



Concept Note

**International Urban Policies Colloquium
Durban, South Africa, April 24th and April 25th 2006**

**“World Class Cities’ and the Urban Informal Economy:
Inclusive Planning for the Working Poor”**

There is convincing evidence of the increase worldwide in both informal enterprises and informal jobs, and informal employment is an important source of income for the working poor. Yet the role of informal employment in providing a key pathway out of poverty and in achieving economic growth is entirely understated. National policies that promote private sector development and small enterprise development commonly do not understand how to support the kinds of 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. In this Colloquium, we pursue the questions: Who are the likely winners and losers in the new model of ‘world class cities’? What are the conflicting interests that have to be managed in integrating informal enterprises and workers into cities in the developing world? What institutional arrangements and processes would allow these conflicting interests to be managed? What would an inclusive planning process be?

An International Urban Policies Colloquium, jointly organized by the global research policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (or WIEGO), the international alliance of street vendor associations called StreetNet International, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, will be held in Durban, South Africa on April 24-25 2006. It aims to bring together different national and international stakeholders – including city managers; officials from the economic development departments of local, provincial and national governments; academics; activists from organizations of informal workers and formal trade unions; civil society leaders; and selected individuals from international agencies – in a one and a half day colloquium, which will include a policy dialogue between city managers and representatives from organizations of informal workers. The Colloquium will be held to coincide with and follow on from WIEGO’s fourth General Assembly (previous ones have been held in Ahmedabad, Boston, and Ottawa), which will be attended by Members of WIEGO from its three constituencies – representatives from organisations of informal workers; researchers and statisticians; and staff of international development agencies.





Structure and design of the Colloquium:

Key themes around which the colloquium will be organised include:

- Management of urban space in relationship to the atypical places of work – using both private and public spaces – of informal operators, and the implications for zoning and management. Private space includes private homes and backyards. Public space includes traditional public space (pavements, squares, parks); municipal/ public property (often used for trading as it is centrally located or vacant or not administered); formal municipal market spaces; quasi-privatised public space (such as garbage dumps); and public or privately controlled garbage dumps
- Management of transport, infrastructure, and security in relationship to these atypical places of work and the residential locations of the working poor. These factors have a fundamental impact on the ability of small business to survive and grow.
- Urban housing and the provision of basic infrastructure in relationship to asset accumulation and productivity of the working poor in the informal economy
- Privatisation of municipal assets and functions in relationship to the ability of local government to support small enterprises
- Entitlements of informal operators who are non-citizens to municipal space for economic activity and to municipal services

In discussions on these themes, the Colloquium will draw on the perspective of four groups of workers:

- home based workers – who comprise a large proportion of the affiliated organisations of WIEGO, and who will be well-represented at the WIEGO General Assembly in Durban
- waste pickers – WIEGO is already involved closely with the two alliances of informal workers, StreetNet International, and various HomeNets (in South Asia and South East Asia). The next international alliance being considered by WIEGO and its Members is of waste pickers and this will be a valuable opportunity for WIEGO to focus its attention on this group
- cross-border migrant workers – the situation of migrant workers is a growing focus of a number of WIEGO programs, in particular Global Markets and Social Protection
- street vendors – typically the main focus of concern for city managers

The Colloquium will open with an overview of trends in the informal economy worldwide, and a discussion of how the informal economy features in the future vision of major developing-country cities.





The second session on the first day will focus on the themes outlined above, from the perspective of the four groups of works described above. The panellists will be asked to address a sub-set of the following issues:

- Analysis of the sector/ group in terms of the five key themes
- Assessment of the appropriateness of existing planning policies
- Identification of what more appropriate policies might be
- Identification of bridges and barriers to securing permanent representation of the interests of informal workers in the planning, agenda-setting and rule-setting forums of local government
- Examples of good practices from different cities, for example Ahmedabad's slum upgrading which was geared towards home-as-place-of-work; Durban's Warwick Junction and the process of negotiating the use of inner city space for street vending; Bogota's and Rio de Janeiro's organisation of waste pickers into co-operatives

The third session on the afternoon of Day # 1 of the Colloquium will consider the challenges of implementation.

On Day # 2 morning, the final session of the Colloquium will be a policy dialogue between leaders of informal worker organisations and city managers on the allocation of urban space/resources and the regulation of the urban informal economy.

Poster exhibition: A considerable body of post-graduate research on the informal economy has been done at the Schools of Development Studies and Architecture, Housing and Planning at the University of KwaZulu Natal. Findings from the best of these dissertations will be converted to posters for exhibition at the Colloquium.

Participants:

- Urban planners in the public and private sectors
- Mayors, city managers, economic development officers
- International agencies concerned with urban policies, labour standards, governance, gender, enterprise support
- Leaders of organizations of informal workers and of formal trade unions that are organizing informal workers
- Leaders from non-governmental organizations working in support of informal workers





Planning Committee:

The following are on the planning committee:

Dr Sharit Bhowmik, WIEGO Urban Policies Director, University of Mumbai (Chair)

Dr Martha Chen, WIEGO Co-ordinator, Harvard University

Ms Pat Horn, Co-ordinator of Streetnet International

Prof Francie Lund, WIEGO Social Protection Director, School of Development Studies,
UKZN

Ms Shannon Moffett, event planner for the Urban Policies Colloquium

Dr Winnie Mitullah, former WIEGO Urban Policies Director, IDS Nairobi

Mr Glen Robins, School of Development Studies, UKZN

Ms Caroline Skinner, School of Development Studies, UKZN

