

# STREETNET ASSOCIATION

## NO. 2 NEWSLETTER APRIL 2001

### THREE DAYS TO REMEMBER IN LATIN AMERICA

by Carmen Roca

What do a street vendor of traditional sweets in Venezuela, an indigenous vendor of flowers in Bolivia and an immigrant vendor of "empanadas" in Costa Rica have in common? A lot - despite their different realities! For example, livelihoods that rely on production and sale on the streets or at markets that cost them years of struggle; goods frequently made with their own hands, battles against unsympathetic municipalities; harassment - sometimes violent - from the local police; the desire to organise themselves, which must overcome daily problems of leadership, politics and internal conflicts, and lack of resources to improve their situation or to help solve problems of their fellow vendors.

This was the surprising discovery street vendors of Latin America made at StreetNet's first regional workshop held in Lima, Peru, from February 15-17. More surprising was to discover that they also shared these experiences with women from as far as India and Africa! As Jacqueline Alvarez who represented a national Chilean network of women's groups known as Bio Bio said, "One is not alone; there are other ladies like me who are finding their way through the same problems....Even though they come from different countries, they have taught me a lot about their experiences and strength".

The workshop was financed by StreetNet, in collaboration with UNIFEM and WIEGO. COPEME, a Peruvian coalition of micro-enterprise supporting institutions, was the organiser of this successful event.

It was attended by 24 representatives of street vendor organisations, coming from 9 different Latin American countries. Members of organisations supporting them also attended. The participants reflected a wide range of organisational experience, coming as they did from national unions, district federations, local women associations and supportive NGOs. Many of their leaders are street vendors themselves, selling products ranging from fruit and vegetables, CDs and tapes to flowers, newspapers, sweets and empanadas.

The workshop was interesting and fulfilled its objectives.

One of these, the exchange of regional experiences, was enriching and highlighted the reality of street vendors: what they do, the problems they face, and how they overcome them through effective organisation. It was felt that vendors in other far off regions of the world appear to be more organised and had much to teach. In this regard, participants thanked the co-ordinator of the National Association of Street Vendors in India (NASVI), Arbind Singh, Winnie Mitullah, the WIEGO co-ordinator and Kenyan researcher, Pat Horn the international co-ordinator of StreetNet, and Nozipho Lembethe, StreetNet's Administrator. Language posed no barrier to learning from their pertinent and illustrative experiences.

Another objective, viz that of getting regional input on several issues around StreetNet's confirmation as the international alliance of street vendors, was also met. Discussions included StreetNet membership (whether members should be the national alliances, city alliances or the smaller associations), political affiliation, class



Some of the 24 delegates at the workshop representing street vendors organisations from 9 Latin American countries



differences, women leadership, and the role of NGOs. There were heated discussions around these issues both in the small discussion groups and plenary sessions, with opinions conflicting and coinciding at different moments. Regarding StreetNet's membership, some participants felt members should be the national alliances, while others preferred city alliance-based membership. Argument for both options included co-ordination, strengthening of organisations, representation of all, etc. It was agreed that StreetNet and its member organisations, should not be politically affiliated. This however, did not preclude individual members from having their political affiliations.

The acceptance of class differences amongst vendors, and acting upon them, was also regarded as a priority. This is to ensure action plans that include all members, and build the capacities of those usually marginalised by class. It was also felt that women's leadership should be ensured by measures such as a minimum 50% female quota. In addition however, there had to be capacity building, and ensuring that women had the necessary space to learn in all aspects of an organisation's work. In regard to the role of NGOs, it was felt that they could offer support and training but had to respect the independence of street vendors' organisations, and their decisions.

Participants also had time for discussions with Elsa Guerrero, a councillor from the Lima Municipality, about the experiences of relocated vendors in the city. Likewise, they met with researcher Eliana Chavez, to discuss an ILO research project being conducted in five Latin American regions, about street vendors. It inspired them to know that

efforts are being made to understand their realities and to act upon these.

