling activities
- special programme for development of women's leadership
- Collective bargaining strategies:
 - registration of all informal workers in Village Development Committees and Municipalities
 - demand right to settle local disputes through tripartite structures
 - direct national bargaining with employers' commodity associations
 - pressure on government departments, and also direct interaction

4. Hong Kong Domestic Workers Union

- Established in June 2001
- 2000 members, part-time workers, mainly middle-aged women
- Recognise women's knowledge and skills through experience-sharing among members and through mass media
- Talk to members by phone to know their needs and concerns
- Occupational training
- Campaigns, such as:
 - fighting labour law amendment to revise part-time work hours
 - fight for minimum wage
 - reduce transport expenses
 - demand insurance from employers
 - demand old-age pensions from government
 - co-operative employment-creation programme
 - joint programme with migrant workers

5. KKPKP (Kagad Kach Patra Kastakari Panchayat) association of scrap collectors

- 5000 members, who are scrap collectors which consists of (a) waste pickers (paper, plastic, rags) and (b) Itenary buyers
- Most of the waste pickers are women from low classes mainly single women from undeveloped area of state
- 10 years old organization, based in Pune, Maharashtra (India)
- Members face constant harassment – demanded endorsement of I-card from municipal corporation – it reduced police harassment – Pune Municipal corporation is the first local authority to endorse I-cards
- To ensure conditions of work improve by not making it an undesirable occupation
- The children are entitled to benefits under central government of India scheme for children of uncleaned occupation
- Strong stand against child labour (which was prevalent in this occupation)
- Children are compulsorily enrolled in school
- Municipal corporation pays for the medical insurance and the worker pays for the life insurance

6. NASVI (National Alliance for Street Vendors of India)

- Initiated by SEWA in September 1998, based in Patna
- Combine efforts to bring policy level changes
- Platform / voice of street vendors at national level
- Brings together street vendor organizations – 400 organizations are affiliated
- Capacity building of the organizations
- Collecting and disseminating information about laws and policies
- Policy dialogues and advocacy
- Supports local struggles
- Constituted a Task Force for national policy which includes representative from police, corporation, street vendors, retired judge etc. – draft national policy has been formulated
- Publish a newsletter ‘Footpath ki Aawaz’

7. NFSVK (National Federation of Street Vendors of Korea)

- National organization of street vendors, with 4000 paid-up members, affiliated to StreetNet International
- NFSVK has 40 regional structures (RFSVKs)
- Street vendors started to organize after 1988 crack-down by Korean government on street vendors during Olympic Games
- Because street vending is illegal in terms of Korean law, the organization mainly engages in highly-disciplined protest actions against the government and municipal authorities to protect their members against harassment and eviction

8. Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)

- National center with 29 affiliated trade unions
- Works with the following types of informal workers:
 - National Automobile Technicians’ Association (NATA) mechanics
 - market vendors’ associations
 - spare-part vendors
 - cattle-rearers
 - hairdressers
 - GSM (cell-phone) operators
 - Okada (motor-bike taxi) drivers
- Organising strategies:
 - negotiations
 - rallies to organize workers
 - workshops for worker education

9. OTM (Organisacao Trabalhadores de Mocambique)

- National center with aim of improving the working conditions and life of workers in all economic sectors and social activities
- Took decision to form an association of workers and operators in the informal sector after a seminar on the informal economy in November 1998
- Created ASSOTSI (see below) at a Consultative Conference in April 1999

- Continues to assist ASSOTSI with financial management and administration
- Assists ASSOTSI with its organizing strategy:
 - membership recruitment campaigns
 - fundraising for its functioning
 - training leaders and cadres through courses, seminars and study circles
- Assists ASSOTSI with collective bargaining and collective agreements

10. ASSOTSI (Associacao dos Operadores e Trabalhadores do Sector Informal)

- Association at this stage of market vendors from 20 of 36 markets in the capital city of Maputo
- Alliances with SINTIQUIGRA (chemical, paper, rubber and graphic workers' union) and SINTIA (sugar industry workers union) of OTM
- Affiliated to StreetNet International
- Has had exchange visits with SEWU (Self-Employed Women's Union) South Africa and ZANAMA (Zambia National Marketeers Association)
- Plans to expand and become a national organisation

