GLU conference in Campinas, Brazil
on
Global Development: Challenges for Union Strategies

Lessons from practical experiences of organizing workers in the informal economy in Africa, Asia, Latin America and beyond: the world of work, livelihoods and socially and environmentally sustainable development.

WORK IN PROGRESS

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Introduction

This paper is work in progress and a first attempt to draw together and analyse information collected by practitioners and activists organizing or supporting the organization of workers in the informal economy. It is a working document that we hope to build on and deepen. The paper is in two parts:

- Organising workers in the informal economy. An overview and analysis of different occupational groups in the informal economy: status, problems, organizing challenges, issues, form and extent of organization
- Broader political and social issues and challenges

Part 1: Organising workers in the informal economy

We will present here a picture of some of the ongoing organizing work being done in the informal economy, bringing to light the innovative organizational strategies being put into practice by practitioners organizing workers in the informal economy. The presentation will include both trade union strategies as well as informal economy organizations which have emerged independently of the trade union movement. The focus will be largely on organization work in the South, with some mention of known initiatives to organise workers in the informal economy in the North.

At an international conference "Combining our Efforts" in Ahmedabad, India in December 2003, the International Co-ordinating Committee (ICC) on organizing workers in the informal economy[1] was able to bring together 60 participants from 35 trade unions and other informal economy workers' organizations from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, already engaged as direct practitioners in organizing various sectors of workers in the informal economy. The conference provided a valuable opportunity for these organizations to exchange and consolidate their experiences.[2] A second international "Combining our Efforts" conference was held in Accra, Ghana in September 2006, with 65 participants from 55 organisations in 22 countries, the majority again from the South.[3] These international conferences have shown that there is a lot of work in progress, especially in the South, both within and outside the trade union movement, on organizing workers in the informal economy. This has helped to consolidate organising efforts in this challenging field of organisation.

Clause 4 of the ***Conclusions concerning decent work and the informal economy*** adopted at the 90th session of the International Labour Conference of the ILO in June 2002[4] characterises informal workers as follows:

> "*Workers in the informal economy include both wage workers and own-account workers. Most own-account workers are as insecure and vulnerable as wage workers and move from one situation to the other. Because they lack protection, rights and representation, these workers often remain trapped in poverty.*"

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[1] ICC on organizing workers in the informal economy consists of SEWA, StreetNet International, TUC Ghana, Nigeria Labour Congress, HomeNet South-East Asia, ORIT Latin America and CROC Mexico

[2] See report on ICC page of StreetNet International website www.streetnet.org.za

[3] See report on ICC page of www.streetnet.org.za

[4] www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc90/pdf/pr-25res.pdf

In the same vein, page 3 of the constitution of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) launched in November 2006 states:

> "It(the ITUC) shall initiate and support action to increase the representativeness of trade unions through the recruitment of women and men working in the informal as well as the formal economy, through extension of full rights and protection to those performing precarious and unprotected work, and through lending assistance to organising strategies and campaigns."

The ICC has produced an organizing manual in 6 parts[5] at the request of unions who have been trying to make inroads in organizing informal workers, a pilot version of which is currently being tested in English, French and Portuguese – and soon also in Spanish.

Common problems and issues for informal workers

In all different sectors, what informal workers have in common is the fact that the majority of them work for low, irregular and insecure income. They usually work in unhealthy, unsafe and insecure working environments, and have little (if any) social security or protection, including health care, disability and death insurance, pension, maternity, unemployment, disaster etc. Many of them have low education levels and little access to skills development and training.

Workers in the informal economy have been difficult to organize, and traditionally ignored by trade unions in the past (so much so that in India they are referred to as the "unorganized sector"). As a result, there are few (if any) worker rights in existence for informal workers in practice, such as protective legislation, representation and voice.

For own-account workers there are additional problems, such as:
- Lack of capital and credit to purchase goods, raw materials, tools
- Poor/no access to financial services
- Lack of access to well paying markets/customers
- Competition – between themselves and against formal sector
- Not recognized as workers – by society , unions, even themselves

Key challenges for unions organizing informal workers

The problems listed above have often prevented traditional trade unions from attempting to organise the workers in the informal economy. However, as informal economy work has persisted, and given that the core business of trade unions is to organise and represent the most exploited workers, many trade unions no longer regard it as a viable or sustainable option to continue to turn a blind eye to the plight of informal workers.

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[5] Part 1: Recruiting informal workers into democratic worker organisations
  Part 2: Building and maintaining a democratic organisation of informal workers
  Part 3: Handling the day-to-day problems of informal workers
  Part 4: The practice of collective negotiation for informal workers
  Part 5: Handling disputes between informal workers and those in power
  Part 6: Collective action for informal workers

Trade unions and other workers' organisations organising workers in the informal economy face the following organisational challenges: There is usually no legal framework or protections around which to organise and make gains, and no traditional collective bargaining forums. Often (such as in the case of own-account workers) there is also no employment relationship. Where an employment relationship exists, workplaces are often so small that precarious waged workers lack power to confront employers and make gains, and they often work for harsh employers who ignore laws, so they are easily dismissed with little or no recourse to legal remedies. This insecurity breeds fear of organizing (fear of police, employers, authorities, husbands).

In the informal economy there are different kinds of workplaces – scattered, sometimes mobile, sometimes people's homes are also their workplaces. Long hours are sometimes worked, and time organising can be income lost for informal economy workers. Many are so poor that their primary focus is on survival. Many workers' organisations lack the financial resources and experience in organizing informal workers.

Policies and the political will of union leadership are essential for sustaining organisation of informal workers. Without this, organisational efforts can be easily side-tracked by previous bad experiences, apathy and not seeing need or benefit from organizing informal workers. Recognition of the need to persist and prioritisation by union leadership are key to maintaining a strategic focus on organising workers in the informal economy.

