

up front

on the margins

The recent violence in Kenya that made international headlines has exposed the underlying problems of poverty and instability in the country. The poorest communities have been hit the hardest by the clashes, often where people are scraping a living on the margins of society with little hope of a decent future.

These conditions are not unique to Kenya. In recent years, sub-Saharan Africa has seen the destruction of millions of jobs across all sectors of the economy, often because of decisions made by Western governments and international financial institutions.

War on Want is fighting for a better life for people who do informal and unregulated work. We need your support today to help workers overcome poverty and build a future for themselves. March 2008

A market in Zambia closing up at the end of the day



£20 could pay to educate street sellers and organise them to stand up to local authorities

Global decisions ruining local lives

In recent years, millions of people in countries like Kenya have seen devastating job losses and had their livelihoods taken from them. And where poverty is already widespread, the wholesale destruction of secure jobs with regular incomes has dramatically deepened poverty and left people in unregulated, informal work with no security, protection or recognition by the law.

These crippling conditions were not inevitable, but were a result of decisions made by Western governments on trade, debt relief and aid. Debilitating conditions placed on the poorest countries have devastated already fragile manufacturing and public sectors. Factory closures and multinational takeovers have led to millions of jobs being destroyed.

Workers have had to turn to the **informal economy**. They do unrecognised work with little or no legal protection, irregular and low paid often in very poor conditions. In Zambia, for example, 80% of people work in the informal economy and 87% of Zambians live on less than \$2 a day. Without the protection and security of formal employment, it is nearly impossible to escape such crushing poverty. In many sub-Saharan African countries, street and market vendors make up almost half the working population, propping up national economies but having little or no

protection from their governments. Many of today's poorest Kenyans work as street sellers or market traders with little regulation or legal recognition of their status.

A gift of £50 could boost their campaign to change the law and gain crucial legal recognition.

The daily struggle of neglected workers

When their jobs disappeared, many ordinary people who were employed in regular, salaried work found themselves unemployed and having to work in unstable and often dangerous conditions. In Kenya, street selling is not legally recognised but is often the only option for many. The recent violence added to the instability of workers' lives when traders lost all their goods in the chaos. With no formal recognition of their livelihoods by the government, they will not get any assistance to rebuild their lives.

It is very difficult for those working in streets and markets to make enough to overcome poverty. With most informal work being illegal, traders are constantly harassed and moved on by local authorities and they cannot secure credit or loans to expand like other businesses.

There are also daily hazards for people working on streets such as: increased risk of injury by motorists on highly congested and dilapidated



Street traders on a busy corner in Nairobi

roads, having to travel long distances to towns and being forced to sleep overnight on streets with their stock – for the many women street sellers, they face the added risk of being sexually harassed. Designated market areas are old and poorly maintained despite the levies paid by traders to the local authorities. There are health risks due to lack of water and sanitation facilities and congestion due to the sheer numbers of traders competing for space.

Trying desperately to make ends meet

Street sellers tend to base themselves along main roads and near shopping areas where there are many pedestrians and motorists. They use tables, racks, handcarts, mats or even trees, heads or shoulders to display their goods depending on their locations. Some might choose a specific spot and others may choose to be mobile and walk around to utilise a larger area. They trade almost everything from food to clothes, household items to tobacco and newspapers, handicrafts, books and school supplies.

Fighting to change the law

War on Want has been supporting partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help people working in all types of unregulated work. Our long-standing partner in Zambia fights for street and market traders and in 2007

we began similar work with a new partner in Kenya. Our partner – the Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders – is pushing hard for government regulation to legitimise and recognise the important contribution of street sellers and market traders to the overall economy, and ensure they have the protection and rights offered to all private enterprises. This would mean that traders could demand safer working conditions, have the opportunity to access credit and, importantly, be recognised as a vital part of the economy, not marginalised as criminals.

Please make a donation today. Our partners are trying to improve the lives of people in desperate poverty who are scraping a living, selling whatever they can on streets and markets. There are solutions to their problems and our partners are fighting hard to make governments implement them. They cannot do it alone.

Help them today and make it happen.

[Please make a donation using the form attached](#)

In many countries, street and market vendors make up almost half the working population, propping up national economies but having little or no protection from their governments.



A life on the margins

Every morning Victor Phiri finds a discreet area on the street to work. He must choose a spot that is visible enough to attract customers but not draw the attention of the police. He used to run a fruit stall, selling apples and oranges, but the stand was too visible and got him into trouble with the authorities. Now Victor must sell phone cards and other goods small enough for him to carry on him. Victor is a street trader in Lusaka, Zambia's capital city.

Victor is also the Vice-Chair of the Lusaka Informal Traders Association (LITA), part of War on Want's partner the Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations. Working for LITA, Victor travels around the country educating traders in their rights, teaching business skills and forging relationships with local government representatives. His goal is to get representatives elected in each of Zambia's regions who are supportive of informal workers like street and market traders.