11. PATAMABA, Philippines

- Started in 1989 as *Pambansang Tagapag-ugnay ng mga Manggagawa sa Bahay* national network of homeworkers
- In May 2003 re-named itself to *Pambansang Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas* national network of informal workers, as its membership now includes homeworkers, vendors, small transport operators, construction workers and youth workers
- Also changed from being a women's organization to including both women and men in the informal economy
- Represents informal workers in the National Anti-Poverty Commission
- Promotes access to productive resources and social security
- Human development services:
 - skills training and upgrading (production-related)
 - gender awareness, health & reproductive rights
 - computer literacy
 - organic farming & food-processing
 - workers & working children's legal rights
 - participatory research, fieldwork, data-collection
 - facilitation & linkages
- Socio-economic assistance:
 - common market (showroom)
 - credit facility programme & micro-finance
 - enterprise development
 - marketing of home-based products

12. Thai Workers Solidarity Committee

- New mechanism to form umbrella organization, with over 9 national centers.

- Collation of TU+NGOs+TUCs+group of workers, comprising workers from all the sectors
- Organizing in the Informal sector is the new field for the TUs in Thailand
- Trying to improve the condition of work and quality of life for the informal workers. Main demands:
 - 1 Health and Safety Institution
 - Labour Relation Act
 - Social Security (unemployment benefit – hopefully from 2005)
 - 2 Workers Rights
 - Include informal sector
 - Workers minimum wage
 - Include migrant workers
 - 3 Aids & Workers: Child Care
 - 4 ILO convention – 87, 98, 177
 - 5 Constitutional rights

13. Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Ghana

- Affiliation of 17 Unions out of which 12 are National Unions
- Traditionally in the formal sector
- Names of the unions: ICU, GANU, CAMWU, PSWU, PUWU, LGWU, MDU, HSWU, REU, RWU, CWU, NUS, GPCWU, GPRTU, TWU, IEWU, MIMIS
- These TU are also working in the informal sector.
- TUC co-ordinates all the activities of National Unions in the informal sector through an Informal Sector Desk located in the Organising Department.
- Their activities: developing programme, link up with National Unions, and organize workshops

14. CBMWU (Construction & Building Materials Workers Union of Ghana)

- Took decision to organize unemployed artisans into union at August 2000 delegates' conference, and to:
 - set up an employment agency to recruit artisans for construction companies and facilitate recruitment of unemployed artisans into associations
 - set up a data-base on all members who lose their jobs so that they can be easily reached
- Land has been acquired for a vocational training center for training and re-training of artisans in new technology in the industry
- In March 2001 the Ghana Construction Artisans Association was inaugurated into the union as a branch of the national union
- Members pay dues only during the periods they are employed
- Union negotiates with employers to employ trained members

15. GPRTU (Ghana Public Road Transport Union)

- A unique union because it started its work in the informal sector (16 years ago)
- It is a non political body
- Drivers, porters, guards, police and private securities are its members

- Private police / guards/ security checks vehicles, proper documentation, vehicle not overloaded, educate the drivers and porters about the transportation laws
- Help the Govt. to collect taxes from the members
- Assist the members to acquire loans
- Support the welfare of the members
- No tensions between the formal and the Informal Sectors because the formal sectors realizes that their membership is going down and the informal sector has realized that they need to organize to have a decent life style and work.

16. ICU (Industrial & Commercial Union of Ghana TUC)

- The largest affiliate of the TUC, the ICU lost most of its members as a result of government restructuring and privatization
- It was decided to organize informal workers corresponding to the ICU's work sectors in order to increase union membership
- The first informal work sector to be organized was beauticians and hairdressers
- After that other sectors were organized, such as domestic workers, batik and tie & dye producers, etc.
- A partnership with KAD (Danish Women Workers Union) on organizing workers in the informal economy was established in 1995
- Informal Sector Workers (ISWs) pay very low union dues, but collection (which is done through the associations) is difficult. A proposal to increase the dues is currently under consideration
- Training is conducted in trade union principles, advocacy, confidence-building, skills development, etc.
- Training in product improvement and skills development is aimed at reducing unemployment
- The union offers services such as legal assistance and fights for workers to be covered by the social security pension scheme
- For purposes of mainstreaming workers in the informal economy, joint programmes are organized for formal and informal workers to learn to accept one another in the ICU

17. Makola Market Union – affiliated to Ghana StreetNet Alliance

- 800 members working in Makola Market in Accra. Many of them travel to the villages to bring foodstuffs to the city center to sell to market women
- Collaborating with Accra Municipality for a proposed Street Market Project which has identified 21 streets to be closed to traffic for the purposes of trading. It is hoped that this will provide enough space for all vendors in Accra so that they do not have to trade on the streets
- Since working with the Informal Sector Desk of the TUC and joining the Ghana StreetNet Alliance, they have been collaborating with the TUC of Ghana on issues of national concern
- The Ghana StreetNet Alliance was formed in Accra in 2003 but has already expanded to some other regions