Key challenges and priority issues for women informal workers
Many women work in the informal economy, and for them there are extra constraints on organizing, e.g.
- Discrimination – unequal incomes for equal value work
- Unequal access to higher income earning occupations or sectors
- Poor and unequal access to financial resources, including credit, banking institutions
- Lack of time – even less than men, forcing focus on survival
- Lack of health care – including maternity leave or income protection during childbirth
- Child and domestic care responsibilities
- Insurance and income protection for family and other disasters/ events
- Physical security and safety
- Sexual harassment
- Fear (husband/partners, male co workers, employers, community)
- Lack of confidence
- Cultural and religious barriers
- Dominated by men in sector
- Male attitudes in society
- Male culture of unions and other organizations

Different sectors of work in the informal economy

Aside from the general problems and challenges faced by workers in the informal economy, and the organizational challenges which result, the different sectors of the informal economy each face different problems and organizational challenges. These sector-specific problems have given rise to different forms of organization emerging, as shown in the summarized table below of some of the largest sectors of informal workers:

Sector or occupational group	Priority issues and key challenges for workers in different occupational groups	Organizing challenges for unions/organizations	Main forms of organization
Street, market vendors and hawkers	Right to vend Space to vend Facilities for storage and shelter, toilets and water Protection against police harassment Safety and security Competition Access to credit Social protection	Not regarded as workers by selves and others Controlled by politicians, "mafia" Fear of harassment by authorities, police Competition amongst selves Time spent on organizing means loss of income Ignored by trade unions No rights or forums for bargaining	**Local associations** Unions Alliances or associations at area, city levels National alliances International Organization: StreetNet
Home-based workers[6]	Equal income, same benefits/protections as those in factories Identifying employer Exploitation by middlemen Access to regular work Improving skills Access to markets (own account) Access to credit (own account) Social protection	Isolated in homes, invisible No time-women double burden of work, child and home care Fear of losing work Prevented from leaving home- religion, culture Children working Ignored by trade unions Not covered by labour law or unclear, disguised status	**Production groups** Area networks National networks Regional networks: HomeNet South Asia and HomeNet SE Asia International: Federation of Homeworkers World Wide Mixed MBO[7]/ NGO networks most common Some unions
Waste pickers and recyclers	Access/right to recyclables Secure space for storage and sorting Integration into solid waste management systems	Low status and self esteem Fear of losing work Fear/dependency on middlemen Competition amongst selves	**Worker Cooperatives/associations Groups** Area federations

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[6] Home-based workers includes own account workers and those working as industrial outworkers (homeworkers). Home-based workers work in many industrial sectors e.g. garment, food, electrical, leather, metal, electrical, crafts etc

[7] MBO – membership-based organisation

	Work higher up the recycling chain Fair prices for recyclables Recognition and improved status Health and safety Exploitation by middlemen Social protection	Time to meet Child labour Not covered by labour law Ignored by unions	National federations/networks Regional network: Latin America Some unions
Agricultural, forestry and fish workers	Right to land and land use (forests, water) Right to natural resources – fish, forest products Regular work Access to resources and equipment Access to credit Access to markets Social protection	Scattered locations Isolated and far distances Child labour Not protected by labour law Seasonal or intermittent work	**Producer/ Self help groups** Some unions
Domestic workers	Recognition and respect Safety Access to facilities Protection against dismissal, abuse Freedom of movement Freedom to change jobs (migrant) Right to organize Social protection	Isolated and invisible in homes Fear of employers and losing jobs Dependency on employer for housing etc Not protected by labour law Lack of time: long hours Fear of authorities (migrant) Child labour	**Unions, faith based associations, migrant worker groups, quasi unions[8]** Regional networks: Asia Domestic Worker Network; Latin American /Caribbean Network (CONLACTRAHO) International Network: being formed under the IUF Mixed networks
Transport workers (urban passenger)	Access to routes and passengers Protection against harassment by authorities, politicians, mafia Health & safety/ accident protection Parking and facilities Petrol and spares prices and fares Competition	Mobility Competition amongst selves Own account not regarded as workers by self/others Control by politicians, "mafia" Threats by employers Fear of harassment by police/authorities Time for organizing means loss of income	**Local associations; unions** Unions may be composed of individual members or association members International: Many individual informal transport organizations starting to affiliate to ITF

[8] Quasi unions, "the broad range of organizations that have emerged to represent the interests of otherwise unrepresented people in their work lives and in their relationships with their employer, seeking to address matters of worker rights and to improve working conditions". "The most frequent organizational form is highly staff-driven, with a small and dedicated staff and a very loose and shifting membership." Charles Heckscher and Françoise Carré. *Strength in Networks: Employment Rights, Organizations and the Problem of Co-ordination*, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 44:4, December2006

| Construction and related workers | Irregular work Wages and conditions Safety Facilities on site Social protection | Job/workplace mobility Unstable/ irregular work Threats by employers and fear of losing work Competition Inability to implement labour laws | **Unions** |
| Sex workers | Decriminalization Discrimination and stigma – respect Health, including HIV/Aids Social protection Safety and security Recognition as workers Protection from police harassment Protection from exploitation by criminals, police, employers | Need to keep under the radar where operating "illegally" Scattered locations and isolation Fear of pimps, employers Fear of police harassment Not recognized as workers- self and others Apathy | **Groups, projects, quasi unions** Some unions Regional alliances: Europe, Asia, Latin America International Alliance: Mixed alliances: projects, NGOs, unions |

Below we will look in some more detail at three of these sectors: street vendors, waste collectors and recycling workers, and home-based workers.

Organising street vendors

a. Who are they?

Job and place of work	Employment status	Gender composition
Informal market vendors	Mainly own account workers, Assistants/family members of own account workers	Gender divisions depending on products, with women predominating in lower income products
Street vendors (sometimes with, sometimes without licences/permits and allocated spaces)	Mainly own account workers, Assistants of own account workers	Majority women in most African & Latin American countries (esp. Andean region) majority men in many South Asian countries – but generally majority women in food vending
Street services (e.g. photographers, barbers, shoe-makers, telephone services, motor-mechanics)	Own account workers and their assistants/apprentices	Gender division depends on trade
Street performers	Own account workers/artists	Majority men
Itinerant traders	Own account and dependent workers hired by suppliers	Women and men

b. Where are they?

Street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers are generally the most visible workers in the informal economy. They are in evidence throughout the developing world (Africa, Asia, Latin America & Caribbean, Central/Eastern Europe) and increasingly in the

developed countries of North America and Western Europe, where refugees and migrants turn to vending in public spaces as a result of lack of access to the formal labour market.

c. Specific Issues and problems

The most central issue for street vendors worldwide is the right to work in a public space without fear of harassment, arrest or confiscation of their goods. All other issues (access to financial & non-financial support, even social protection) tend to become secondary concerns as some of these cannot be effective in the absence of secure work space. As a result, regulation of street vending is a key concern – not whether or not there should be regulation, but putting in place <u>appropriate regulation</u>, which needs to encompass all the following elements:

1**.** <u>Regulation system</u>: whether to use a *licensing system* to regulate trade or a *permit system* to regulate space.