Our partners in Zambia are the only mouthpiece for street traders. They fight for traders' only source of income to be legally recognised, benefiting from all the protections associated with formal recognition.

Trained as an accountant, Victor used to work as a schoolteacher and for a local charity. But when Zambia's economy was wiped out in the mid-1990s he lost his job. Now he spends his days selling goods on the streets of Lusaka, trying to avoid the local authorities. "I can't display many items in case the authorities come and move me on. If they arrest me they do not take me to a court but demand money, a bribe." Being forced to pay constant bribes wipes out a trader's business, making it nearly impossible to buy new goods and start over.

Because of his work with LITA, Victor is a particular target. The authorities identified him as a "ringleader", and he was not able to work for a period. But even when left alone by the authorities, making a living from selling is difficult. Victor says he sometimes makes a living wage, but not always. "Sometimes yes, sometimes it's hand to mouth. Sometimes I sell nothing for weeks."

Victor is grateful to War on Want for the work we do supporting informal economy workers like him. The financial assistance we provide and the work we do highlighting the problems for workers are invaluable to him: "I urge you to continue fighting on our behalf."

NEWS

An ICM poll published by War on Want in March asked people what they now see as the real reason for the invasion of Iraq five years ago. More people identified "to gain control of Iraq's oil" than any other reason, ahead of removing Saddam Hussein from power, disarming Iraq's weapons of mass destruction or stopping Iraqi support for international terrorism. We continue to support Iraqi trade unions in their fight to defend their oil from companies such as Shell and BP.

War on Want supports Advisory Services for Alternative Agriculture (AS-PTA) Brazil, an organisation dedicated to supporting sustainable agriculture in Brazil. For years they have been doing battle with Brazil's national biosafety commission over its lack of transparency and decisions that are harmful to the country's small farmers. AS-PTA, supported by federal health and environmental agencies, filed a suit in Brazil's federal court calling for the commission's recent decision to allow the release of genetically modified corn to be overturned. AS-PTA held that there were inadequate studies on the health and environmental impacts or the risks to farmers, and the court agreed. This was an important victory for our partner and for Brazilian farmers.

Award-winning journalist and author Naomi Klein will be in London on 19 May to launch the paperback edition of her latest book *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* at Friends Meeting House. All proceeds from the night will benefit two War on Want causes: our partner the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions and the Hands Off Iraqi Oil coalition. Tickets, which cost £7/£5, are available on War on Want's website and from our office on 020 7549 0590.

Factory workers in two Sri Lankan factories have signed a ground-breaking new contract. Working with our partner the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union, workers signed the first collective agreement signed in the Free Trade Zone with guaranteed cost of living increases. The agreement covers the 1,000 workers employed by the factories. In March of last year, workers in these factories had gone on strike for 15 days to gain official recognition for their union.

War on Want's Comedy Gig took London by storm on 21 February. Excellent press coverage before the event and strong ticket sales made the night a huge success. Thanks to everyone who took part. Comedy duo Armstrong & Miller, Lee Mack, Shazia Mirza and surprise guest Bill Bailey joined fast-rising stars Josh Howie and Jack Whitehall on the stage of the legendary Shepherd's Bush Empire in support of War on Want. Visit our website to see photographs from the show.

Save the date: War on Want's Annual General Meeting has been scheduled for 21 June 2008, and is open to all members and supporters. Come and hear reports on the year's activities directly from the Council of Management and the Chief Executive, and take part in debates on any resolutions presented to the meeting, thus directly influencing the future of War on Want. Further details will follow in the post, or check our website www.waronwant.org

Bill Bailey at War on Want's Comedy Gig



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donate

£50

£20

£250

What your donation could achieve:

- £20 could pay to educate street sellers and organise them to stand up to local authorities
- £100 could pay for someone like Victor's monthly salary to train workers in their rights and business skills
- £250 could fund a media campaign including posters and events to raise awareness of the issue with the public, local authorities and MPs

**We can't do it
without you**

For more information visit
www.waronwant.org

Support War on Want today and help informal workers in Kenya and Zambia fight for their right to decent work. Overlooked by their governments, these workers need your help to change the law and gain crucial formal recognition.

Yes, I can help. Here is my gift of

Name _____

Address please write in capitals _____

Postcode _____

E-mail please write clearly _____

I enclose a cheque / CAF Voucher / Postal Order made payable to War on Want

Please debit my Mastercard / Visa / Switch / CAF Card

Card Number _____

Valid From _____ Expiry Date _____

Issue Number Switch Only _____

Security Code last 3 digits on your signature strip _____

Name of Cardholder _____

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New Gift Aid Declaration
Please tick if you would like War on Want to reclaim the tax that you have paid on your donations since 6 April 2002 and on any future donations.

You must have paid an amount of income and/or capital gains tax (in the UK) equal to the tax that will be claimed (currently 28p for each £1 you give).