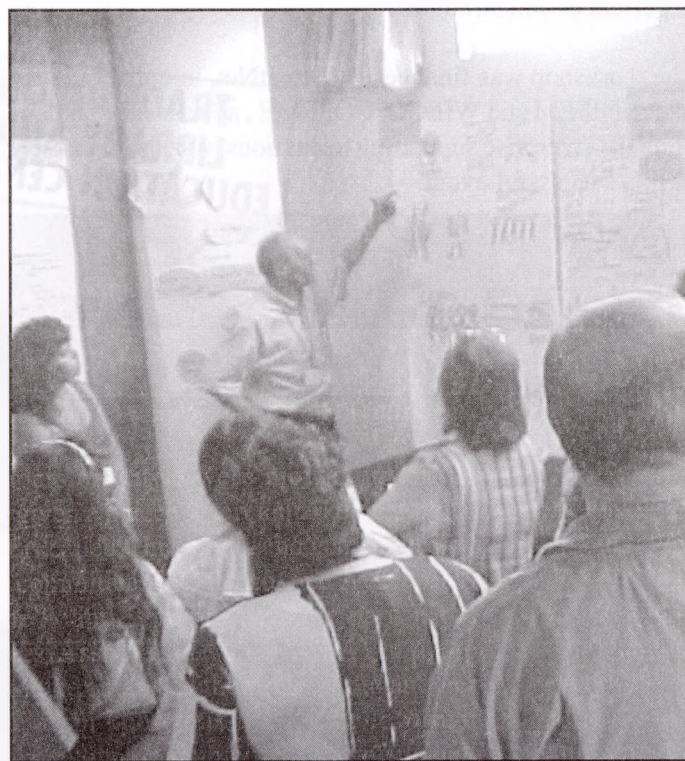
The workshop programme was a full one, varying from discussions to lively entertainment. For example, Peruvian folk dancers showed participants their art during the first coffee break! A special bus tour through the city, including a visit to its two large markets and meetings with respective market leaders, was a fitting end to the workshop. Participants had a chance to address the markets' vendors through microphones during this visit.

The spirit and atmosphere throughout the workshop were extremely good. Participants took part enthusiastically and left quite inspired to spread the news about StreetNet in their respective countries. They undertook to report events they knew would take place over the next few months. Most left with a copy of an interim report of the workshop proceedings ( a final version will be forwarded to them later) which included a directory of participants' contact information. They will be contacted for their evaluation of the workshop.

The need to keep in contact and to draw in other organisations for inclusion in StreetNet's database is part of an ongoing programme towards StreetNet's launch in 2002. Part of popularising StreetNet in Latin America will be local distribution of the StreetNet's newsletters, with the help of some of the participating organisations. It is also hoped to continue the collaboration with COPEME and EDAPROSPRO to co-ordinate contact with Latin American street vendor organisations.



**Good translators were provided so the language posed no barrier**



**All participants showed great interest and appreciation**



## DURBAN'S NEW INFORMAL ECONOMY POLICY

### An interchange between informal workers, researchers and local government

by Caroline Skinner

In 1998, the Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU) approached the Centre for Social and Development Studies (CSDS) at the University of Natal, Durban to conduct a study on street trading. This was a unique opportunity as seldom had a grass roots organisation approached the centre with a project that it had itself designed. This 18 month research programme covered a number of issues including synthesising all the research that had been conducted in South Africa on street trading since 1990, analysing five city governments' approaches to street traders and understanding how street traders were organised. The research was conducted in close collaboration with SEWU under the auspices of the international research and activist network, Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising or WIEGO. As a direct result of the research, Prof. Francie Lund and Caroline Skinner, who had worked on the project, were approached by the City of Durban to assist in developing an informal economy policy.

The research found that Durban compared well with the other four South African cities. Unlike Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria and East London, Durban has a department dedicated to managing street trading. Since 1995, Durban has spent R45 million (approx. US\$5.6 million) on infrastructure for street traders both in the city centre and in outlying areas. This is more than any other city has spent and has resulted in a real improvement in the work environment of many traders. Although progress has been made, the research also highlighted that the city did not have a policy to guide its approach. This meant that different departments often had different approaches. SEWU had found this very frustrating, and described to the researchers how important it was to them to have a clear, written policy, translated into the language of traders, which officials from all departments would be guided by. As in other cities, interventions in Durban have tended to focus on street trading and not on other informal economy activities like home based work. The North and South Central Councils (which govern the central areas of the city) and particularly the forward thinking Metropolitan Economic Development Department, rose to the challenge.