2**.** <u>Spatial bylaws or regulations</u>:   *spatial bylaws or regulations* which determine criteria for priority in access to space (such as common-law rights of prior occupation vs new entrants, or opportunities for survivalist traders vs fronts for syndicates or large business interests).

3**.** <u>Enforcement provisions</u>: which do not criminalise those in breach of regulations or bylaws, which specify neutral enforcement agents (to avoid the protection of certain interest groups at the expense of others) and which contain user-friendly *appeal procedures* to be invoked in cases of perceived injustice in enforcement.

4**.** <u>Taxation system</u>: *integrated taxation system* which incorporates licence fees, payments for services and rental of space in an overall revenue system which recognises the payments of street vendors as taxes which entitles them to certain social benefits.

d. How organized

Base/Local unit
<u>MBOs</u>: Associations, market vendors cooperatives, associations integrated into union structures (e.g. Ghana and other West African countries)

<u>Trade unions</u>: Local and national street/market vendors' unions (either constituted by TU centres, e.g. SINTEIN (CUT-SP) Brazil; or independently, e.g. Makola Market Union Ghana), *de facto* unions which are registered as associations because of legal constraints, but which operate as unions (e.g. SEU Bangladesh)

<u>NGO projects</u>: groups (e.g. NIDAN affiliated to NASVI India, Street Vendors' Project in New York), quasi unions, proto unions (groups that intend to become unions e.g. Assoc.Pure Water in Niger), self help groups (mainly savings and mutual financial support)

<u>SME projects</u>: groups linked to small business organizations (e.g. ACHIB South Africa)

Federation: Level 1 – intermediate country

MBOs: Associations of individual associations/unions into city, province/state/country regions (e.g. Eastern Cape Street Vendors' Alliance, FEDEVAL Peru, urban alliances affiliated to KENASVIT Kenya)

Trade unions: union structures (e.g. SYNAVAMAB, USYNVEPID Benin)

Federation: Level 2 – national country

MBOs: national alliances, federations or networks (e.g. Ghana StreetNet Alliance, NASVI India, KENASVIT Kenya, KOSC Korea, AZIEA Zambia, ZCIEA Zimbabwe)

Trade Unions: Unions of autonomous/self-employed workers (e.g. SEWA India, FNOTNA-CROC Mexico, CTCP Nicaragua, UPTA-CGT Spain, FUTRAND-CTV Venezuela), national street/market vendors' unions (either constituted by TU centres, e.g. SNTCI (UNTA) Angola, SIVARA (CGT) Argentina, FOSSIEH (CUTH) Honduras, ASSOTSI (OTM) Mocambique, NEST (GEFONT) Nepal; or independently, e.g. Malawi Union for the Informal Sector), new union structures (e.g. new national unions established across different national TU centres by ILO-DANIDA project in Burkina Faso & Niger)

Federation: Level 3 – regional or sub region

MBOs: regional networks (e.g. SEICAP – la Red de Sindicatos de la Economia Informal de Centroamerica y Panama)

Federation: Level 4 – international

MBOs: StreetNet International

Trade unions; through affiliation to GUFs[9] e.g. SEWA (ICEM, ITGLWF, IUF) and street *coiffeurs*, *coiffeuses*, *gerant cabines* organizations affiliated to UNI (West Africa)

e. **Extent of organisation: what we know**

Africa. Has the most extensive organization. Main form of organization is associations and unions. Trade union pluralism, which resulted from multi-party political democracy processes, particularly in francophone countries, has led to trade union centres organizing informal workers mainly to gain advantage over their rivals – as this is sometimes the only identifiable unorganized work sector.

Since the 1980s in Ghana and francophone West African countries, unions have recruited members from informal workers' associations and integrated these associations into their union structures (e.g. GAWU agricultural workers union in Ghana and the Banana Association, leading to integration of rural workers' associations into constitutional structure of GAWU). More recently federations/alliances of associations (sometimes street vendors only, sometimes including all different sectors of informal work) have been formed in many countries, often with the assistance of trade union centres (e.g. Burkina Faso, Niger, Zimbabwe). Now some of the associations are being encouraged to

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[9] GUF – global union federation

transform their structures and become unions, particularly with the encouragement of the ILO ACTRAV in West Africa who are providing technical support. ILO ACTRAV in Southern Africa also provides technical support, and has encouraged new informal economy structures to formalize their relationships with trade union centres through an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding, e.g. Zimbabwe, Swaziland). Projects to strengthen the organization of workers in the informal economy by the ILO and DANIDA (francophone West Africa), LO/FTF Denmark (Ghana, Sierra Leone, Benin, Niger), IFWEA (International Federation of Workers' Education Associations – Southern and East Africa), UNI and StreetNet (francophone West Africa) have also been conducted with the support and/or participation of the ILO/ACTRAV and GUFs. This has facilitated the formation of new trade union structures or MOUs between independent associations and trade unions (e.g. Namibia).

Latin America. Main forms of organization are associations, federations and autonomous/own-account workers' unions or informal economy unions affiliated to national trade union centres. Some of these trade union developments are very recent. In countries with high level of trade union pluralism, the same tendency to organize informal workers to gain advantage over rival trade union centres (as described above in Africa) can be observed. Initially this was more noticeable in Andean countries, but now in Brazil with the emergence of new national centres they invariably cite organization of workers in the informal economy as one of their main priorities – although their capacity to organize informal workers is not necessarily stronger than that of the more established trade union centres. NGOs providing services to street vendors and informal market vendors sometimes get involved in establishing organizational structures (e.g. CONFIAR in Lima, Peru). They compete for support through the services they provide – and it is those with the most resources who create the worst confusion and disunity among members of democratic membership-based worker organizations.

Asia. SEWA in India is probably the best-established informal workers' organisation, and has been inspirational for the development of other organizations in Asia as well as internationally. Asia has several national federations/alliances/confederations of street vendors (e.g. India, Korea, Philippines). In the Philippines there are multiple national federations of street vendors, apparently all working in competition against one another.

Unions organizing informal workers in Asia often do not organize street vendors because of their own-account status. However, recently GEFONT in Nepal formed a street vendors' union (NEST) and BFTUC in Bangladesh formed a self-employed union (SEU) after being aware of similar developments in other countries and the existence of StreetNet as an international organization to which they could affiliate.
China has an extensive sector of street vendors, some of whom are organized into "community unions" or self-employed workers' unions, but since these unions are affiliated directly or indirectly to the ACFTU, they are bound by the ACFTU's policies on international affiliation and it has been difficult to find out more about them.