18. Outgrowers Association of GAWU (Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana)

- Founded in 1983 and registered in 1986, has 7000 members in 26 districts
- Unites all farmers regarding cultivation of oil palm trees and sales of harvested fruits, and negotiates with GOPDC for better prices
- Attends to welfare of members
- Role of GAWU:
 - assisted farmers in collecting chares bought in GOPDC
 - trade union and worker education
 - training in income-generating activities, such as snail farming, grasscutter-rearing, bee-keeping
 - training in financial management
 - education in ecological farming methods
 - bringing all informal farmers into a unified body under GAWU
- Fight against violence against women:
 - public sensitization on violence
 - provide First Aid where there are injuries
 - counseling and support, referrals, accompaniment to state agencies, follow-up
 - training in conflict-resolution
 - training in negotiation, mediation and arbitration
 - exchange visits between areas where the programme is operating

19. Timber Workers Union of Ghana

- Members are chainsaw workers and small-scale carpenters
- No membership fees – fellow members support each other from time to time
- TWU intervenes on government policies on behalf of members, e.g. banning of chainsaw activities
- TWU negotiates with government to minimize taxes and assists members to pay taxes so that they are then entitled to demand services and benefits

20. Trade Union of Moldova (Business-Sind)

- Founded in 1989 after the destruction of Soviet Union – many factories were closed down and women were out of employment
- Mainly working with agricultural workers
- 20% women started working as street vendors but their rights were not recognized
- Organized as a TU after a struggle of 14 years
- Tried to convince the govt to legislate laws for the informal sector
- Confederation of 8 TU with 16000 members
- No funds from govt or other sources
- Sectors of work: street vendors, construction workers, home based workers, transport, non-professional

21. ZCTU (Zambia Congress of Trade Unions)

- Autonomous labour movement with 26 offices
- Member of ILO
- Representation in the structure depends on membership

- According Art. 3(b) and 6 of the Constitution
 - Provide informal sector representatives according to size
 - Association to ZCTU and not affiliation
 - Fees collected once or twice in a year and paid by members to Congress.
- Assist retired and retrenched members
- Assist in provision of training
- Assist in sourcing funds in area of economic participation
- Provision of legal services
- Work together on economic and social development
- Assists in maintenance of mutual co-operation

The govt. has agreed to amend some clauses for the benefit of the informal sector.

22. AZIEA (Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations)

- Formed in October 2002 with the assistance of the Workers Education Association of Zambia (WEAZ) supported by the ZCTU
- Consists of 12 paid-up affiliate organizations representing over 50 000 members working in the informal economy
- Membership fee is only \$1 per organization
- Affiliated to ZCTU as well as StreetNet International
- Action Plan:
 - organizing and mobilizing (aim to expand and bring in another 5 affiliates)
 - social dialogue (with central and local government)
 - education & training (to build capacity in negotiations, leadership, organization and management)
 - women empowerment (to promote at least 50% women leadership)
 - networking (to build working relationships with other organizations)
 - fundraising (to enhance the delivery of sustainable programmes)

23. ZCIEA - Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Association

- Born to fight
 - against the govt. as in Zimbabwe workers have no right as workers
 - workers cannot easily form associations
- Associated to ZCTU (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions) but not affiliated
- Born out of ZCTU-CTUC Informal Economy Project:
 - To organize, establish, promote and protect the interest of informal economy
 - To empower the marginalized informal economy operators with TUs by educating and developing entrepreneurial skills
 - To undertake research and collect information to disseminate the same
 - To assist with easy accessing of social and economic resources for its members in an effort to extend social services to the marginalized people of Zimbabwe and therefore facilitating equitable distribution of wealth

24. AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) - Bidi, Cigar and Tobacco Federation

- This federation works under the parent trade union AITUC, with 7,5 million members in around 14 States in the Union and 700 000 members in the Federation