In November 1999, an interdepartmental Technical Task Team was established to develop an informal economy policy. The Team comprised officials from different departments (City Health, Metropolitan Police, Economy Development, Planning, Informal Trade and Small Business Support). This was the beginning of a year long process. There was a substantial consultation process with organisations representing formal and informal business, trade unions, officials, development forums and individuals. Where information was lacking research was commissioned.

The North and South Central Councils adopted the policy in October 2000.

With respect to improved **management**, the policy presents a vision for the city, which integrates informal work into economic and urban planning. This in itself will lead to a more coherent approach from the many different Council departments who deal with informal workers. Concrete suggestions are made to ensure greater co-ordination between departments, such as area-based management.

The policy emphasises **support** of informal economy workers. It acknowledges that currently, national government support is inadequate and that the private support providers are often reluctant to service this group.

Local government must be proactive and should:

- \* disseminate information about how best to support informal economy workers to existing service providers
- \* provide a referral service to informal economy workers
- \* identify gaps in support
- \* where appropriate be a direct service provider or fund appropriate agencies.

Globally, there is a sectoral or industry based approach to supporting formal business. The policy suggests employing a group of sector specialists to conduct analysis of the informal component of different sectors. This will help to focus support more precisely and identify appropriate roles for local government as well as formal business.

The policy recognises the importance of **consultation and negotiation**. The interests of local government can best be served if it has strong and stable partners to negotiate with. A programme of assistance should be offered to organisations representing informal economy workers. Local government officials should undergo training in negotiation and dispute resolution. Where possible, existing facilities and personnel will be used in assisting organisations, for example, the provision of meeting space, assistance with minute taking and translation.

The City of Durban has been particularly forward thinking. It drew on learning from different experiences:

- \* Lessons learnt from the pilot projects, which Durban municipality had set up during the political transition.
- \* New approaches to health education developed by the City Health Department
- \* Insights gained through the SEWU initiated research.

These, combined with direct involvement from informal economy workers in the policy development process, have contributed to making Durban's approach particularly accommodating to those working in the informal economy.





**Durban's new "muthi" (traditional medicines) market established as part of the Warwick Avenue renewal project.**

**A "muthi" trader carries her stock to her stall at the "muthi" market.**





## **INDIGENOUS STREET VENDORS IN ECUADOR**

by Rosario Curichumbi Y. - AMAUTA FOUNDATION

Quito Ecuador

Ecuador is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multinational country with a diversity of peoples and cultures. This variety extends to the bio-diversity of its fauna and flora, thanks to the generosity of nature. The country is divided into four natural regions; the Coast or Littoral region, the Sierra or Interandina, the Amazónico or Oriente and the insular region of the Galapagos Archipelago.

According to the previous decade's census, it is believed that the population is 12 821 000. Thirty five percent of us are indigenous people living in different villages and belonging to different nationalities. In all, we number about 4 300 000, and are the most vulnerable sector of our population. None of the governments in power during the entire republican period of Ecuador's history, has worried about creating public policies to benefit this very important sector, in spite of the fact that this group feeds the entire nation, since its main activity is agriculture.

During this last decade, the lack of government attention has prompted the massive movement of people from the countryside to the city. As a consequence, this migration has created the so-called 'belts of misery' in cities like Quito, Guayaquil, Ambato, Machala, Santo Domingo de los Colorados, Quevedo, etc. We indigenous people have found a completely different world in the cities that contrasts completely with our view of the cosmos. However, the instinct of survival enables us to face the immense difficulty of surviving in the cities. It is in this way that many of our brothers succeed in finding insecure and poorly paid jobs albeit with great difficulty. Many of us have committed ourselves to informal trade as street vendors.