NGOs providing services to street vendors have sometimes played a relatively progressive role in Asia (e.g. some of the members of NASVI India) particularly where there have not been identifiable street vendors' organizations (e.g. Cambodia, Thailand).

Europe and North America. In parts of Central and Eastern Europe there is a growing sector of street vendors and informal market vendors, and some unions have been organizing market vendors (e.g. Moldova). The ITUC has an informal workers' organizing project in this region, started by the ICFTU prior to establishment of ITUC.

Street and informal market vendors are often found amongst the Roma communities, as well as immigrants from poorer countries – they face additional problems due to their often undocumented citizenship status. UPTA in Spain has taken this organizing challenge on by actively recruiting them to register as autonomous workers in terms of new legislation passed in July 2007. Other West European unions have recently started organizing self-employed workers in the Netherlands (FNV) and Germany (Ver-di).

In New York, there are projects providing para-legal and other services, particularly to immigrant street vendors, who have become membership based organizations in order to be able to represent their members in negotiations with authorities.

f.   Organizing challenges

An inclusive system of regulation by negotiation, implying the ongoing participation of street vendors themselves (and can extend to other stakeholders and interest groups) in determining the appropriate regulations and regulation system, is essential to sustaining such a regulation system. There have been many examples of municipalities which have started such processes, but have not been able to sustain them, for various reasons. This probably remains the biggest challenge to municipalities in their dealings with street vendors and their organizations.

Organising waste collectors and other informal solid waste workers

a.   Who are they?

Job and place of work	Employment status	Gender composition
Pickers and sorters on landfill sites and dumps	Own account/family/cooperative member	Women, men and children
Door to door collectors from mixed bins prior to municipal service or where prior sorting by households	Own account /family/cooperative member	Women and men – majority men?
Itinerant waste buyers from households	Own account	Majority men
Collectors from government and private offices, public bins	Own account/cooperative member	Women and men
Collectors from riverbeds, open spaces etc	Own account/family	Women, men and children – majority women?
Sorters, recyclers at warehouses, depots, transfer stations, sorting areas, projects	Own account/cooperative members and wage earners	Men and women

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Small dealers in various forms of waste	Own account	Majority men
Government or community recycling project workers	Employees, usually temporary or casual	Women and men
Collectors employed by big recycling companies	Own account, piece rate workers (disguised employment?)	Majority men
Door step collectors, recyclers in privatised or outsourced companies	Employees, often temporary contracts, or with limited protections and benefits	Majority men

b. Where are they?

Mainly in developing countries, but even in developed countries there are people who "scavenge" for food, things to recycle and/or sell[10]. There are indications that waste-collecting is prevalent in some CEE countries. Informal waste collection and recycling is concentrated in big cities, and especially where there is a market for recyclables. In rural areas less waste is generated, and so there is less market for recyclables. There are sometimes community collection and recycling projects.

c. Specific Issues and problems

A key issue for informal waste pickers is the threat to their livelihoods. As cities increasingly privatise services, big corporations take over and new technologies such as incineration are introduced, the livelihoods of thousands of informal waste pickers are at risk.

d. How organized

Base/Local unit
MBOs: Associations, cooperatives, self help groups, e.g. ASMARE cooperative in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (and many others in Latin America)

Trade unions: local trade unions e.g. KKPKP, Pune, India; local structures of national or state union e.g. SEWA paper pickers' cooperative, Ahmedabad City, India

NGO projects: groups, quasi unions, proto unions (groups that intend to become unions), self help groups (mainly savings and mutual financial support), proto-cooperatives such as the Ankara Waste Pickers Association in Turkey

Federation: Level 1 – intermediate country
MBOs: Associations of individual cooperatives or associations into city, province/state/country regions, e.g. Colombia with 11 regional associations in the national waste picker association/alliance (ANR); regional networks CataBahia, CataUNIDOS and CataSAMPA in Brazil.

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[10] See for example http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/22/nyregion/22wide.html?oref=login on informal collectors of bottles and cans in New York. Similarly in Germany according to the GTZ (Bogota conference *Recicladores Sin Fronteras*)

Trade unions: union structure and/or may be part of/ or associated with a trade union (e.g. SEWA India)

Federation: Level 2 – national country
MBOs: national alliances, networks or movements, e.g. SWACHH National Alliance of Waste Pickers, India; alliance/network of unions, self help groups, NGO projects, Brazil National Movement of Waste Pickers MNCR, National Association of Waste pickers (cooperatives) in Colombia ANR;

Trade Unions: union structures or may be part of above (e.g. SEWA waste pickers' cooperative, India)

NGOs: may be part of MBO alliance above or in loose alliance with above or with other NGOs (SWACHH Alliance, India)

Federation: Level 3 – regional or sub region
MBOs: regional networks, movements, alliances (e.g. Latin American Network of Waste pickers, consisting of movements from 12 countries, established March 2008)

Federation: Level 4 – international
MBOs: none yet
Trade unions; through affiliation to GUFs, e.g. SEWA and Nepal Garbage Collectors Union (ICEM)

d.   **Extent of organisation: what we know**

 Latin America. Has the most extensive organization. The main form of organization is worker cooperatives and associations (operating as cooperatives). Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Peru have structured national associations or movements of cooperatives/associations from local to city to regional to national. They have offices, officials and constitutions. Many of the cooperatives are registered as cooperatives and pay tax (Colombia). In other cases such as in Brazil they tend to be registered as Associations as there are some technical difficulties in registering as a cooperative. Many of the cooperatives are recognized by their respective municipalities, and have agreements regarding access to recyclables. In Brazil the MNCR (National Movement) is recognized by President Lula. Representatives meet with him annually. There is also a national Inter-Ministerial Committee which meets monthly. The regional network has recently expanded and consolidated (decision taken at the recent Conference held in Bogota, *Recicladores Sin Fronteras*). It consists of 12 countries and its Secretariat is now in Brazil (the Secretariat rotates and was previously in Chile). Technical support is provided by a range of NGOs (and sometimes by local governments) in different countries. AVINA Foundation provides support for the regional network. Despite leading the way in organizing waste pickers the majority are still unorganized. For example, in Brazil 80% are unorganized[11], working on the dumps and in the streets and selling to

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[11] AVINA Foundation "Solidarity in Sustainable Recycling" 2008

middlemen. In Bogota, Colombia, the ANR estimates that only 2000 out of 18000 waste pickers are organized. Individual coops are small, averaging about 40 members.

