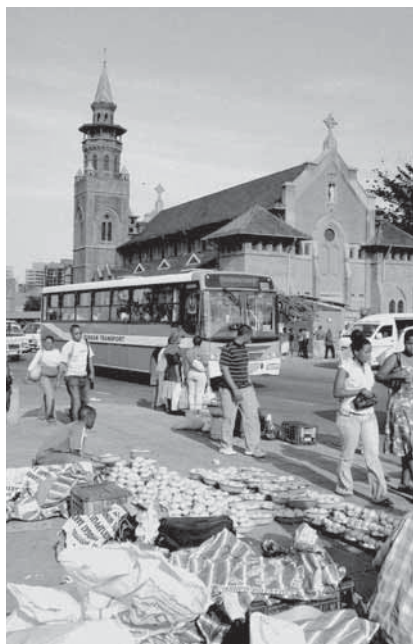


What are we solving by telling lies about our cities?



As the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup approaches, South African cities have started clean-up campaigns. Street children, road-side vendors and all that municipalities regard as unsavoury are being whisked away from the heart of the city. In late 2006, the World Class Cities for All campaign (WCCA) was launched which challenged government's First World approach. **Azad Essa** spoke to **CheChe Selepe**, WCCA national spokesperson about the campaign.

What approaches does the WCCA want to challenge around building World Class Cities?

At the moment elements of poverty and underdevelopment, the so-called Third World element is being driven out of the city in order to make way for a 'world class city'. We challenge these elitist ideas of what constitutes a world class city. We are saying that you can renew the city but you don't have to throw people out into the rural areas. It is like the Group Areas Act [apartheid law endorsing blacks out of the city into rural ethnic areas]. Except, race is not the issue and instead, finance is the determining factor. We are arguing that world class cities must be inclusive.

What is the WCCA's strategy?

The ideas that we stand for need to be hammered into the minds of the

authorities, which include local organising committees and local government. All those who are building stadiums, and impose by-laws need to be persuaded, including national government. We hope to persuade through campaigns, protests and the media. These are the only tools we have at our disposal at this time.

What role do trade unions play in the WCCA campaign?

The WCCA was launched at Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions) in the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) office. Samwu is the most important since stadiums being built, and removal of street children and hawkers are by the municipal workers. We have a warm relationship with Samwu.

Our campaign partners are

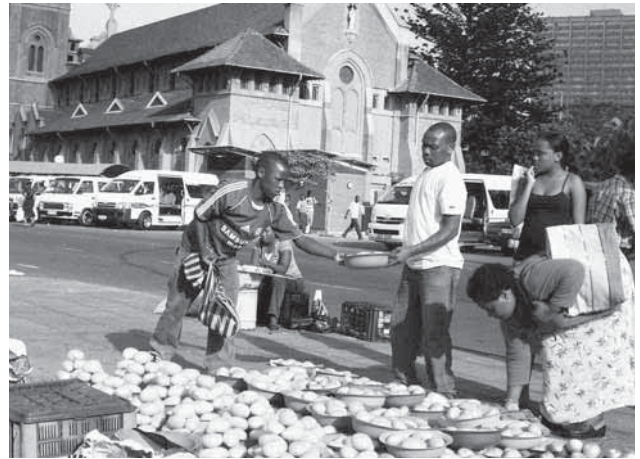
important for spreading information. We are also speaking to Satawu (South African Transport Workers Union) and Saccawu (South African Commercial Catering Workers Union). We have the rail hawkers on board as they are often abused by private security firms recruited by Metrorail. We also have contact with the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) whose members are crucial in building the new stadiums.

Municipal support is crucial for the success of the campaign.

How have they responded?

To be quite honest, the level of support is minimal. We have explained our campaigns, but we don't expect them to fight our battles. There are still attempts to get them on board. Naturally, we need them on board, but this does not mean that if they are not on board,

Azad Essa



the campaign collapses. The 2010 Act strips the power of national government and municipalities in regards to 2010, and certain issues surrounding the event. FIFA will take over and issues governing things like alcohol and sex workers will be relaxed to accommodate the games. By implication, national sovereignty will be handed over to FIFA.

Our campaign only collapses if the disadvantaged groups withdraw or don't take it seriously. It is crucial that they understand and support the campaign. In fact, the success or failure belongs entirely to them.

What are the WCCA alternatives? 'Cleaning' cannot be used to describe removing humans, effectively black people out of the city. Then Europeans come and what? Shall the city be clean?

With regards to alternatives, we are saying that there must be fair interaction with the people affected. If you want to move street traders out of Eloff and Market streets, let us engage the hawkers and see what they have to say. If you say you are going to demolish a building because it is unsafe or unhygienic – what exactly is the alternative? If you remove the occupants, you have to supply an alternative, a new market place for them to make their living.

The biggest mistake regarding these forced removals is that government is creating a false impression that there are no hawkers or poor people in our cities. It will be a lie. If you let the city remain as it is, a tourist, let us say, a Chinese tourist visits our cities and sees the reality. It is possible he can be helpful towards solving the

problems faced in our cities. What exactly are we solving by telling lies about the state of our cities? It is not as if the world is not aware of what is going on here. Claim no easy victories and tell no lies.

The economic context is such that if a municipality removes vendors, others will arrive to make a livelihood. Again, what does the campaign suggest as a way forward?

Let there be diversification. It is crucial to engage the people themselves. [It seems] we don't want to discuss it in an honest, open and amicable manner. But you can't undermine the intelligence of the masses. The authorities need to engage people in dialogue in an honest way. Why remove a hawker selling peanuts to put up a McDonalds or Wimpy? Why not engage the traders and explore organic food, for example.

It is to seek ways for the street children, sex workers and the hawkers – the so called undesirable elements of society. Where are they supposed to go? Every city is spending so much money on security. Why not get people to help in the fight against crime instead? We are asking for broad-minded alternatives.

Similar clean-up operations are taking place in India, as New Delhi gears up for the Commonwealth Games in 2010. Is the WCCA linked up with struggles in other parts of the globe?

We were active in Seoul, South Korea with much success, back in 2002.

This campaign is headed up by Streetnet, with link-ups to organisations in India and in Ghana, who just held the African Cup of Nations. We are engaging with our affiliates in India. We have been active in Beijing as well. Not as the WCCA, but it has been borne out of other struggles of a similar sort. Let us pre-empt and be proactive. Now that it [the World Cup] is coming here, let us put up a strong campaign.

The WCCA was launched in late 2006, with a four year plan. What has its progress been?

For now, there has been tremendous progress, especially in raising the consciousness of the people themselves. We are conscientising the masses – from the homeless, the street kids, sex workers, to the hawkers. We have engaged the municipalities, have mobilised Cosatu, and been able to ensure the maximum support of the most strategic leaders in Cosatu. We have challenged evictions and won in some areas, like the railways. We have picked up the level and intensity against evictions. We have produced bulletins, and been able to penetrate mass media, including union publications. We have overcome a number of obstacles and the future looks bright. LE

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