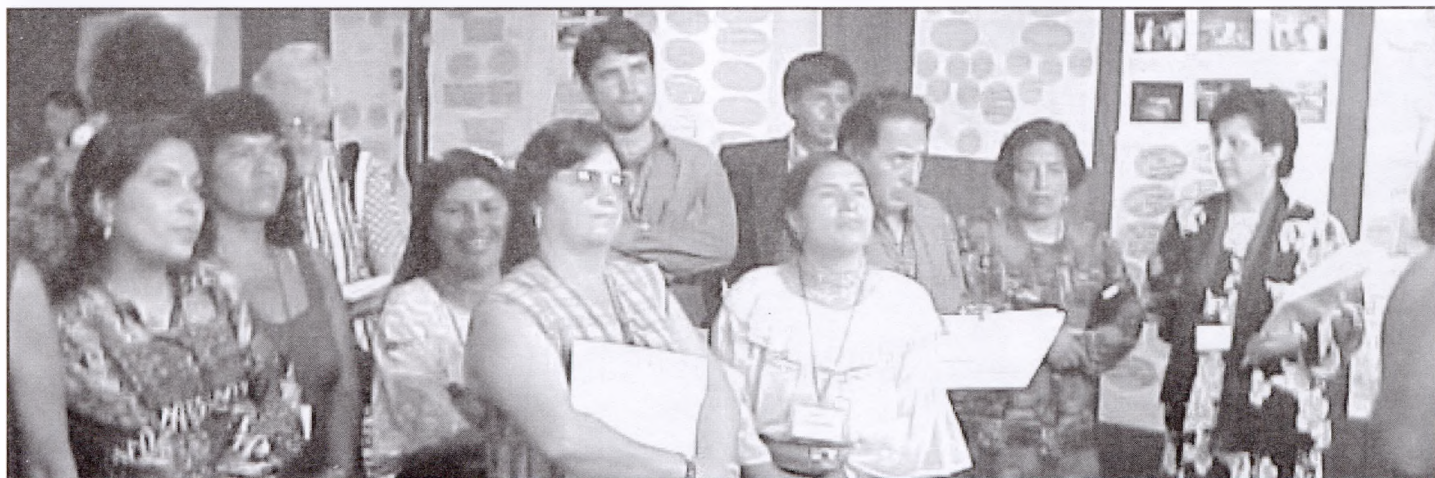
Men, women and children walk the streets, avenues, dusty marginal areas, supermarkets, squares and vehicles offering different types of products, like packets of playing cards, fruit, vegetables, prepared food, clothes, music tapes, etc. We sell from door to door in residential areas, to pedestrians, housewives, office workers.

This journey is not easy. We have to start at three or four in the morning and continue until five or six in the afternoon. This is an endless routine. We are forced to do it every day of the year. On the days we don't work, we don't eat. Furthermore, we have to carry the products on our hardened backs or shoulders, or in a wooden handcart or a rickety tricycle or wheelbarrow.

Meanwhile, there exists another group of informal vendors, who have been luckier and through negotiations by street vendor organisations' management, they have persuaded the town municipalities to grant them a place on pavements at the roadside, no bigger than two square metres each. These street vendors start at five in the morning, and when the sun's light fades, they pack and store their goods in improvised warehouses overnight.

The street vendors and informal vendors have to overcome many barriers. Many of these are not within our reach. Life is a real odyssey. However, the reward for effort is a piece of bread for our family, especially for our children. We believe that just the struggle will change us and will improve our families' life circumstances, so that we will be able to give our children a better education, and be able to prevent unhealthiness.

Because these activities have no fixed timetable or time limits, they make us vulnerable to many abuses. The city police, the so-called security agents and health inspectors, amongst others, have ill-treated us with physical and psychological violence. The mestizos humiliate the indigenous people. Therefore, it is understandable that there exists a great deal of racism, delinquency, assaults, frauds, traffic accidents, etc. This insecurity is wide-spread amongst all the workers. For this reason we urge the social security, police and human rights organizations to concern themselves deeply with this human throng that generates the country's resources day by day. We want to live like human beings and individuals by right. We appeal strongly to the politicians who form part of the government, to propose policies for all social sectors including ours.



**2 women (dressed in white traditional shirts) came from Ecuador and explained problems encountered by street vendors in that country.**



## **COURTING JUSTICE FOR STREET VENDORS IN DELHI**

**by Arbind Singh -NASVI Co-ordinator**

Two landmark Supreme Court decisions signpost the long and difficult road to recognition of Delhi street vendors and their rights by the city authorities. These are :

Sodhan Singh vs NMCD (1989)

Genda Ram vs MCD (1992)

As a result of Supreme Court directives, two committees were appointed to identify genuine vendors and award them their trading licences. These were the Thareja (TC) Committee which was assigned the area under the NMDC, and the Chopra Committee (CC) which was put in charge of the MCD area.

In Sodhan Singh vs NMCD the court was approached thrice - in 1989, 1992 and 1998. Justice K Singh made a historic decision in 1989 when he declared vending on street pavements within reasonable restrictions, a fundamental right. The Thareja Committee, made up of three members, was tasked to implement this decision by considering whom, of more than 80 000 vendors, were eligible for a trading space.

