



**‘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

Worldwide, the number of informal jobs and informal enterprises is increasingly steadily. This is because informal employment is an important source of income for the working poor, providing a key pathway out of poverty. Yet, even though the informal sector contributes to economic growth, its role is unrecognised as well as misunderstood.

Leaders of informal organisations from some of the most exploited sectors in the global informal economy – migrant workers, waste pickers, home-based workers and street vendors – will meet with top international planners and experts as well as provincial and local government officials from South Africa and abroad in Durban at the end of this month.

Durban will host the international meeting of the global research and advocacy network of WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) on April 22 and 23. On April 24 and 25, there will be a follow-on international colloquium entitled “‘World Class Cities’ and the Urban Informal Economy: Inclusive Planning for the Urban Poor’ organised by Streetnet International.

The colloquium will spotlight key controversies surrounding the management, regulation and support of informal workers. Presentations will cover important initiatives such as the Ahmedabad slum upgrading project, and Durban’s Warwick Junction improvement initiative.

The Colloquium will pursue crucial questions: What are the conflicting interests that have to be managed in integrating informal enterprises and workers into cities in the developing world? What





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institutional arrangements and processes would allow these conflicting interests to be managed?  
What would an inclusive planning process be?

Mr Sbu Ndebele, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal has been invited to open the conference where prominent presenters such as Dr Ela Bhatt, founder of the famous Self Employed Womens Association in India, Dr Martha Chen, international coordinator of WIEGO, and based at Harvard University as well as representatives from the South African Cities Network (representing South Africa's nine major cities) will thrash out important issues.

The colloquium programme also includes two crucial Policy Dialogues. One will focus on South African local and provincial government interventions and include Mr Mike Mabuyakhulu, KZN MEC for Local Government and Traditional Affairs. Officials from Johannesburg and Bloemfontein will contribute.

The second dialogue will draw on international experience, with speakers including Arbind Singh of the National Association of Street Vendors in India as well as representatives of the Alliance of Zambian Informal Economy Associations. The dialogues will be chaired by Petrus Mashishi of the South African Municipal Workers Union.

Ends.





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NOTE TO EDITORS:

The organisations co-hosting the event are:

**Streetnet** - an international federation of 20 street vendor organizations in 18 countries with its head office in Durban, South Africa. StreetNet was launched in Durban in 2002 (website: [www.stnet.org.za](http://www.stnet.org.za))

**WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising)**: a global research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy through better statistics, research, programs, and policies and through increased organization and representation of informal workers. The individuals and institutions in the WIEGO network are drawn from three broad constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers; research, statistical, and academic institutions; and development agencies of various types (non-governmental, governmental, and inter-governmental). (website: [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org))

**The School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal**: a multi-disciplinary research and graduate teaching institution at the UKZN with a primary focus on development and reconstruction. Its researchers are nationally and internationally recognised experts in their fields and a number of them have developed a research cluster on the informal economy. (website: [www.sds.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.sds.ukzn.ac.za))

