

**ERA OF DARKNESS TO STREET VENDING AS A LIVELIHOOD FOR THE
URBAN INHABITANTS IN ZIMBABWE: A REVIEW**

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of the paper was to examine the threats exposed to street vending as a livelihood for the urban inhabitants in Zimbabwe. The aspect under review was very topical in Zimbabwe's urban, and hence recent literature was prominently scrutinised. Both the state and independent newspapers were among the sources of literature. High unemployment levels in Zimbabwe, economic recession, job retrenchments and need to fulfil basic requirements were among the major drivers for street vending. However, some people opt for street vending as a route to enterprising and business to earn a living. Content analysis of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Urban Councils Act and the Economic Empowerment Act helped understand street vending in Zimbabwe. Street vending was exposed to threats like harassment and attack from municipal and state police, confiscation and loss of wares, politicisation of vending operations and lack of legal protection. The paper acknowledges the complex nature of street vending. Therefore, strong collaboration is needed between the street vendors and the local authorities to reach to mutual understanding in order to reduce the friction between them.

Key words: *street vending, livelihood, urban inhabitants, threats, Zimbabwe, local authorities*

INTRODUCTION

The downturn of the Zimbabwean economy and lack of employment opportunities engineered street vending to be an alternative to meet basic needs by urban settlers. However, levels of appreciation and consideration of street vending faced multi-criticism like being illegal and upsetting. Vendors were attacked because of negative beliefs such as that they block footpaths and streets, make the streets dirty, sell unhygienic food, and are controlled by the mafia (Efroymson, 2015). The Urban Councils in Zimbabwe got in confrontation with vendors on their legal reputation, places of operation and kind of goods they provide. The private and public media was hefty with issues pertaining to vendors. Efroymson (2015) argues that street vending is a source of jobs both for the rural poor migrating to the city and for those who have lost their formal sector jobs after financial contraction. Also, some formally employed people undertake street vending as an alternative livelihood to beef up financial capital as indicated by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF). The paper reviews

street vending as a livelihood of the urban inhabitants by examining the threats involved. The review process took close diagnosis of media stories, journal articles and the legal framework. The paper seeks to address the issues involving street vending as a livelihood to support the lives of the urban inhabitants.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Street vendors are the people who sell various types of goods and services on streets, railway terminals and platforms, bus stations, besides parks and open spaces with a very low cost to the city dwellers (NPUSV, 2006 cited in Hasan and Alam, 2014). The 1995 Urban Councils Act 29:15's third schedule defines a street vendor as any person who sells goods from one or more fixed places in or on any public place. Vendors are primarily independent operators running their own businesses on basis of self-employment (Baruah, 2004, cited by Assan and Chambers, 2014). National Vendors Union Zimbabwe (NAVUZ), (2015) defines a street vendor as a person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street, lane, side walk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area, from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place and includes hawker, peddler and squatter. Bhowmik (2005) cited by Ndhlovu (2011) prescribed street vendors as self-employed workers in the informal economy who are either stationary or mobile, and that they trade from the street, offering goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. Thus a street vendor is a person operating a small level trade either mobile or stationed based in the streets, pavements on informal basis. In Zimbabwe, street vendors are usually found in streets of major towns and cities. On the same note, street vending forms one of the most visible areas of the informal economy (Cross, 1999), cited by Assan and Chambers, (2014). Despite the various definitions casted upon street vending, it is highly defined basing on the location of the trade. Street vending in Zimbabwe usually occurs in the streets along the pavements, along the roads, in avenues, under the trees both at designated and undesignated places. Street vending is not solely an activity for the poor but others take it as their major livelihood due to profits associated with the trade. In most instances, street vending involves high mobility, for example air time and ice cream vendors among others. Thus, Cross (1998) defines street vending as the production and exchange of legal goods and services that involves the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of

zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labour regulations governing contracts, work conditions, and/or legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients. On the other hand street vending is a legal activity which is undertaken by individuals or entrepreneurs who really follow the rules and regulations.