To ease its task, the TC divided the NMDC area into five zones. Trading places for hawkers in each zone were identified. Further, they were categorized into five groups, in order of the number of years spent as vendors, for consideration, viz :

1. those vending from 1977 or before
2. those vending from 1978-1980 and
3. those vending from 1981-1987.

The NMDC formulated a scheme through which the first group would be given kiosks or stalls, while the second group would get these depending on whether they were available. Alternatively, they would get a tehbajari licence. The third category would get tehbajari licences only if space was available. Their eligibility would be determined by presentation of documents such as receipts issued to them by the NMDC, challans by the police and so on.

Despite the TC's hard work (It cleared 5627 vendors as eligible for licences), the allotments did not take place. It seems that the NMDC deliberately gave the tehbajari licences to vendors, knowing that this is not a licence as such, but a fee paid for using space. This enables traffic police to eject vendors from a trading spot if they feel that vendors are obstructing traffic.

Till 1992, tehbajari receipts indicated the name of the trading zone in which a vendor could trade. However, after 1992, these names were omitted, so that an evicted vendor had no "evidence" of the place in which she had been trading.

Further, names of trading places were purposely abbreviated to mislead and confuse eg a vendor having the letters SB stamped on her receipt and believing this entitled her to trade in her spot in Sadar Bajar would be told by NMDC officials that this was actually for the Sunday Bajar!! These practices indicated the bad faith of the municipal authorities. They knew quite well that poor vendors rarely keep documents such as tehbajari licences.

In 1998, the Supreme Court was approached again in Sodhan Singh "III". It ordered that a hawker could change her trade if she wanted to, as long as it was a permissible trade. The BC Chaturvedi Committee was appointed to determine the final allotment of vendors' trading licences.

The case of Genda Ram vs MCD is a replica of the Sodhan Singh case in most respects. The court had the Chopra Committee appointed to identify and allot trading places to genuine vendors in old Delhi - the area under the MCD. This area was divided into 12 zones; 84624 applications were considered out of which only 4128 were cleared. Priority was also based on the number of years spent in vending. Most of the licences awarded however, were the tehbajari.

Because of their bad experiences, vendors have realized that favourable court decisions on their own are not enough. They need strong unions and organizations to secure positive outcomes for themselves, from the implementation of such decisions.



**Street vendors have one thing in common: tolerance, patience and determination.**



## STREET VENDORS IN ZAMBIA

by Pat Horn

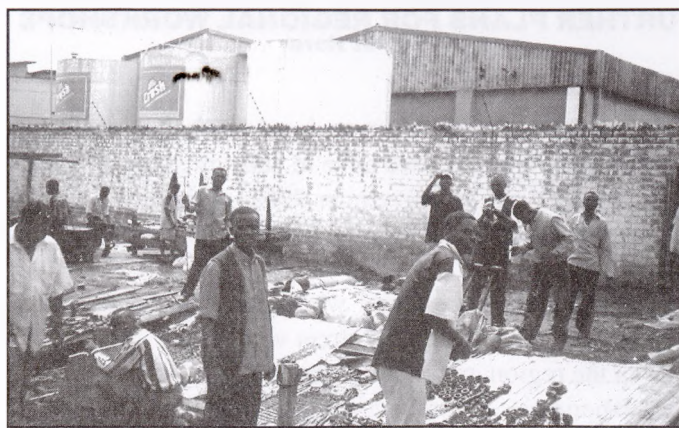
In Zambia, the Workers Education Association of Zambia (WEAZ) was formed, assisted by the Zambia Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU), to deal with the education and training needs of the trade unions and their members. Because of Zambia's high rate of unemployment and the growing informal sector, WEAZ found itself looking at the training and education needs of workers in the informal sector as well. Helped by the Workers Education Association (WEA) of the UK, WEAZ decided to plan a workshop on organising workers in the informal sector in October 2001, followed by exchange visits between informal sector workers in Zambia and members of SEWU (Self-Employed Women's Union) in South Africa and SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) in India.

