



WOZA MOYA



WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE ARISE (WOZA) September 2015

WOZA means 'Come forward'.

By women for women and with women, across race, colour, creed, class or political persuasion.
Empowering women to be courageous, caring, committed and in communication with their communities.

An open letter to the Honourable Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National housing

Honorable Minister Saviour Kasukuwere,

Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) members, the majority of whom are women, and are informal vendors, confront you with the lived realities of vendors. Vending is not a crime; The Zimbabwean Constitution protects the right to earn a living with dignity. – (Chapter 2- 'National objectives', section 13 on National Development, 14 on Empowerment and employment and section 15-Food Security. Chapter 4, section 51-right to human dignity and Part 2 'Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms' section 58-Freedom of assembly and association)

Honourable Minister, we are approaching you because in terms of the National Objectives of the Constitution, "*The Government is expected to take reasonable legislative and other measures to realize these constitutional rights*". Please take help us to ensure that vendors enjoy their constitutional right to trade. You must know that Zimbabweans are not vendors by choice but due to the fact that they are unable to secure employment despite the election promise of millions of jobs. The closing of factories and massive loss of jobs is pushing people into the informal markets. However, despite having a right to trade and earn a living, the lived reality of vendors, many of them our members, is as follows:

- Vendors are being harassed, beaten and chased from their vending places by Municipal police. In early August, a vendor's foot got stuck in a drainage hole as he was trying to flee from the municipal police. They caught up with him and beat him until he broke his leg. This level of violence against vendors is unnecessary!
- Vending is not a massive profit making venture but a survival strategy. However some police officers seem to be making profit by looting vendors' goods. There are no transparent receipts for confiscated goods or even a known place where people can claim their goods and pay a fine. Municipal police demand a sum of \$6 from vendors every week and sometimes twice a week. Those who fail to pay have their goods confiscated for personal use by the police.
- Confiscated goods, specifically clothing, were given to the first lady, Grace Mugabe. She then donated these to ZANU PF supporters in Zvimba and her orphanage in Mazoe. According to **News Day, 28th of August 2015**, "*First Lady Grace Mugabe yesterday shockingly disclosed that second-hand clothes confiscated from vendors by municipal police, State security agents and Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) at the country's border posts and in major city centres had been handed over for distribution to Zanu PF supporters.*" Vendors are not being given a chance to pay a fine and reclaim their commodities.
- A company called Park Rite Africa which was engaged by the Harare City Council to manage parking is now collecting vending fees of \$3 per week from vendors in Chitungwiza. At the same time, the city council is collecting monthly fees of \$6 from the same vendors and a sum of \$20 from vendors who sell cooked food.
- When vendors try to sell their goods in the areas of Murewa, Mutoko, Mt Darwin and Nyanga, they are asked to produce ZANU PF membership cards or a letter of permission from a ZANU PF district chairman.
- Vendors are being forced to attend national events like Heroes and Independence Day or burials of ZANU PF members by ZANU PF youth. On the day of the event they lock the vending sites and force vendors to get into buses that take them to the events.
- Vendors are being allocated in vending sites that have no sanitation facilities or running water. Most of these vending sites have no access to customer traffic.

Honorable Minister Saviour Kasukuwere; Do Not Persecute Vendors!

As women and mothers of this city, we ask that you work towards finding solutions that will cater for both the interests of the local authority and informal traders. Women have to put food on the table. They live at the sharp end of desperation seeing children's faces showing hunger and this is what motivates them to try and find food. Vendors should not be persecuted for trying to feed their families. We expect you as our Minister to protect the rights of vendors and allow for peaceful trading. The issues we need to be addressed as we dialogue for a lasting solution include:

1. City council collect vending fees and also allow Park Rite Africa to collect a second payment. Why did council mandate a parking company to collect weekly payments from vendors? We demand to have affordable standardised monthly fees which can be paid directly to the city council for transparency and accountability.
2. These fees must be publicised so that all vendors can be aware of how much they should pay.
3. We demand receipts for confiscated goods from all police officers seizing these – there must be transparency and accountability and no theft.
4. We demand to know where looted goods are taken and the process to help us recover our goods. Vendors should be allowed to reclaim their goods. It is an injustice to give the first lady, Grace Mugabe confiscated goods for her political campaigns. **Where is the justice for those affected by this looting?**
5. City council should have conducted an audit of stand allocation before chasing vendors from the streets. We demand your ministry conduct this audit and publish a report. We as citizens and residents of Harare and Chitungwiza want to know about budget amounts allocated to development of vending stands over the last year. Vendors have the right to understand where their taxes and fees have gone.
6. Members of WOZA do not believe it is the Zimbabwe Republic Police's role to deal with vendors.
7. The Municipal police must stop harassing and beating up vendors. **Violence is never a solution!**
8. Why is the City council not playing their role of allocating vending stands? Stand allocation is often done on a political basis and members feel that this is unfair. Poverty is there for all of us so all of us must have a fair chance to survive it.
9. We demand a one person; one stand policy should be initiated by city council – no to space barons who push up the stand fees.
10. Vending sites should have access to sanitation facilities and access to high customer traffic.
11. Vendors should be allowed to trade undisturbed on a daily basis. Many vendors have their right to trade disturbed by party youth who come and force vendors to leave their stands and goods to attend party events. This violates their Constitutional freedom of assembly and association (*chapter 4, section 58*)

Let us help people to find sustainable livelihood's in a dignified manner befitting Zimbabweans.

ⁱFootnote: Other references from the Zimbabwe Constitution-Chapter 2 National Objectives

ⁱ 14 Empowerment and employment creation (1) The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must endeavour to facilitate and take measures to empower, through appropriate, transparent, fair and just affirmative action, all marginalized persons, groups and communities in Zimbabwe. (2) At all times the State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must ensure that appropriate and adequate measures are undertaken to create employment for all Zimbabweans, especially women and youths.

24 Work and labour relations (1) The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must adopt reasonable policies and measures, within the limits of the resources available to them, to provide everyone with an opportunity to work in a freely chosen activity, in order to secure a decent living for themselves and their families. (2) The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must endeavour to secure- (a) full employment; (b) the removal of restrictions that unnecessarily inhibit or prevent people from working and otherwise engaging in gainful economic activities; (c) vocational guidance and the development of vocational and training programmes, including those for persons with disabilities; and (d) the implementation of measures such as family care that enable women to enjoy a real opportunity to work.