This paper adopts the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) threats to street vending as a livelihood. Generally, livelihood refers to means of supporting for survival on one's daily life. The livelihoods are determined predominantly by the context in which people live and the constraints and opportunities this location presents (Timalsina, 2011). In other words, Chambers and Conway (1992) cited by Krantz (2001) confirm that a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living, which street vending strives for. Francis (2006) expresses that the SLF adopted by Department for International Development (DFID) proposes that people construct livelihoods from a portfolio of assets, which consist of a combination of human, natural, financial, social and physical capital. People's ability to construct livelihoods from these assets is shaped by a vulnerability milieu and by transforming structures and processes which affect livelihood strategies and hence livelihood outcomes (ibid). Timalsina (2011) coins that street vendors try to live their life with dignity and self-respect through hard work and that they work under harsh conditions. In doing so, some of the vendors build assets that assist them meeting their daily lives. The urban inhabitants route to street vending as a livelihood. In this instance, street vending is a livelihood strategy that the urban people adopted to create their capabilities and assets in various facets. However, backwashing tides sweep away street vendors' hopes in their vending activities as a livelihood due to disturbances which act as shocks to disturb them.

The threats bedeviling street vendors are therefore analysed in relation to the SLF. Vendors see vending as a livelihood but they face a lot of bullying from the surrounding operational environment which led to social unrest and disturbed vending activities, creating shocks expressed by the SLF. Though street vending has to somewhat been shouldered as nuisance to city governance and urban sanity, the mishaps vendors face in the streets disturb vending. Mitullah (2004:2) confirms that "serious focus on street vendors begun with the

Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors which called for national policies for street vendors, and follow up actions by individual vendors, vendors associations, city governments and international organisations. This shows that there are policies from local government (local authorities) institutions that effect the vending processes by crafting policies that vendors need to follow as enshrined in the SLF. According to the SLF, various institutions like the political parties, civil society groups like NAVUZ and the legislative bodies like local authorities create conditions that affect the operations of street vendors, striking some shocks on them. These challenges pose a threat to the street vendors in Zimbabwe as they enterprise to meet their livelihoods.

METHODOLOGY

The authors used the content review of the literature which was analysed in relation to the legal parameters for street vending in Zimbabwe. Since the issue on review is very topical nationwide recent articles in periodicals like newspapers and journal articles were used as sources. Newspaper articles used are from 2014 to 2018. Journal articles were drawn from journals discussing street vending and urban governance. Both the state and independent media sources were used so as to provide an analysis to reduce bias and enhance strength to the content of the paper. The SLF was used to back up this paper to create analysis, discuss the plight of street vending, drawing the conclusions and also proffering the recommendations. The major issue under the discussion is on the current phenomenon befalling street vending and how it affects and impacts vending, with the lens of the complexities involved.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STREET VENDING IN ZIMBABWE

Street vending in Zimbabwe is not homogeneous but varies in nature. Street vendors are more prevalent within the central business district (CBD) of any urban area. The different sectors in which street vendors operate in include but not limited to commercial, services, food, children's activities, drug dealing, clothing, foot ware, airtime selling, fruit and vegetables, empty containers, household goods, and farm implements among others. In other words, street vendors operate in all sets of economies and services. Street vendors do generate demand for services provided by formal sector public and private actors, including transportation, and formal shops and suppliers from whom they source their goods (Roever and Skinner, 2016). Street vending is usually undertaken by the youthful age between 18 to

35 years although children under 18 years, including the street kids are found in vending activities to fund raise and earn a living. Both young men and women take part in vending activities. There is no actual statistics of the street vendors in Zimbabwe. In recent time, street vending extended to money changing where vendors illegally exchanged currencies like United States Dollars to bond notes or ecocash, or any other current. Zwinoira (2017) reported that street vendors were turning into cash dealing by selling cash at 20% to 30% mark-up. Street vending has also gone to the extent of providing illegal drugs which the street kids abused. Though some take it as a means to earn a livelihood, most of the street vendors have responded to the challenges in the economy and sailed through it to make ends meet.

Vendors belong to particular groups and are politically affiliated though some are free from such a dilemma. The various groups of street vendors either belong to the ruling party or to the opposition party. For example, NAVUZ is a vendor association that mainly focuses on uplifting the standards of vendors. Founded in 2008 and registered as a trust in 2014, its purpose is to advocate for the legitimization and national acceptance of vending as a viable employment avenue. However, street vending is not simply recourse for people retrenched from the formal economy, but it is also a lucrative livelihood of choice. Some street vendors often work with others, they do work in partnerships or collectives, act as agents for local shops, and some are employers and importers.