Asia. There are a lot of informal waste pickers but very limited organization. India has the largest number of organizations, and has formed a national alliance (SWACHH). This is made up of MBOs/unions and NGOs. They have come together to discuss and plan around common positions (a recent meeting with government resulted in government asking for a proposal on incorporating informal workers into solid waste management systems). Organizations tend to be small and unstable. SEWA paper pickers' cooperative perhaps has the largest membership in Ahmedabad city (30 000). The KKPKP is small (5000) but seems to be effective. There are other forms of organization associated with NGOs such as Bhartiya Kabari Mazdoor Adhikar Manch (BKAM), a consortium of NGOs representing the wastepicker community and associations of wholesale junk dealers and recyclers initiated through and supported by the NGO, CHINTAN Environmental Research and Action Group. There is a small, newly formed membership based organization (hoping to become a union) operating in Mumbai and Solapur, formed through the work of the NGO, LEARN. In India as well, the NGO, NIDAN, has chosen to form /register as a worker owned company. In South East Asia there does not seem to be coordinated or extensive organisation. There are NGO projects, and informal businesses especially in Philippines. In Indonesia there is some unionisation, but we do not have details yet. Waste pickers are generally unorganized and dependent on middlemen – sometimes even for housing. China has an extensive informal waste sector (6 million according to Dr. Liu Kanming, Institute for Contempory Observation, Hong Kong[12]) but workers are not organized.

Europe. In parts of Central and Eastern Europe there is a growing informal recycling sector. Waste pickers are often found amongst the Roma communities of Albania, Rumania, Serbia, Macedonia and other countries, but little is known yet about organizations. The IFC of the World Bank has a project to promote SMEs in recycling and link these to larger industries. There is the beginning of organization of waste collectors in Turkey, with the formation of the Ankara Waste Pickers Association. The intention is to work towards the formation of a cooperative.

Africa. We have not yet been able to identify substantial workers' organizations of waste collectors in Africa. In South Africa the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) is experimenting with recycling projects and considering expanding from a housing focus to livelihood work especially in waste. There are some small localized coops such as the registered Sokana Recycling Cooperative with 45 members, in a Port Elizabeth informal settlement. In Cairo, Egypt, the Christian Community has a long tradition of waste collection and recycling. There are 60 000 Zabbaleen involved in various collection and recycling activities. They are organized mainly in family units and small businesses, and a number of NGOs provide support and services such as training. In the Kenyan city of Nakuru there are many community based organization involved in recycling projects but no alliance formations.

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[12] *Recicladores Sin Fronteras* congress, March 2008

Organising home-based workers

a. Who are they?

Job and place of work	Employment status	Gender composition
Manufacturers and Assemblers: Sewing, packing, routine assembly (e.g. electrical, toys, cigarettes, footballs, garments, artificial flowers etc)	Homeworkers (Industrial Outworkers) : Employees, disguised employees- piece rate workers (dependent workers) Own account /unpaid family workers	Majority women
Artisan production: Weaving, carpet making, embroidery, crafts etc	Homeworkers (Industrial Outworkers) Employees, disguised employees - piece rate workers (dependent workers) Own account /unpaid family workers	Women and men, children
Personal services: Laundry, hairdressers, shoe repairs, catering etc	Own account/unpaid family	Majority women
Clerical work: Tele marketing, data processing, typing etc	Employees: temporary, casual, part time, disguised employees, piece rate workers (dependent workers)	Majority women
Professional work: Accounting, consulting, programming etc	Own account and dependent workers	Women and men

b. Where are they?[13]

Asia: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia
Africa: Mainly own account workers in most countries. In South Africa and Egypt significant numbers of garment/leather workers on piece rates.
Latin America: Chile, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Guatemala (probably also others)
Europe: UK, France, Germany, Portugal, Madeira, Spain, Greece and Turkey
CEE: Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Macedonia, Czech Republic
North America: Canada, USA
Pacific: Australia

c. Specific Issues and problems

A defining characteristic of home-based workers is their isolation and invisibility, which keeps the workers vulnerable to exploitation and makes collective organisation difficult.

d. How organized

Base/Local unit
MBOs: production groups, income producing and self help groups (finance) especially in Asia, associations e.g. Portugal, cooperatives e.g. in Turkey

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[13] This is not exhaustive but where we have information

Trade unions: Generally traditional trade unions are not very active in organizing home based workers – even industrial outworkers except Madeira, Australia (textile, clothing and footwear union), SEWA in India, Ver-di and IG Metall in Germany.

NGOs: groups formed under auspices of NGO, welfare and training projects, NGO with members e.g. Kaloian in Bulgaria, which has the intention of becoming a union but needs 10 000 signatures (proto union), quasi unions

Federation: Level 1 – intermediate country
MBOs: networks of groups (e.g. HomeNet Thailand formed from networks in different regions of Thailand), associations

Trade Unions: Madeira, Australia (textile, clothing and footwear union), SEWA in India, Ver-di and IG Metall in Germany.

NGOs: networks, associations

Federation: Level 2 – national country
MBOs: national networks, e.g. HomeNet India. Many of the national networks in Asia are not pure MBOs – see below

Trade Unions: through union structures. New unions formed recently in Nepal (affiliated to DECONTand GEFONT). UNITE trade union, Canada, runs an association for garment making homeworkers who have associate membership status of the union.

NGOs: may form part of a network with MBOs, NGOs e.g. HomeNet Indonesia, HomeNet Pakistan, HomeNet Thailand.

National NGOs: e.g. The National Group on Homeworking (NGH), UK, with mixed membership (homeworkers, unemployed, businesses, universities – in fact anyone can be a member). In Turkey there is a coordinating group works with local groups in different cities (Working Group on Women Home-based Workers)

Federation: Level 3 – regional or sub region
MBOs: regional networks e.g. HomeNet Asia and South East Asia. Not pure MBOs.