I was invited to attend the WEAZ launch meeting of this project in Kitwe, Zambia, in January 2001. WEAZ arranged for me to meet with different informal sector organisations in Kitwe. I discovered that market and street vendors in Zambia seem to face the same problems as street vendors in most other countries. During this time, the Kitwe municipality burnt down the stalls of street vendors who were selling second-hand motor parts of minibus-taxi operators at a site close to the taxi-rank, known as KMB, in the middle of the night. The municipality had been unsuccessfully trying to persuade the traders, most of whom belonged to the KMB Traders Association, to move away from that site. For these vendors, it is important to sell their goods close to the taxi-rank which is frequented by their customers.



**Ashes of street vendors' burnt goods and stalls**

Most informal traders of Kitwe were moved out of the town's centre and given a place to start a market in August 1999. This market is called Chisokone, and is managed by four different area committees, i.e. Chisokone A, B, C and D. The Chisokone A and B committees are part of the Zambia Marketeers Association (ZANAMA) and the Chisokone D committee organised themselves into another independent association known as the Kitwe Informal Traders Association. Now the municipality wants to sell the land on which the Chisokone market is located and is trying to get the vendors to move again.



**Come what may, we won't give up! We only rely on street vending for our livelihood.**

The associations representing the vendors are resisting such a move, unless a suitable alternative, viable from the point of view of getting customers, can be found. Although all the market vendors are paying for their sites, the municipality is not providing services to the vendors, according to ZANAMA. ZANAMA officials say that they have to provide cleaning services as well as security. They have appointed Neighbourhood Officers who are screened by the police and given security cards, who assist the police by identifying criminals in the market and handing them over to the police. ZANAMA say they even provide social welfare services, such as assisting orphans and street children who come to the market in need of food and shelter. The KMB Traders Association and ZANAMA have apparently not succeeded in working together. Thus the KBM Traders Association did not get any support from ZANAMA to prevent their stalls from being burnt down. In fact, ZANAMA informed us that they were aware that the KBM stalls were going to be burnt down by the municipality !!

The Zambian government has a Vendors' Desk. When there were continuous fires at Chisokone market, the Vendors' Desk made funds available for a revolving funds loan scheme to vendors affected by the fires. Street and market vendors' organisations have tried to negotiate with the Minister in charge of the Vendors' Desk in an attempt to secure better rights for their members. However, they have been told that they need to represent street and market vendors in at least six provinces if they want to be able to have a Memorandum of Understanding with the government.

We talked to street and market vendors' organisations which we met, about the importance of being united to better protect and defend their members' rights. Clearly, if all the organisations representing street and market vendors in Zambia united under one alliance or umbrella body, they would then have the power to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the government, and ensure that the Vendors' Desk works in the interests of the majority of street and market vendors in the country. Moreover, municipalities would not easily be able to get the tacit support of one organisation to demolish the vending sites of members of another.



## **FURTHER PLANS FOR REGIONAL WORKSHOPS**

by Pat Horn

Now that StreetNet's first regional workshop has been held in Latin America, we have to start preparing for the next one in Asia, in November 2001, and the following one in Africa, in the first half of 2002

The aims of these regional workshops are as follows;

1. To share experiences of street vendors in the region and to hear about the experiences of street vendors in other regions.
2. To share experiences about how the problems of street vendors have been overcome through organisation, and information about how other organisations (in other regions) work
3. To make recommendations from the region about how to structure StreetNet as the international alliance of street vendors.
4. To make plans for building national alliances of street vendors (or any other form of national co-ordination) in the countries in the region between the workshop and the international launch of StreetNet in late 2002

The Asian regional workshop will be hosted by the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) somewhere in India. It is intended to organise a major event like an international street vendors' fair just before or after the workshop, to give international prominence to street vendors and their social and economic rights.

If you are part of an organisation of street vendors anywhere in Asia, and your organisation is interested in being part of the regional workshop, you should contact the StreetNet office in Durban, South Africa, or the NASVI office in Patna, India.

If you are not able to attend the regional workshop, we would still be very interested in receiving details about your organisation to put on our international data-base about street vendors organisations and their organising strategies.

We are still discussing in which country in Africa we should hold the African regional workshop early in 2002, and which organisation we should ask to host that workshop. We would also like to be contacted by organisations of street vendors in Africa who are interested in participating in the African regional street vendors workshop, or even to just give us information about the organisation and its organising strategies to put on our international data-base.

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**The Asian workshop will be hosted by the National Alliance of Street Vendors in India assisted by the co-ordinator Arbind Singh.**