Street vending is an activity that is composed of diverse social groups like children, men, women, agents of shops, cross-border traders. Also, these groups operate in different sectors. The diversity of the social groups involved in street vending is precisely the reason why regulation of street vending at street level becomes a challenge, especially considering that space for vending on the streets is a limited resource and many other groups require recognition of their needs and space such as pedestrians, bike users, and shop owners.

THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT OF STREET VENDING IN ZIMBABWE

The Government of Zimbabwe (2013) in section 14 of the Constitution Amendment (No. 20) encourages the state and all institutions and agencies of government to facilitate and empower, all marginalised persons, groups and communities in Zimbabwe; and advocate for creation of employment for all especially women and youths. Owners of vending businesses

in Zimbabwe's urban cities have employed their family members or relatives and contribute significantly towards the creation of employment to boost their financial capital. Section 64 of the Constitution spells that it is the right of every person to choose and carry on any profession, trade or occupation which should be regulated by law. In this instance, people go into street vending as a means to create the human, social, physical, and financial capital. Part XII of the third schedule of the Urban Councils Act 29:15 empowers the Urban Council institutions expressed by the SLF to make by-laws in relation to: the regulation and licensing of hawkers and street vendors and persons who employ or engage hawkers or street vendors as servants or agents; the prohibition, regulation or inspection of the goods which may be sold by street vendors; and the prohibition of the carrying on of business by street vendors except in specified areas. Hence, the urban local authorities in Zimbabwe brandish power to make by-laws as they may deem necessary to regulate the operations of vendors. It is upon such powers that the legal status of vendors is determined. Thus the council by-laws require all vendors to be registered. Registration is important in that the local authorities can then benefit from the taxes paid by the vending businesses. In the area of street vending, by-laws set standards in the provision of public goods and services provided by the street vendors and the expected manner of operations (Mitullah, 2003). They also enable the Local Authorities to collect revenue for payment of services such as refuse collection and management of vending sites (ibid). Again, the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act 14:33 provides for the establishment of the National Indigenisation and economic empowerment fund whose object is to provide finance for business start-ups, rehabilitation and expansion. The Ministry responsible for small to medium enterprises provide the human capital to vendors through capacitation with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge so that they will be able to start, manage and sustain their businesses. The legal framework is part of the institutional processes prescribed in the SLF to regulate the vending processes in Zimbabwe's urban cities. A review of Zimbabwe legislation demonstrates that the government through its decentralised systems (local authorities) put conditions on operations of vending and other small businesses. Human rights lawyers, as part of the institutions, therefore gain interest and become involved when they see and hear of vendors being victimised, as they move to quote relevant provisions of the legislation. Vendors in Zimbabwe are not just victims but at times perpetrators who may

be used by politicians to gain political mileage. Thus, street vendors have been used as machines to discredit the local government institutions as failing to manage the cities.

In Zimbabwe, a vendor not registered by the urban local authority is regarded as illegal and not allowed to operate. Illegal vendors are usually forced out of the street and evicted to create spaces in the pavements for pedestrians. Although the national constitution and statutes allow for vending activities in Zimbabwe, the council by-laws are not in tandem with the national pieces of legislation which further gives series of headaches to councils in their operations. These contradictions act as a liability to local governments who are expected to control and regulate the vending activities. For example, the indigenisation policy promotes street vending as an informal economy but the council by-laws prohibit any form of vending if not registered and not within the designated places. Therefore, when urban councils evict vendors from the streets, they do it in line with the legislation like the Urban Councils Act which empowers them to disallow vending in undesignated places. However, vendors have usually cried foul over the unequal application of laws where others have been treated as sacred cows against council by-laws. Roever and Skinner (2016) have noted that some vendors are relocated, but often to more marginal locations with low pedestrian footfall and/or inadequate facilities. Despite the existence of the law, its applicability on street vending in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired.

WHY STREET VENDING

The Zimbabwean economy has undergone earth-shattering structural inscrutability that has inevitably propelled the growth of informal sector (Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU) & Bankers Association of Zimbabwe (BAZ), 2014). The dwindling of the country's economy has resulted in many people struggling to meet the basic needs due to lack of the livelihoods assets which increased their vulnerability as described by the SLF. High poverty levels have intensified in urban areas and this has facilitated the burgeoning of the informal economy such as vending as an adaptation strategy to failing economies (Ndiweni, Mashonganyika, Ncub and Dube, 2014). This does not however compel that all street vendors are poor as others are rich. ZEPARU and BAZ (2014) compel that the economic crisis (2000-2008) resulted in company closures and the remaining companies were operating at low capacities which did not contain the escalating labour force from the