Trade Unions;

NGOs: part of regional networks e.g. HomeNet Asia and South East Asia

Federation: Level 4 – international
MBOs: none

Trade Unions: through affiliation to GUFs e.g. SEWA through ITGLWF, IUF

NGO/ Mixed: Federation of Homeworkers Worldwide – FHWW (out of HWW mapping project – some old and some new orgs. Open to all those working with home-based workers and supporters i.e. not an MBO)

e. **Extent of organisation: what we know**

Home-based workers are generally unorganized or very weakly organized into small local groups – production, savings, support groups. Worker cooperatives do not appear to be common. They are largely ignored by trade unions, with some exceptions noted above – sometimes unions are hostile as they see homeworkers as undermining their conditions

and taking away jobs. NGOs (quasi unions) have taken up the space left by unions: often focused on advocacy and welfare and sometimes worker rights.

Asia. Asia is best organized through HomeNet South Asia (450 000 members through 700 organisations) and HomeNet SE Asia. National HomeNets exist in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand. Networks are a mixture of MBOs and NGOs. HomeNet South Asia focuses on strengthening organizations, supporting policy development and advocacy, supporting social protection scheme pilots, promoting fair trade practices.

Europe: There are local groups, associations, coops in many countries and some unions like IG Metall in Germany have organized homeworkers (piece workers), STIBTTA in Madeira organizes embroiderers. Generally there is weak organization nationally. In the UK the NGO, National Group on Homeworking – a mixed organization – works with the TUC. In Turkey there is a national coordinating committee.

Latin America: there are local groups e.g. in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and parts of Mexico. In Bolivia there is a women's committee in La Paz trying to coordinate home-based worker groups. Unions were apparently formed in Chile after the HWW mapping exercise (but no detailed information about this). There are support groups/NGOs such as CECAM (HWW in Latin America).

PART II – broader political and social issues and challenges

Issues of social and environmental sustainability
Experiences of organizing workers in the informal economy raise questions which could be usefully taken up by the trade union movement for consideration, and about ways of strengthening the links between trade union agendas and broader issues of social and environmental sustainability. This depends on the question of how to link livelihood issues with environmental issues. Trade unions are beginning to address sustainability and environmental questions. ITUC has for example identified climate change as a special focus issue.[14] The ITF is starting to address this issue as well.

During the 1980s there were many confrontations between trade unions and environmental organizations as the latter proposed the closing down of factories to protect the environment from particularly serious forms of pollution and contamination, threatening the livelihoods of the workers employed in such industries. Such stand-offs resulted in polarization between those supporting employment opportunities and those supporting an improved environment.

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[14] 'special focus would be given to trade union work on climate change, protection of migrant workers and those in informal unprotected work, and action to fundamentally change the course of globalisation, support for workers in Export Processing Zones, and supporting workers' rights in China'. ITUC General Council, 29 June 2007

During the 1980s when the South African trade union movement was actively opposing the Apartheid government, it had to develop a political approach. During this time, the CWIU (Chemical Workers Industrial Union) developed a relationship of solidarity with the environmental NGO Earthlife Africa, and these two organizations were able to cooperate on joint strategies to challenge many chemical companies (e.g. Thor Chemicals which was polluting a stream in KwaZulu-Natal with mercury, and Chrome Chemicals in Durban) about their unsound environmental practices to improve health and safety for workers without threatening their jobs.

The Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWU) which operated in South Africa from 1994 – 2004 also adopted an approach that merged livelihood and environmental issues. Many SEWU members in Durban were women harvesting and selling traditional medicines and herbs. Because of concerns about the harvesting of traditional herbs causing these to become extinct, SEWU members in this sector participated in a project of the Environmental Justice Network (EJN) which involved re-planting medicinal herbs as they were harvesting them. SEWU members became involved in other aspects of EJN work and jointly they advocated for the provision of land for planting more medicinal herbs, including those which had already become extinct in certain areas.

SEWU also tackled issues of health and safety for street vendors, and approached local health and safety LSOs to become more familiar with the health and safety issues of streets as workplaces. As public spaces, better health and safety in the streets would also contribute towards a cleaner urban environment.

In the fishing sector, there are often conflicts of interest between informal fisherfolk and large multinational fishing companies whose activities empty fish from lakes and large areas of the ocean. It is the interests of informal organisations of fisherfolk to join forces with environmental organizations for the purposes of defending both livelihoods as well as water ecosystems – also in the case of companies pouring toxic waste into rivers and the ocean.

The most advanced case of workers' organization with a common focus on livelihoods as well as working for a sustainable environment is that of the movement of informal waste collectors and recycling workers. In Latin America this movement has coordinated waste collectors' associations and cooperatives into a social movement which is preoccupied with not only the technical management of solid waste, but the collection, processing, recycling and re-use of waste and transformed waste products, in the interests of conservation of resources for a more sustainable environment.[15] This movement has the technical support as well as the potential to organize on a scale which could make a significant impact on environmental sustainability.

At the 1st International Congress of Waste-Pickers in Bogota in March 2008, organizations raised the question of carbon trading as a way of recognizing their contribution to the environment. Under the Clean Development Mechanism, which is part of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, rich countries can partially meet their targets

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[15] See www.mncr.org.br, www.recicladores.net

for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by financing emission-reducing projects in poor countries. Waste pickers reduce garbage going to landfill sites, and could do so further by composting organic waste.

Living wages and labour standards in trade negotiations and global supply chains
In 2006, WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) joined the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) which has its Secretariat in the UK. The ETI is a tripartite organization made up of more than 40 companies many of whom are global Brands, NGO's and Global Trade Unions including the ITUC, the ITGWLF and the IUF. 'Ethical Trade' involves companies taking responsibility for the conditions of the hundreds of millions of people around the world who make the consumer goods or grow the food which they source. Member companies of the ETI are required to sign up to the ETI Base Code which is derived from International Labour Standards based on the core ILO conventions. Companies report annually to the ETI on progress being made in their supply chains.

