

When 'work' does work

Twenty years ago, Febby Kampambwe was among the millions of workers in Zambia forced to leave her job. Like so many other businesses, the textile company she worked in had to close due to economic reforms driven by Western governments that failed to protect local businesses.

Desperate to support her family, she set up a stall selling nuts in the market, with no protection from the sun and rain. She worked 11-hour days to scrape a meagre income so she could bring up her four children on her own in one room in a slum. Tired of the conditions she was working in and wanting to increase her income, she joined a scheme which helps traders to fight for better working conditions and trains them to improve their incomes.



She has now secured a proper stall protected against the elements, and has expanded her business to selling fish and beans. Febby is just one example of the many informal workers War on Want continues to help.

War on Want's partners in the informal economy

- Alliance for Zambian Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA)
- Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT)
- Malawi Union for the Informal Sector (MUFIS)

Join War on Want to help ensure the rights of informal economy workers are recognised.

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FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

Registered Charity No. 208724

When work isn't 'work'

Fighting for workers' rights in the informal economy



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

When is work not 'work'?

Arriving in an African city, you are greeted with the sounds of people selling anything and everything from tomatoes to shoes.

Just so as to earn enough to feed their families, people sell their wares anywhere they can set up shop long enough to make a sale, be it dodging cars in rush hour, sitting on the pavement with their children or in dilapidated sprawling markets.

Many of these traders were forced out of work in the formal economy. Millions of workers across sub-Saharan Africa lost their jobs as a result of ill conceived economic policies, including public spending cuts. These cuts left people with no choice but to scrape a living in the informal economy. The destruction of secure jobs with regular incomes was the result of pressure from donors and international financial institutions, which pushed local governments to open their markets to foreign companies. This destroyed local industry and culminated in economic meltdown.

With no safety net to fall back on, the majority of the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa now has to resort to the informal economy for survival. Ignored by their governments and with no other jobs available, traders have to work long hours in the blazing sun with no guarantee of making a sale. They face constant harassment and discrimination from the police, who arrest them, confiscate their stock and force them to pay bribes to keep trading. This wipes out a trader's business, making it nearly impossible to buy new goods and start over. But in the eyes of the authorities, this is not real 'work'.

Informal economy workers in Africa put in long hours in tough conditions just to earn enough to feed their families.

If this isn't work, we don't know what is.

What is the 'informal economy'?

- The informal economy encompasses a wide range of work not formally recognised by governments, including market traders, street vendors, domestic workers and waste pickers.
- Over 80% of non-agricultural workers in sub-Saharan Africa work in the informal economy. The majority are women, with many earning less than \$2 a day.
- Workers in the informal economy generally have no legal status and are criminalised, meaning they have no rights and are subject to the whims of the authorities. This means their lives are highly precarious, making it impossible to escape crushing poverty.

How we are making 'work' work

War on Want, together with its partners in Africa, is fighting for work in the informal economy to be legally recognised. We support our partners as they challenge governments to protect the rights of informal workers, to organise informal workers on the ground and to build public pressure for change.

Our partners, with War on Want's support, work at the grassroots level to enable informal workers to demand their rights. Along with training in literacy, numeracy skills and business management, this improves informal workers' working conditions and ability to provide for themselves and their families.

War on Want and its partners have already made huge strides to get informal economy work recognised as work. But there is still a long fight ahead of us.

To join our fight and find out more, please go to:

waronwant.org/work