educational system. Ndiweni et al (2014) pointed out that de-industrialisation in Harare has inexplicably compelled many people into the informal economy since the formal economy was driven by unemployment and retrenchment. Since June 2015, unemployment caused by retrenchments has massed in Zimbabwe which created shocks that cut the pipeline for social investment in rural areas and as a result of lack of diversification of livelihoods. After losing employment, people lacked the resilience to bounce back and some of whom ended up in informal trading as an innovative way of earning a living. Those who lost employment added to the pool of the unemployed, amplifying the statistics of those succumbing to make ends meet, and hence street vending was found as the lasting alternate solution. In other words, the need for sanity in the cities of Zimbabwe was disturbed by the street vendors who blocked pathways. Therefore, the matter of street vending as a livelihood need to be highly considered in the sense that street vendors' work allows them to feed their families and pay their children's school fees (Efroymsen, 2015).

Consequentially, the economic paralysis scored high unemployment levels due to break down and massive closure of industries. Unemployment, low productivity in agriculture and the need to migrate to the urban to search for employment has forced millions of the youths in developing countries to engage in informal trade (Aryeetey, 2009) cited by Mramba (2015). Street vending is one such informal trade area that the urban inhabitants resorted in reply to the agony that they faced. In this regard, urban street vending is not only a source of employment but it provides affordable services to the majority of the urban poor (Timalsina, 2011) that enhances social capital. Zimbabwe's economic woes saw more than 50 companies lay off at least 6960 workers in 2014 alone according to the country's Retrenchment Board (Rusvingo, 2015). Socio-economic hardships in Zimbabwe have tightened over the past two years, driving thousands of Zimbabweans into the streets where they scarp for a living through vending (ibid). Mitullah (2014) further concur that most of street vendors had been driven into the streets due to landlessness, retrenchment and poverty. However, it could be arguably accurate to think that not all street vendors have been driven to the streets due to the hardships but rather they may be used by some mafia groups who seek to control the urban cities and towns.

Street vending has been accused to be a direct result of lack of education. Low levels of education affect the human capital base that involves lack of skills and knowledge to transform from vulnerability to a better state. In their research in Bulawayo metropolitan province, Ndiweni et al (2014: 4) found “that women tend to make up the greatest portion of the vendors in the informal sector since the majority lack formal education and skills because of a patriarchal nature of the society”. This means that there is a gender lens in street vending where among the social groups, mostly women run the street vending. Most of these women are youthful and of school going age whereas others are grown up to above 50 years. Across Africa, street vendors have indicated couple and elaborate reasons that have driven them into the streets: lack of space in the markets, lack of school fees, search for economic opportunity and income, strategic nature of street vending, family influence in form of supporting family member, entrepreneurship, lack of finance for larger business, evading taxation, orphan-hood, widowhood, low level of education and poverty (Mitullah, 2004). A study in Kathmandu in Nepal revealed that vending attracts those who have limited opportunities for obtaining formal employment or prestigious business, and minimizes chances of social exclusion and marginalisation (Timalsina, 2011). Although such research results deserve applause, it would be wise enough to question that besides the uneducated people in the streets, why are the university graduates vending in streets? Zimbabwe is at the pinnacle of the education system in Africa but her citizens are indubitably struggling on streets. Hence, this is a lucid symptom that although Zimbabwe has a pool of human capital, failure to absorb those graduates into their areas of specialisation for employment is one such magnetic factor which exerts force for people of Zimbabwe to sell in the streets. In its commercial essence selling is not wrong, yet what brings critical enquiry are the reasons for and the outcome of it in informal sector. Viewing it from another lens, before street vendors cry foul, they also need to follow the prescribed legal procedures and do their vending in designated places made by local government in Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, street vending in Zimbabwe’s urban areas is not only undertaken by the poor people but also some better off ones who see business opportunities in street vending. In cities like Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru there are cross boarder traders who import items like clothing, blankets, kitchen ware and many other forms of hardware from neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique. Such kinds of traders have paid the

university fees for their children and others have even built their own accommodation in the Zimbabwean cities. Cross border trading is linked to street vending which greatly helps business endeavours to improve the livelihoods of people. In a study conducted by Njaya (2014) in Harare, following factors were identified as promoting Street Vending: quick and easy avenue to earn subsistence income; social system for the under-privileged urban dwellers; failure to find jobs in the formal economy; response to known demand from customers who prefer open-air environment of shopping; low barriers to entry which makes street vending a refuge occupation; easy accessibility and low initial capital requirements; more flexible and/or attractive employment option than wage work; no overhead costs of rentals, rates and sometimes licensing fees; flexibility of working hours allows women to fulfil their household care chores; redundancies or retrenchments caused mainly by economic crisis; and retirement. Regardless of such, street vending continues to provide an essential livelihood for many (Efroymson, 2015).