The question is whether labour standards improve as a result of codes of conduct. In 2006, the ETI published an independent report which was the result of a three year evaluation undertaken by researchers at the Sussex University based Institute of Development Studies. They found that improvements for workers had been made in crucial areas such as improving health and safety, reducing child labour, increasing wages and reducing the incidence of excessive overtime. They found that real progress has yet to be made in other key areas, such as extending the reach of codes to particularly vulnerable workers, for example migrant workers and homeworkers, and in helping workers organise for themselves through trade unions.[16]

The ETI also carries out pilot projects with tripartite participation in sourcing countries to test out new approaches to improving labour standards in particularly challenging areas. One such example is the India Homeworkers Project where companies, NGO's and Unions worked together with India-based organizations and unions such as SEWA, to develop a set of guidelines in how to apply codes to homeworkers. One outcome of the project was the formation of a National Homeworker Group (NHG) and its local branch, the Bareilly Homeworker Group. The Bareilly group worked with contractors to link homeworkers with the government-run personal accident and illness insurance schemes. Over 1,500 homeworkers in Bareilly have also improved their knowledge and skills in simple record-keeping, quality, health and safety as well as healthcare through ongoing training organised by the Bareilly group.[17]

The ETI fosters a partnership approach through joint action among the member companies, suppliers, local trade unions and NGOs. Other pilot projects have been carried out in Turkey to harmonise codes between companies, in the UK with a cross-industry collaboration on migrant labour, South Africa, China, Colombia working in horticulture and Bangladesh in collaboration with the Multifibre Framework Agreement, (MFA) forum.

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[16] The full report can be downloaded at www.ethicaltrade.org/d.impact
[17] More information is available at www.ethicaltrade.org/d/homeworker

WIEGO sees its membership of the ETI as a vehicle for promoting the visibility and rights of informal workers. By highlighting the presence of informal workers such as homeworkers and migrant workers and the particular situation of women workers in global supply chains, we can maximize our collective impact. At the same time, we are realistic about the limitations of voluntary codes insofar as there is often an absence of trades unions in many sourcing sites and the application of the code is voluntary even though the rights included in the code are meant to be protected in national legislation. At the same time the increase in informalisation means that there are increasing numbers of contract and casual labourers, many of whom are female and migrant. These workers face the poorest employment conditions, lack protection or union representation, and are open to labour abuse. Codes often fail to reach these workers.[18]

In Ghana, struggles by the banana producers' association to secure access to world markets succeeded after they joined forces with GAWU (General Agricultural Workers Union) affiliated to the Ghana TUC. National unions like the TWU, ICU and PSWU have negotiated with government authorities for organised informal workers to pay group taxes which are usually lower than individual taxes. Others have helped their members to access loans and obtain lower prices for their working tools and raw materials. GAWU was able to intervene on behalf of rice farmers for the Government to purchase stocks of rice that the farmers were unable to sell on the market.[19]

Global civil society and social movements

Labour standards: International organizations HomeNet International, StreetNet International and WIEGO have all been accredited as international organizations with NGO status (like the GUFs) to participate in International Labour Conferences of the ILO, where they participate as part of the Workers' Group in various committees. This has meant that they have been able to bring the perspective of organized informal workers into the discussions in the Workers' Group committees and ultimately into some ILO instruments, such as Convention 177 on Homework (1996), the Conclusions on Decent Work and the Informal Economy (2002) and the Recommendation on Migrant Work (2004).

Fair Trade: In the last two decades over five million farmers, farm workers and their families across 58 countries have joined one of the largest and fastest growing social movements in the world: Fair Trade.[20] Fair trade products now represent more than US$1.6 billion annually with the UK market growing in excess of 40% year on year. Fair trade has been described as one of the most dynamic of a range of movements, campaigns and initiatives that have emerged in recent years in response to the negative effects of globalization. These movements have been referred to as the "new globalization", with

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[18] IDS Policy Briefing, Issue 35, April 2007. Some unions are very critical of Codes and promote International Framework Agreements. IUF has a number of these agreements as does ITGWLF.

[19] Ghana TUC/ILO draft report on "Organising Informal Economy Workers in West Africa: *Trade Union Strategies – A Four-Country Case Study*"

[20] "Fair trade Labelling Organisation" 2005

Fair Trade using market-based strategies to "redirect globalisation's transformative powers toward the creation of greater social equity on a global scale".[21]

The Fair Trade movement is made up of a set of groups which are linked through their membership organizations – the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), the International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT), the Network of European Worldshops (NEWS!), and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA). Together these organizations are known as the FINE network, by virtue of the first initial of each of their names. In North America there is a Fair Trade Federation which is the equivalent to FINE in Europe.

Fair Trade emerged from a small church and Third World solidarity movement in the 1960's and 1970's. The growth in the market has been largely down to what is known as the "mainstreaming" of fair trade, i.e. taking the sales of Fair Trade goods out of small charity shops and into High Street supermarkets and retailers. At the same time Fair Trade "Brands" have emerged which compete head to head on the shelf with the biggest players in their respective industries in coffee, chocolate and bananas. The development of Southern producer ownership in the Brands, is one of the most radical elements thus integrating producers vertically into the value chain and propelling them directly into the market place. In this way, producers are not just objects to gain the sympathy of caring consumers, but subjects in their own businesses in partnership with Northern organizations.

World Social Forum (WSF)
The Brazilian national movements of waste collectors MNCR (Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Reciclaveis) used the WSF to popularize their movement which was first established in Brasilia in 2001, and grew to a national movement in 2003. They also used the WSF to establish links with *recicladores* and *cartoneros* organizations and movements in other Latin American countries, which was also an opportunity for the promotion and popularization of the social and environmental objectives and strategies of their movement.

In 2004 StreetNet's Indian affiliates NASVI and SEWA organized an event on street vendors at the WSF in Mumbai. The event was well attended, including by the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, as a result of which the India government adopted a National Policy on Street Vending shortly thereafter which NASVI had been working with them on for some time. In 2005 StreetNet prepared a panel for the WSF with the co-operation of PSI (Public Service International) and attended with a small team including two street vendor representatives from affiliate organizations, and participated in a panel on informal economy worker organization organized by the ICFTU, WCL, IFWEA and Solidar. This experience showed that to make an impact at the WSF it is necessary to organize events in collaboration with other organizations. StreetNet prepared for a more intensive participation at the WSG in Nairobi in 2007, having failed to raise funds to participate in the polycentric social forums in 2006. In the meantime, some of

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[21] "Fair trade: the challenges of transforming globalisation" edited by Laura T. Reynolds, Douglas Murray, and John Wilkinson

StreetNet's affiliates were participating in local and regional social forums. The KCTU in Korea found StreetNet affiliate KOSC is able to play a bridging role between trade unions and social movements – and this seemed to be happening in other situations too, e.g. at the Zimbabwe Social Forum late in 2005.

Decent Work for Decent Life Campaign
In 2006, StreetNet International joined the Decent Work for Decent Life campaign, and through this campaign experimented seriously with international networking using the internet. Together with GUFs that StreetNet works with closely (e.g. PSI and UNI) this campaign enabled informal workers' organizations to play the same bridging role between traditional trade unions and social movements that had been noticed in specific countries.