- 90% of members are women
- Bidi industry is in danger because the MNC's are now manufacturing mini cigarettes and also because the WHO is thinking of adopting a resolution to abolish the use of tobacco by 2004
- The Federation is fighting against the formation of this resolution and have launched an anti tobacco campaign. They are demanding from the govt to provide alternative employment to all the workers who would be affected because of the ILO resolution.
- Main objective: Socialism, Secularism, Democracy, peace and prosperity to all.
- Present campaign: Against Globalization, Privatization, and Liberalization – For alternative development path based on mutual interrelations and equitable trade practice
- Informal sector membership: Over 60 %
- Bidi industry is the only informal sector which has a law.
 - Minimum wages fixed in all the states of the nation
 - Bidi industry is able to achieve welfare scheme with tripartite negotiations
- They are getting their demands through fights
 - Children scholarship for education
 - Subsidies for housing
 - Health care
 - Pension

25. CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions)

- Formed in 1970 – exists in all States of India and all industries
- 3,5 million members – 50 % in informal and 50 % in formal sector
- 40 % are women workers – target is of 50 % women workers
- Not affiliated to any international trade unions but have connections
- Particular stress on increasing members of informal sector
- Stress given to meet specific demands of working women

26. SEWA Bharat

- Formed in 1984, total members in 2003 reached 700 000
- 9 member organizations in the 7 states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Lucknow, Chattarpur, Bhagalpur, Mungiar, Delhi, Bikaner
- SEWA Bank only services Gujarat, but most regions have joined the insurance programme of SEWA Gujarat
- Objective is to do policy advocacy at national level

27. TNGOU (Tamil Nadu Govt. Officials Union, affiliated to PSI)

- Organises village health nurses who work with mostly bidi, agarbatti and silk workers in the villages
- Assist in eradicating killer diseases such as typhoid, jaundice, measles and diphtheria
- Operate a Child Development Scheme, and carry out the population census for new-born to 6-year-old children, handicapped children, etc.

28. UNI (Union Network International)

- Established on 1st January 2000 and is based in Geneva, Switzerland
- Merger of 4 international Organizations – FIET, CI, IGF, MEI
- 15 million workers across 144 countries
- Working in 4 regions – Africa, Asia Pacific, America, Europe
- Working in 13 sectors – Commerce, Finance, Postal, Telecommunication, IBITs, Property services, Hair and Beauty care, Graphical, Social Security, Media and Entertainment, Tourism, Electricity, and Casinos.
- Working with 4 interprofessional groups – Women, youth, managers and professionals.
- Their motto – DECENT WORK AND A DECENT LIFE FOR WOMEN
- Their activities consist of education trainings and global equality project
- They aim at proportional representation based on membership at every level. Try to organize industries rather than dividing it into formal and informal sectors because the vendor whether at shop or street, does the same job.
- They provide following support in the informal sector: Educational Programme, professional trainings and training in getting organized.

29. CAW (Committee for Asian Women)

- Working for the past 25 years and based in Bangkok
- Work with Trade Unions, Women's organizations, Women's departments in trade unions and NGOs.
- 28 organization across 13 countries
- Is a network of members
- Work is based on themes:
 - Issues facing women workers – as a women and as a worker
 - Strategies of Organizing – Chain strategy, Legal Strategy
- Working in the informal sector for the last 4 years
- Working for workers' rights

30. HOMENET THAILAND

- Network of home-based workers mostly in northern Thailand
- 4000 members
- Working in alliance with other workers in informal sector like street vendors, service based workers, domestic workers, agriculture workers etc.
- Building members based organizations
- Capacity building of organization and representation
- Campaigns on policies, laws, social insurance
- Mapping and Research on policy and situation
- Seminars and workshops:
 - Social Security
 - Labour law
 - Health and safety
 - Fair trade facilitation

- Assisting home-based workers with marketing
- Co-ordination with TUs

31. IFWEA (International Federation of Workers Education Association)

- Organization providing labour education and training
- Trade Union, Labour Research and information institutions
- Regional and national meeting and conferences on labour education strategies
- Joint actions eg. Joint May day statement
- Special education projects eg. International study circle, Global network project

32. IRENE, Netherlands

- 20 years old, organizes with trade unions, workers groups, academics, international groups, NGOs, on:
 - Policies and strategies of workers
 - Legally attract TUs and possibilities
 - Instrument for contact points
 - Case studies of accountable international organizations
 - Seminars on special issues
 - They bring together knowledge, activists and union
 - Women issues at international and local level

33. People's Solidarity for Social Progress, Korea

- Women-based organization affiliated to Korean People's Solidarity, a broad coalition of Korean organizations fighting for social justice
- Labour activities include research into irregular work, linking with the workers organizations in these areas and advocating policies for such work
- Fighting for the rights of migrant workers and against the EPS (employee permit system) which interferes with the freedom of movement of migrant workers
- Organise demonstrations against neo-liberal government policies and other issues such as the war in Iraq

34. WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising & Organising)

- Founded by SEWA, HomeNet, StreetNet in 1997
- Constituency is member-based organizations, research institutions and international development agencies
- Five programmes are:
 - statistics
 - urban policies
 - global markets
 - social protection
 - organistaion & representation
- Does work which promotes organization of workers in the informal economy as a service to the organisations

Information sent by organizations which did not manage to attend

35. BHWA (Bangladesh Homeworkers Women Association)

- Registered with Labour Ministry as a trade union, which means homeworkers can demand basic worker rights
- Community-based organizing, including education and survey work among women home-based workers
- Awareness-raising campaigns
- Training in how to conduct mass meetings and in collective bargaining techniques

36. CUT Peru

- Formed in December 1993 with support of ORIT-ICFTU, with 16 affiliates
- One affiliate, FEDAMPI, organizes autonomous workers, street vendors, micro-entrepreneurs in productive and service activities, commerce and agriculture
- CUT offers access and technical assistance, capacity-building and enterprise development, and creates co-operatives
- CUT represents its members in different forums and negotiations on employment and development

37. FEDEVAL (Federacion Departamental de Trabajadores Ambulantes de Lima y el Callao) Peru

- Federation of street and market vendors' associations in different areas of Lima, founded 20 May 1979
- Affiliated to CUT Peru with support of ORIT-ICFTU
- Promotes modernization and formalisation of street trade, and creation of self-managed markets
- Promotes organization and representation of street vendors, and improvement of their working conditions
- Promotes development of enterprises for informal traders

Day 2: 5 December 2003

Renana Jhabvala presented a synthesized report of the similarities and differences between the approaches of the different organisations, from the previous day's presentations. It was clear that, instead of being put off by all the obstacles, the organizations had all "taken the plunge" to organize workers in the informal economy, and then faced the obstacles as they arise.

Some organizations have been organizing informal workers for many years, e.g. SEWA, CITU, AITUC, KKKPK, CROC. Others have recently started organizing informal workers, e.g. NLC, ZCTU Zimbabwe.

Some organizations have started to organize informal workers because they lost many members due to retrenchments and casualisation, e.g. GhanaTUC and most of their affiliates. Others started to organize existing informal workers, but grew as a result of liberalization, e.g. HomeNet Thailand, SIEU.

There was found to be a mix of different kinds of organizations:

- a) unions organizing informal workers (e.g. SEWA, SIEU, etc.)
- b) national federations or trade union centers (e.g. CROC, NASVI, etc.)
- c) international networks or federations (e.g. GUFs, StreetNet, etc.)

The strategies of each level of organizing is different:

- a) unions are focused on particular issues and are usually smaller;
- b) national federations or centers are concerned about structures and policies;
- c) international federations are concerned about how to highlight informal workers and their organizations internationally.

ISSUES

All the organizations were found to be equally concerned about the following:

- the identity and recognition of workers (e.g. the issue of ID cards)
- to increase the bargaining position of informal workers;
- legitimacy and access to institutions and resources;
- to effect policy and/or legal changes;
- capacity-building of members and/or member organizations.

Some of the organizations are actively trying to find or create alternative employment and develop skills (e.g. PATAMABA) while others are more focused on protection and bargaining (e.g. SIEU). Many offer services, such as access to credit, housing and various social services. Migrancy is an issue for many of the organizations (e.g. Hong Kong Domestic Workers Union)

There were different approaches to globalisation among the organizations. Some try to create or use new markets (e.g. PATAMABA and SEWA) whereas many are actively focused on opposing neo-liberalism.

STRUCTURES

Most of the organizations have democratically elected decision-making structures. Some organize both formal and informal workers, such as trade unions that follow their members into the informal economy and create new structures (e.g. OTM, NLC) Some organize informal workers separately, and co-operate with unions working with mainly formal workers. There are also interesting combinations of structures, such as:

- a) associations as part of unions (e.g. ICU and GAWU of Ghana)
- b) unions sponsoring co-operatives

All the organizations organize by sector. Some integrate workers from different sectors into one organization or federation (e.g. national centers like Ghana TUC) while others unite workers in particular sectors only (e.g. GUFs).