The Zimbabwe Agenda For Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) was crafted to achieve sustainable development and social equity anchored on indigenisation, empowerment and employment creation largely propelled by the judicious exploitation of the country's abundant human and natural resources (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). Some of the key result areas outlined in ZimAsset include employment creation. However, about some years down the line since ZimAsset was crafted it is extremely astounding why many people continue losing jobs day by day. Some antecedents of indigenisation programme are best considered as a populist ideology or vortex of suspicion with regards to economic transformation. Such programmes are greeted with desperate dispute. The provisions in the constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) and other parliamentary enactments are not fully put into move by local authorities as important institutions in vending especially with regard to vending. According to the SLF, such institutional processes have an impact on street vending which hinges vendors' livelihoods through crafting of policies that may in other words hinder effective operation of the vendors. From both social and economic protection perspective, street vending is driven by the need for people to support themselves and their families in order to meet the basic needs like education, health, nutrition and capacity to work. Harnessing constructs from functionalist perspective, the phenomenon of vending is inevitable component in Zimbabwean society. It is one such means that people can obtain the

social, financial, physical, personal and human assets as provisioned in the SLF. Muzingili (2015) argues that addressing socio-economic problems in Africa requires the adoption of macro-deterministic dimension that will bring social and futuristic change dimensions. Street vending as sub-system within main economic framework in Zimbabwe demonstrates an asymmetric failure of overall macro-economic performance. Thus, street vending entry points vary from social circumstances that hit people to the failure of economies of a country though not forgetting the other multiplicity of factors that may perpetuate the existence of street vending. For example, it is important to note that some vendors in the urban cities sell wares from the formal businesses as a strategy to run away from the taxes. Also, in the streets, items on sell are usually readily available for the pedestrians to buy hence a cheap way to move with business.

STREET VENDING AS A LIVELIHOOD

Using a DFID (1999) report Murray (2002) defines a livelihood as “Comprising the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living”, (p.154)’, cited by Assan and Chambers (2014: 2144). The informal economy is a livelihood strategy because it enables people to make a living (Mugisha, 2000, cited in Ndiweni et al, 2014). Mitullah (2004) propounds that people engaged in vending are bread winners taking care of large families that include dependants. Assan and Chambers (2014) quote Rakodi (2002) who regards urban livelihoods as being particularly complex with poorer people being “more dependent on cash incomes and often [lacking] access to common property resources, such as water and fuel, that are found in rural areas”, (p. 37). Lack of access to resources increases the levels of vulnerability of urban inhabitants. Street vending contributes 7% to the national gross domestic product (GDP) in South Africa and generates 22% of the total employment in the South Africa (Davies and Thurlow, 2010 cited by Gamielien and Niekerk, 2017). As an activity to make a living as ascribed by the DFID livelihood framework, street vending needs to be looked into from the perspective of helping the urban residents. Ndiweni et al (2014) thus opined that urban authorities should not take street vending as an illegal and unproductive sector but as an important livelihood securing sector. From the lens of the SLF, the insight is the realisation that while economic growth may be essential for poverty reduction, there is not an automatic relationship between the two since it all depends on the capabilities of the poor to take advantage of expanding

economic opportunities (Krantz, 2001). Therefore, vendors see street vending as an opportunity for work and employment in the urban areas and take street vending as an earning opportunity and an opportunity to provide livelihoods to dependent family members (Timalsina, 2011).

