

SADC Informal Traders Campaign Update – 21/11/2011

Report by Tsolo Lebisa (Lesotho)

A committee of informal traders in Lesotho led by a trader association called Khathang Tema Baitsukuli and partnered by Lesotho Council of Churches yesterday (16/11/2011) held a rally with councillors and the Market Master in Mafeteng. In Lesotho, the Market Master is the one responsible for the allocation of stalls for informal traders at the market place whilst the councillors are strategic for engagements about development and sites allocation. During the rally the councillors agreed with us that the current market in Mafeteng which was since built in 1969 and can only accommodate 100 traders need to be expanded and refurbished. At the event, the traders committee was also able to distribute questionnaires to more than 50 traders who were in attendance. Amongst others the questionnaire touches on issues of policy and regulation of the informal traders locally as well as treatment of cross-border traders. The rally formed part of our activities undertaken under the SADC Informal Traders Campaign to highlight our marginalisation and exclusion from partaking in the economy of our respective countries. The informal traders who attended the rally came from Mafeteng and other neighbouring areas such as Tetenara, Thabaneng, Matholeng, Matseke and Motsekuoa.

Report by Sipho Thwala (Orange Farm, South Africa)

As part of the SADC Informal Traders Campaign, aimed at putting an end to sexual and economic violence on informal traders, the campaign co-ordinating team in South Africa last week (08/11/2011) visited the traders at Orange Farm Stretford station upon hearing that there will be a march against them. According to the two elderly informal traders who have been trading at the station for years, the councillor and the landlord of the land at the station as well as other government stakeholders have mobilised the community to march against them. This they believe is an attempt to make them move out from the station and make way for the development of the mall. The two elderly women explained that they feared for their lives because they are the one having an agreement which makes provision for them to continue trading at the station even after the mall is built. The campaign co-ordinating team, ESSET officials and representatives from Orange Farm Fraternal paid traders at the station a visit a day before the march. They also wrote a letter to the councillor in the area about the concerns of the traders as well as seeking police protection for the security of traders at the station. The march never materialised and the traders at the station are continuing to trade with no disturbance.

Report by Sipho Thwala (Eldorado Park, South Africa)

Informal traders selling next to Shoprite in Eldorado Park receive a shock of their lifetime over the weekend (12/11/2011) when unexpectedly, the metro police pounced on them and even shoot bullets in the air before confiscating their goods. The Chairperson of the

traders in Eldorado Park, Leon Barclay says: “We have never been harassed by metro police before. Thus, we were all surprised by the harassment incident over the weekend because we never received any complaint for trading illegally nor have they informed us of demarcated spaces for trading. Also surprising is the fact that the metro police only attack coloured traders. But we will not give them a chance again; if they can come and harass us we will fight them back. We are ready for them”.

Report by Mrs Regina Muwowo (Zambia)

The Zambian government is one amongst the very few states within the SADC region which support the informal trade sector. We wish many of our states can emulate it by supporting the informal traders. The Copper belt Cross Border Traders (CBTAKT) and Integrated Business Association (IBA) are some of the informal business structures that enjoy the support of the Zambian government. The government has even donated five containers, land and three warehouses to informal traders belonging to the CBTAKT and IBA. Government officials are usually invited to our workshops and other events hosted by CBTAKT and IBA.

The Zambian Development Agency is an agent in the government that helps the informal sector to develop into well-established entities. The same agency identifies foreign Companies to be linked to local traders so that they can learn new skills. The government promote lower interest charges by the commercial banks and other financial lending institutions to encourage more people in the informal sector to have access to loans and start businesses. The government also has established the Citizen Economical Empowerment Commission which identifies women and youth groups who have viable business proposals or projects to undertake, but have no access to capital. Upon identifying these groups, they are given loans to start-up business. By so doing, employment is created in the informal sector both to the youths and women. Even the disabled benefit from the same programme because they also form part of the informal sector in this area of trade.

Report by Bhevha Hlophe (Swaziland)

The Coalition of informal economy Association of Swaziland held two rallies on the 15th and 17th November with informal traders in Nhlanguano and Madlangisi respectively. The rallies focussed on issues and challenges affecting informal traders in Swaziland. The rallies were also used as platform to mobilise local traders and raise awareness about the SADC Informal Traders campaign. The coalition is preparing to hold bigger rally in the first week of December 2011, which will bring informal traders from different regions of Swaziland to come and strategize on how to advance our struggle and engage our authorities.