CREATING BARGAINING STRUCTURES

Nearly all the organizations are faced with the challenge of creating new bargaining structures since these rarely exist for workers in the informal economy. There were found to be a range of interesting approaches to this:

- a) Creating an “employer” where an obvious one does not exist – e.g. SIEU in the state of California, USA.
- b) Creating a regulatory board – e.g. different tripartite boards for headloaders in Maharashtra, India.
- c) Creating a multi-partite structure in a municipality – e.g. in the case of street vendors.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNMENT

Some of the organizations have a very clear policy of non-party-political partisanship. However, others are associated with political parties (particularly ruling parties) to help them gain access. In Zimbabwe, the ZCTU is constantly under risk of attack because of their association with the opposition party.

Most organizations use government programmes or try to create new ones, irrespective of their policy on political affiliation.

FINANCING AND FUNDING

There was general consensus that charging membership fees is important, even if it has to be small – and most organizations have difficulty collecting fees on a regular basis. There were many examples of savings schemes and pooling funds (e.g. co-operatives, credit unions, etc.) Some organizations obtain funding from their country’s labour movement (e.g. Ghana TUC) or from donors (sometimes via GUFs).

Group work

Participants then went into five groups to discuss the following issues for the greater part of the day:

1. Sustainable organizational development and capacity-building
2. Labour law reform and policy development
3. Developing appropriate collective bargaining systems

4. Social protection
5. Employment creation and skills development

In each group, organizations described their different approaches to the particular issue as well as the obstacles they encounter. Ways of overcoming the obstacles were shared, as well as ways of assisting each other across different countries (see Group Discussion annexures for more detailed accounts) and each group made recommendations for incorporation into the Conference Resolution (see Resolution 1).

Day 3: 6 December 2003

Participants discussed the following questions in groups:

1. Develop elements of a three-year plan to promote and develop more sustained, co-ordinated and systematic organization of workers in the informal economy worldwide (including exchange of information, arranging exchange visits, international campaigns).
2. New partnerships/alliances which need to be built, and strengthening existing partnerships/alliances – discussion and planning.
3. Identify what mechanism needs to be put in place to take forward the processes decided upon at the meeting.

At the plenary report-back session, the following way forward was developed:

Elements of Plan

1. All agreed that international meetings of this kind should continue.
2. The organizing committee should be asked to continue to play a convening role, but including representatives from the Americas and Europe.
3. Prepare the report of this workshop speedily.

Action Plan

4. Next year's ILO conference 2004:
 - Participation with specific agenda i.e. Migrant workers issue in forthcoming meeting
 - Group presence, with spokesperson from informal economy
 - Arrange a meeting with Mr. Juan Somavia (DG of ILO)
 - Arrange next meeting of the representatives of these conference
5. Work with ILO at country level, and lobby ILO to directly support the unions and organizations of the countries like Hong Kong and S. Korea
6. Document successful collective bargaining efforts from different parts of the world and disseminate. Also document labour laws of different countries, and methods of capacity building for dissemination.
7. Take up the Conclusions on Decent Work and the Informal Economy adopted at ILC 2002 and interact with the ILO on follow-up action. (Other UN documents make no mention of workers – only talk of the 'poor' without recognition of their status as workers.)

8. Campaign on
 - a. poor as workers
 - b. informal workers also workers
9. Build database of organizations in the informal economy.
10. Focus on unrepresented sectors.
11. WIEGO to take on the following role:
 - Document and disseminate labour and other laws, policies and reforms for the informal workers;
 - Social Protection – documenting what works and perhaps promoting micro-insurance consultation;
 - Statistical services.
12. Awareness raising. Create awareness among those working with the poor about their status as workers.
13. Exchange visits between organizations.
14. Annual conference, maybe theme-based, eg vendors.

Networks and alliances

15. Expand existing alliances by bringing in other types of informal sector workers currently not represented here.
16. Network with other groups are who working with informal workers but have not organized them.
17. Work with GUFs and international confederations of national centers (global unions) as well as their regional formations.

Mechanisms

18. The current organizing committee, with the addition of representatives from the Americas and Europe, should act as the working group to drive the process.
19. Regional-level committees should be constituted to carry the work forward.
20. Promote regional-level networks which bring unions of formal and informal workers together.
21. Structures also to be formed where necessary – but in due time.
22. Establish more systems for communication within the network.

Resolutions

Finally, the following four resolutions were adopted by the meeting;

1. Organizing in the informal economy (principal conference resolution)
2. Migrant workers
3. Situation in Zimbabwe and Nigeria
4. Condolences on the passing away of Bro. Luis Anderson

(See attached annexures for full text of resolutions)

The conference ended with a press conference and votes of thanks.