A study carried out in South Africa substantiates that hawking, synonymous to street vending, offered the means for survival (Gamieldien and Niekerk, 2017). The Herald (2015) confirms of a story where the Zimbabwe Vendors Union National Director said that “we ask government not to chase us because this is how we are able to feed our families. Our lives are in the streets and we make a living from selling”. In another report, Chitumba and Masara (2015) in Chronicle reported that ‘in Bulawayo, illegal vendors ... took a stance to defy the government directive to leave the streets, arguing that vending was their only source of income and have nowhere to go’. The move taken by vendors to resist from vacating the city centres indicates to some extent the lack of enforcement of the legislation regarding vending. Writers add that in Gweru, the ultimatum galvanised the vendors into action as they scrambled for vendor marts from the local authority. Krantz (2001) viewed poverty as not just a question of low income, but also includes the dimension of a state of vulnerability and feelings of powerlessness in general. It is this vulnerability that the SLF expresses as a shock since the street vendors lack freedom in conducting their business. Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA)’s first national vice president in Bulawayo city said that vending and informal trade is the only source of livelihoods for many people in the city since the closure of many industries (ibid). One of the street vendors in the city of Bulawayo raised that they would not adhere to the deadline to leave streets for designated place unless and until they were guaranteed of steady jobs (Radio Dialogue, 2015). Such media reports reveal the extent to which street vending is affected as noted from both the independent and state media speaking almost the same tone. To make matters worse, the local authorities in Zimbabwe have little space, if any, to put vendors to sell their wares. Lack of the physical assets therefore affects the operations of vendors who further get disadvantaged due to lack of space and hence opt for the pavements in the city centres. To strengthen their capacity, vendors associations and groups as institutions have been formulated in Zimbabwe to protect the vendors against any mistreatment. However, some vendor associations have been formed to create parallel systems that on one hand move the political agenda. Thus,

vendors have been a special tool to spearhead the political agendas since each had a political affiliation in one way or the other. In some instances, those owning formal trading shops in the heart of cities took their products to street vendors who sold wares on their behalf as a strategy to boost business. The aspect of street vending as a livelihood is depicted in the incomes earned by the vendors which they avail towards meeting life demands. Money obtained from street vending is invested into more other business with some being remitted back home.

Zimbabwean local government's role and attitudes in controlling urban street vending

In Zimbabwe, local governments represented by urban councils have the power to make and enforce legislation that affects the vendors' operations. Despite having the role of provision of the necessary services, local governments need to provide spaces for the street vendors' business to thrive. They also provide the licensing services and have to make sure that where vendors operate the environment is clean. Thus urban councils have employed the council police who enforce the by-laws made by the local authority councillors (policy makers). Ward councillors are there to provide an oversight role over the implementation of the regulations by the employees of the council. In this instance, local government becomes about local decision making, planning, financing, implementation, monitoring, accountability and management of local development processes that do not rest only on the powers, resources and actions of local government but also important space and roles given to other actors and citizens to participate (Ndlovu, 2011). Vendors, in other words, are other players in service provision and development framework. Hence, it is the local government's role to ensure that street vendors conduct their vending within the confines of the law.

Although street vending is allowed according to the Zimbabwean statutes like urban Councils Act, the attitudes of local governments in Zimbabwe towards street vendors have been negative. The actions taken by local governments through confiscation of vendors' wares have polarised the relations, further creating tensions leading to cat-rat relationships between local government and vendors. Though local governments have justifiable reasons for removing vendors from the streets, their failure to provide adequate spaces and necessary material has lent them to be a point of criticism and indication of governance ills from the public's eye.

Street vending is a basic alternative to act as a tax base for the local government in Zimbabwe. If well regulated, taxes remitted by the street vendors to council can boost the income levels and financial muscle. However, most vendors in Zimbabwe have been operating informally and have failed to pay taxes to councils, rendering them illegal. There is however a strong need for the urban councils to further develop, upgrade and expand the vending spaces to attract more taxes from the vendors. However, councils have also failed to come up with the strategic means to obtain taxes from the street vendors and they lost a lot of potential finances into the coffers of council. Eviction has been a proposed and implemented solution by urban local authorities in Zimbabwe. Though legally justifiable, the politically motivated moves have always been acted against council. There was friction between the central government and local government in terms of how to resolve the issues of evicting street vendors and politicisation of street vending have been at its heights. After some time of eviction, the street vendors went back to the streets to sell their wares. For example, a survey by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) indicated that some errant vendors were not ready to vacate the streets (Report Focus News, 2018). This time, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, had given a 24 hour reprieve to all vendors in the country. Although vendors lost their wares, they did not give up operating illegally in the streets. On the same note, Butawo (2018) reports that vendors have resisted against the cops and they retaliated by beating the cops who tried to evict them from the streets of Harare city. Such media reports reveal the high tension between local governments who are overwhelmed to control the activities of street vending in urban councils. However, the law abiding street vendors have always been free from harassment from local authority police officers. Therefore, the issue of street vending requires commitments from the central and local governments to control and regulate the activities to create a balance between the needs of street vendors and the service provision and development focus of urban local authorities. By-laws need to be developed with the knowledge of vendors and also be implemented within the confines of the Urban Councils Act among other local government legislation.

