



**'World Class Cities' and the Urban Informal Economy:  
Inclusive Planning for the Working Poor**  
Durban, South Africa  
24-25 April 2006

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Where people work, and how they work, has changed worldwide. More and more people work in precarious conditions in their homes, on the street and in public places with few benefits and little of the security associated with formal work. Trade unions have only just begun to cope with organising new types of workers and cities face huge challenges when it comes to managing these newer places of work.

Announcing that two prestigious international gatherings to address these dilemmas would be held in Durban within a month, Frances Lund, Associate Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Development Studies explained: "Informal employment is an important source of income for the working poor. Yet its role in providing a key pathway out of poverty is entirely understated. National policies that promote private sector development and small enterprise development commonly do not support the very small businesses that most of the working poor, and especially women, are found in. Cities, pre-occupied with competing for 'world class city' status tend not to integrate informal workers and informal enterprises in their urban planning and economic development strategies."

Durban will host the fourth general meeting of the global research and policy network called WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) on April 22 and 23. WIEGO's focus is on improving the working conditions of women in the informal economy.





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On April 24 and 25, there will be a colloquium entitled "'World Class Cities' and the Urban Informal Economy: Inclusive Planning for the Urban Poor'. Leaders of informal organisations from some of the most exploited sectors in the global informal economy – migrant workers, waste pickers, homebased workers and street vendors – will meet with top international planners and experts as well as local government officials from South Africa and abroad.

Why is Durban hosting these two important events? The School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has developed expertise in informal economy policy having assisted local, provincial and national government with extensive research and policy development. The international alliance of street vendor organisations, Streetnet International, has its headquarters in Durban, and will be having its full international council meeting here at the same time.

The colloquium and policy dialogues will spotlight key controversies surrounding the management, regulation and support of informal workers. Presentations will cover important issues such as the Ahmedabad slum upgrading project, the organisation of waste pickers in Rio de Janeiro and Durban's Warwick Junction initiative. One policy dialogue will focus on South African local and provincial government interventions. Another will draw on experiences from organisations of local governments and informal workers in Brazil, India, and Zambia.





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Key participants include Dr Martha Chen Harvard University who is coordinator of the WIEGO network, Dr Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self Employed Womens Association in India, a trade union that represents 700 000 poor informal women workers, Mike Mbuyakhulu, KwaZulu-Natal's Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Martin Medina, a researcher activist from Rio de Janiero who is involved in the Brazilian waste pickers movement and Pat Horn, the coordinator of Streetnet International.

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**NOTE TO EDITORS:**

The proposed International Urban Policies Colloquium will be jointly hosted by the global research policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (or WIEGO), Streetnet International, an international alliance of street vendor associations and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa on April 24 and 25, 2006. It will bring together approximately 150 stakeholders - including city managers, officials from economic development departments of local, provincial and national governments, academics, activists from international informal worker organizations and trade unions, civil society leaders and representatives from international development agencies. The Colloquium will coincide with and follow on from WIEGO's fourth general meeting (previous ones have been held in Ahmedabad, Ottawa, and Boston).

**FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE COLLOQUIUM AND THE PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER WITH REGISTRATION FORMS AND BACKGROUND MATERIAL WILL REACH YOU SHORTLY.**

DATE: 24/03/2006

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Call 083 301 2809

