

New Urban Agenda Perspectives for Street Vendors in the HABITAT III Conference



Oksana Abboud

Die diesjährige HABITAT III-Konferenz der Vereinten Nationen legt ihren Schwerpunkt auf Wohnverhältnisse sowie nachhaltige Stadtentwicklung und wird im Oktober in Quito, Ecuador, stattfinden. Dabei treffen sich u. a. Interessenvertreter_innen der Zivilgesellschaft, des informellen und des privaten Sektors sowie akademische und wirtschaftliche Institutionen, um gemeinsam eine neue Agenda der Städte der Zukunft auszuarbeiten. Die internationale Organisation StreetNet fordert auch eine Beteiligung von Straßenverkäufer_innen an der Ausgestaltung dieser New Urban Agenda. Sie muss einen Raum bieten für die Stimmen, Erfahrungen und Strategien jener Personen, die von den Maßnahmen betroffen sind und am besten wissen, was sie wollen und was sie brauchen. Eine inklusive Konferenz biete so die Möglichkeit für neue partizipativ

und geschlechtergerechte Stadtentwicklung. Eine erfolgreiche Mobilisierung fand zum Beispiel im Rahmen der „The City We Want“-Kampagne in Durban, Südafrika, statt. Arbeiter_innen aus dem informellen Sektor organisierten sich und lenkten die Aufmerksamkeit der Öffentlichkeit sowie des Parlaments auf ihre Anliegen.

The HABITAT III Conference, also known as the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is going to be held in Quito, Ecuador, on October 17-20, 2016. Street vendors are already organizing themselves to get the city they want. The conference will bring together a large range of urban actors including local authorities, civil society, representatives of workers in the informal economy, the private sector, academic and professional institutions and all other relevant interest groups to review urban policies affecting the future

of cities. Therefore we, street and market vendors, have a right to become part of those actors who will draft a New Urban Agenda for all of us. Every 20 years, UN Habitat outlines an urban agenda, and, this year, a New Urban Agenda will be determined by all the UN Member States. The new urbanization model will set fresh priorities and strategies that take into account the evolving patterns of the new century. It is very important to mobilize around the process while the New Urban Agenda is still being formulated. It should be noted that the role of street vendors here in the process of developing a new and inclusive urban policy is crucial, as informal workers who perform the activity on the street know exactly what they want and need in order to secure livelihoods and safe workplaces. That's why we have to address our main challenges and concerns, which directly affect our daily lives. All the local realities of grassroots need to be brought to the table for international discussion.

Challenges and Concerns

We need to recognize that the New Urban Agenda must create space for the voice, experience and strategies of the urban poor in urban policy, planning and development. It's also a great chance to develop new practices by local authorities in creating a participatory, inclusive, and gender-oriented style of urban planning.

Urban poor must be not only a recognized part of negotiations with local authorities but also a real partner in decision making processes. They should be fully involved in decision making.

Actions

In South Africa, StreetNet affiliate Ubumbano Traders' Alliance, together with members of other allied organizations SASEWA (South African Self-Employed Women's Association), SAWPA (South African Waste Pickers' Association), KwaZulu-Natal Fishermen's Forum and the workers' organizations of minibus-taxi drivers, launched "The City We Want" Campaign in Durban in March 2016. They used local government elections on August 3, 2016 to draw the attention of candidates to their demands.

This was then taken up by the South African Informal Traders' Alliance (SAITA), which organized a National Day of Action on July 13, when marches and demonstrations in seven South African cities were organized for "The City We Want". This national campaign was part of the international "The City We Need" campaign launched by UN Habitat in preparation for HABITAT III. It is an exemplary case of how we need to mobilize before such international events.

Preparations for the Conference

Although HABITAT III will take place in October 2016, a preparatory process started in September 2014 and continued until the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference in Surabaya, Indonesia, in July 2016.

During this period, 11 regional and thematic meetings were held all over

the world, mobilizing national and local governments and stakeholders.

To get an inclusive, efficient, effective and improved document, the UN General Assembly decided to organize five days of open-ended, informal, consultative meetings before the submission of the draft outcome in order to provide opportunity for feedback on the conclusions of the HABITAT III Policy Units and the regional and thematic meetings.

The General Assembly also invited the bureau of the preparatory committee to convene informal intergovernmental negotiations for three days in May, three days in June and three days in July. Local authorities' associations and stakeholders were invited to participate in two-day informal hearings in May and June. This is really a unique case and practice when all the stakeholders have a space for expression of their views, voice and concerns. We just need to use it properly to maximum effect for our success, which will be reflected in the New Urban Agenda document. The New Urban Agenda is a real chance to improve the lives of the urban poor.

Output of the Process

The first major output of the HABITAT III process took place in May 2015 when agencies from across the United Nations and others published 22 "issue papers" — key technical snapshots of various sectors and thematic areas in today's urbanization trends. The following "issue papers" hold a particular interest for street vendors, namely: Inclusive and Safer Cities, Urban Land, Public Space, Jobs and Livelihoods, Informal Sector and Informal Settlements.

During the thematic meetings some declarations have been issued. The Barcelona Declaration on public spaces is an important document for the street vendors as public space is where they work, hence why sufficient access and the right to public space is a big concern for them.

It must be pointed out that for all informal traders the right to the city has

the same value as the right and access to public space. We need to mobilize ourselves and develop our own vision towards „The City We Want“ and „The City We Need“.

StreetNet International encourages all its affiliates to approach their national governments and ask them to also consider and include street vendors' concerns and demands in their national reports, which they were formally requested to prepare before the HABITAT III Conference.

*Let's make difference together!
Nothing for us without us!*



References: www.habitat3.org/bitcache/462d74cfb2e04878ff43c8fcca48037da73d84f?vid=582559&disposition=inline&op=view // <http://citiscscope.org/habitatiii/explainer/2016/04/habitat-iii-source-documents-and-resources>

On the author: Oksana Abboud is a StreetNet Organizer responsible for the Asian and European regions. Currently she is based in Kyiv, Ukraine. Before joining StreetNet International in January 2013, she worked as a Head of International Department of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), the only independent National Trade Union Center in Ukraine.