StreetNet's Kenyan affiliate KENASVIT organized a national street vendors' rally for the Nairobi WSF in January 2007, and StreetNet organized panels on the following, with street vendor panelists from 14 countries:
- women street vendors;
- child labour;
- migrants and cross-border trade;
- disabled street vendors.

StreetNet participated in a number of other panels in the Decent Work for Decent Life programme, on informal work, as well as discussions towards the establishment of an international Labour and Globalisation Forum. Members of the StreetNet delegation split up and attended many different themes, and made the presence of organized informal workers felt in various activities and events. While many WSF veterans who had attended since 2001 were talking about the need to end the World Social Forums because they were getting boring and repetitive, StreetNet members were just coming into their own after the organization had built up its capacity over some years to bring a sizeable delegation of grassroots street vendors to the WSF, and were enthusiastically using the WSF space to forge new relationships directly with various social movements.

Labour and Globalisation Network
At the World Social Forum meeting in Nairobi in 2007, the Labour and Globalization network was established as a space for trade unions, social movements and other social actors to discuss impacts of globalization on labour and to ensure that the issue of labour was more visibly and broadly addressed at the next Social Fora.

The Global Network is planning its first international meeting after the Nairobi WSF, to be held later in 2008. The objectives of the first international meeting are
1. To jointly discuss in more depth how globalization is shaping labor relations, including a joint analysis on key policy fields that are of particular relevance;
2. To offer a space for sharing experiences of struggles for labor rights in different regions;
3. To offer a space for trade unions and social movements and other social actors to build new relationships;

4. To discuss the development of the network itself (what working program, what tools to work together etc.)

Informal workers' organizations SEWA and StreetNet have been invited to be part of the global network in order to ensure that issues of new forms of organizing are prominent on the agenda, and it has also been agreed that the global network should actively work against traditional patterns of northern dominance by having sufficient representation from labour organizations of the south at the international meetings. As a result, this could be another space where informal workers' organizations can potentially strengthen their relationships with the mainstream labour movement and social movements in linking labour and livelihood issues with other issues of social and environmental sustainability.

Co-operatives and the solidarity economy
The Declaration of Principles of the MNCR in Brazil summarises their aims as follows:
1. Self-management of production;
2. Direct democracy and worker control from below;
3. Direct popular action for self-reliance and recognition as professionals;
4. Class independence in struggles of the poor in relation to political parties;
5. Collective attitude of mutual support, contrary to individualism and personal gain;
6. Class solidarity with other social movements, marginalised social groups and informal workers.

Their T-shirts proclaim the following:
> *Preservacion da natureza* (preservation of nature)
> *Contra privatizacao do lixo* (against privatisation of waste)
> *Pelo reconhecimento e valorizacao* (for recognition and valorisation)
> *Auto organizacao dos catadores* (self-organisation of waste collectors)

Their ongoing struggles for contracts from the municipalities, against stiff competition from enterprises in the sector, is a struggle for an alternative economy – as they seek to persuade local authorities of the social and environmental value of adopting policies in line with these objectives as opposed to simply focusing on solid waste management strategies. Their ongoing struggle, and that of the waste collectors' movements in other Latin American countries, is for authorities to adopt policies and practices of social inclusion. Their alliances with street-dwellers' movements, and active integration of street dwellers into employment in the waste collection sector, is an innovative contribution by this movement to the development of a solidarity economy inclusive of the poorest of the poor.

Many waste collectors' cooperatives in Brazil were eventually officially recognised after occupying municipal public space to establish their cooperatives, then struggling fiercely for their usage rights to be established in written agreements. The movement is now expanding by organising individual or groups of waste collectors to form themselves into cooperatives to strengthen their collective struggles for work and use of public spaces (while at the same time accessing technical support from development NGOs such as

AVINA). To this end, they are establishing regional networks – CataBahia, CataUNIDOS in Minas Gerais, CataSAMPA in Sao Paulo, CATANDO para Sobrevivir in Rio Grande do Sul – to create an organising momentum which goes beyond the sum of individual cooperatives.

Other cooperatives movements in Brazil are also established with the intention of building a solidarity economy for the inclusion of workers who have lost their formal employment, such as the ADS (Agencia de Desenvolvimento Solidario) established by CUT, and the OCB (Organizacao das Cooperativas do Brasil, affiliated to International Cooperatives Association ICA – to which some of the MNCR cooperatives are also affiliated) linked to another trade union confederation UGT. In Argentina, the recent financial crisis gave rise to cooperatives and worker-controlled enterprises which provided an economic alternative for large numbers of workers who lost their formal employment.

The above initiatives from below by worker-controlled cooperatives are driven by a different dynamic from those imposed from above by left-wing governments. In Venezuela, much attention has been focused on President Hugo Chavez' initiatives to develop a solidarity economy from above, after nationalising the country's oil reserves and redistributing oil revenues. The government of Brazil also established a National Secretariat of the Solidarity Economy to develop policies to facilitate the development of a solidarity economy. I asked members of the MNCR movement whether this Secretariat was effective from their point of view – and they did not feel that it was penetrating through to local governments where the worst problems and inconsistencies are affecting their movement. Clearly their movement's continuing struggles will be a critical factor in striving for the solidarity economy which their members are aiming for.

In Spain, where the Socialist Party is presently in power, the Labour Ministry has a department of Social Economy, which governs cooperatives, worker-owned enterprises and autonomous workers. Recent legislation on autonomous workers (passed in July 2007) has been promoted by the *Union de Profesionales y Trabajadores Autonomos* UPTA (formed in 2001) and is used by them to organise previously marginalised workers such as informal workers, migrants and gypsies into the system which gives them social protection and representation on a national council of autonomous workers.

Conclusion
The above examples and case studies give us many practical examples of how new forms of worker organisation in the informal economy have already developed the capacity to engage with broader political and social issues and challenges, despite their relatively limited organisational capacity relative to the mainstream labour movement. This probably has something to do with the fact that informal workers' organisations have emerged precisely as a result of globalisation and changes in labour processes which have squeezed so many workers out of the formal labour market. They have no option but to tackle some of these broader political and social issues at one or other level, for their very survival.

Probably the main challenge for the mainstream trade union movement is to be able to recognise these new working class initiatives as critical to their own struggles, and find ways of joining forces with them in the interests of the creating a better world for the working class as a whole.

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