



# StreetNet International: Organizing for Social Protection



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## Resolving to Work for the Extension of Social Protection to Informal Economy Workers

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 55 per cent, or four billion people globally, do not receive any social protection benefits.<sup>1</sup> A large number of those without access to social protection are workers in the informal economy who make up over 60 per cent of the global workforce.<sup>2</sup> As able-bodied adults of working age they are excluded from social assistance benefits targeting the poor and vulnerable outside of the labour market. At the same time, the fact that so many informal economy workers work outside of the standard employment relationship means that they are also excluded from employment-related social protection. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the percentage of people who have access to at least one social protection benefit is lowest in those regions which have the largest informal economies, especially sub-Saharan Africa and South and South East Asia.

ILO Recommendation 204 (2015) emphasizes the importance of the extension of social protection to informal workers in the transition from informality to formality. In line with this, SNI's 2019 International Congress adopted **Resolution 32 on the Extension of Social Protection Coverage to Informal Economy Workers**, which calls on all affiliates to petition their governments on the extension of social protection to informal economy workers. In doing so, SNI draws on an international legal framework which includes not only R204, but also draws on Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Income Security Recommendation, 1944 (No. 67), the Medical Care Recommendation, 1944 (No. 69), and the Convention of Minimum Standards of Social Security, 1952 (No. 102).

### On the Ground: StreetNet Affiliates Mobilizing for Policy Change and Implementation

Although SNI adopted Resolution 32 in 2019, several of its affiliates have been working to make the extension of social protection a reality for informal economy workers for a number of years.

Affiliates active on social protection in **sub-Saharan Africa** include the Alliance for Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA), which was a member of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Technical Working Group on the Extension of Social Protection to Informal Economy Workers, making key inputs into Zambia's Social Protection Bill. AZIEA is currently also working with its partners towards the establishment of the AZIEA Mutual Fund, which will be built off currently existing indigenous social protection schemes. The Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT) has been working to bridge the gap between its members and several government-led social protection schemes, at one stage using its membership structures to facilitate the payment of premiums to the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF).

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1 ILO. *World Social Protection Report 2017-2019: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*.

2 ILO. *2018. Women & Men in the Informal Economy (3rd Edition)*.

In Nigeria, the Federation of Informal Workers Organizations of Nigeria (FIWON) has campaigned to strengthen the capacity of informal worker organizations to engage with government on social protection issues. The Sierra Leone Traders Union (SLeTU) has advocated for the inclusion of informal workers into the National Social Security Act. It has also been involved in the development of a capacity building manual on social protection for informal economy workers. In Togo, the Fatiere Nationale des Travailleurs du Secteur Informelle (FAINATRASIT) are members of the Inter-union Technical Committee for the Informal Economy (CTIEI). The CTIEI is a platform comprising representatives from the informal sector within the four main trade unions, and informal workers' organizations not affiliated with the trade unions. Currently the CTIEI is focused on engaging with the National Social Security Fund around the implementation of a registration desk for the workers in the informal economy.

SNI affiliates have also been active in **Latin America**. Asociación de Feriantes de Ferias Especiales (AFFE) from Uruguay reports on a “monotributo” (monotax) system, which is based on the idea of a simplified tax regime and which, in addition to facilitating the payment of one or more taxes, ensures a minimum level of social protection (health and pensions) to a large number of small taxpayers. Similar systems exist in Argentina and Brazil and in 2017 was introduced to the general tax system in Colombia.

In **South East Asia**, Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) from Cambodia has been advocating for informal economy workers to be covered under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). As a result, the Cambodian Government issued an inter-ministerial prakas (regulation) 404 in 2017, allowing some groups of informal economy workers to access free healthcare, including maternity care. IDEA was approved by the NSSF to register informal economy workers to get health care for free at the beginning of March 2018 and currently more than 3,000 members of IDEA have received NSSF ID cards.

## StreetNet and Social Protection: Where to Next?

Social protection is a key aspect of SNI's strategic plan under its pillar of work on R204. This work will focus on influencing national level implementation and ensuring that informal economy workers are recognized as legitimate workers who are entitled to the four pillars of Decent Work. Through its two projects with the Open Society Foundation's Economic Justice Programme and OXFAM, SNI will continue to promote the extension of social protection in sub-Saharan African and in South-East Asia. These projects will focus on strengthening organization and enhancing affiliates' negotiations skills and capacity to engage with national tripartite government structures and advocate for the universal social protection coverage.

StreetNet International

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## About StreetNet International

Founded in 2002, StreetNet International (SNI) is an international alliance of membership-based organisations that unites informal traders, street and market vendors, and hawkers from around the world. SNI enables its affiliates to demand their economic and human rights and to make these rights easier to access by improving policy, regulatory, social, and economic environments. SNI currently represents over 600,000 members in 56 affiliates from 50 countries.



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