THREATS TO STREET VENDING IN URBAN AREAS OF ZIMBABWE

For the purpose of this paper, threats refer to the external imminent dangers that street vending is exposed to in Zimbabwe's urban. As expressed by the SLF, street vending is prone

to some shocks that impinge its success in Zimbabwe as they lack security. Street vendors trade in a number of commodities in different locations of cities and provide a variety of services (Mitullah, 2003). In recent years many threats affected vendors which darkened the future of vending. The time is termed 'era of darkness' because it is a time when street vending as a livelihood has undergone great negative transformation in recognition and support from the eyes of socio-economic, political and operating environment, though some street vendors benefited somehow since they have their political agendas. With the remorseless poverty bedeviling Zimbabwe left, right and centre (Rusvingo, 2015) it becomes crucial to interrogate the threats meeting street vendors in their daily business. On another note, it would be very questionable why vendors went into the city centre. This however could have been on the logic that vendors wanted to attract attention of the city travellers and pedestrians so that they buy their wares and services.

In Zimbabwe's urban, street vendors face legal barriers in their economic activities. Mitullah (2003) opines that, "*research in Zimbabwe shows that many street vendors are unaware of the existence of by-laws, and have no access to them, while others know but choose to ignore them*", (Mitullah, 2003: 11). On the same note, street vendors across Africa are disadvantaged in the areas of legal, regulatory and policy Environment (Mitullah, 2004). In Zimbabwe the laws guarding the informal sector has a blind eye towards recognising vendors. In 2015, vendors were accused of lack of compliance to the law and were regarded as 'illegal' operators. However, whether registered or not, vendors still faced threats on how they were supposed to operate. Urban local authorities failed to walk the talk in meeting what is in their by-laws. The directive offered by the minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing to vacate streets in June 2015 largely upset street vendors in Zimbabwe's urban. Murwira (2015) in the Herald outlines that illegal vendors in cities and towns have been ordered off the streets within seven days or risk arrest as Government moved in to restore normalcy in urban areas. Whilst it is good for the urban councils to restore sanity in the cities, the directive has come as an abrupt instruction to vendors since most of them faced negative consequences like loss of their business items and their ultimate fall. In other words, because of the aspect of unionisation of street vendors, there could be some politically motivated linkages of street vending. A study carried out in New Delhi, India indicated that vendors stated that if the government were to attempt to stop them from operating they would

actively seek out some form of political action or protest (Assan and Chambers, 2014), a similar scenario is in Zimbabwe's urban areas.

Street vending business as a livelihood for the urban inhabitants in Zimbabwe is facing some political accusations. The state media in Zimbabwe was able to outline that the vendors found backup and were funded by the opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change(MDC) and countries like Britain. The private media labelled such accusations as mere political moves to extend political muscles into street vending. Njaya (2014) confirms that there was partisan allocation of flea market sites as well as selection of the vendors where certain areas were known to be for either Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front(ZANU-PF)or MDC-T. Chimedza (2015) in the Herald wrote that 'Two Western nations have been fingered in funding of resistance efforts by illegal vendors who have been ordered to move out of Harare streets to designate vending sites across the city. The move is meant to foment political cataclysm in the country pursuant to the illegal regime change agenda.'Related story of accusing Britain and America funding vendors union, which is regarded as pro-opposition political party is found in another state newspaper, the Chronicle as indicated by Mataire (2015). In this regard those street vendors who lack political muscle succumb to terrorisation. It is very pathetic to issue that every sector of the economy in Zimbabwe is usually politicised and are used as platforms to translate political agendas by the existing political parties. As such, provision of support to street vendors is rendered with partiality and divisibility which are against the principles of public administration and leadership as enshrined in Zimbabwean constitution. Hence, this shows that there is debatably lack of good governance in Zimbabwean local authorities. Therefore, indivisibility and impartiality in provision of services to the urban residents in general and street vendors in particular can properly transform the lives of many Zimbabweans.

Whilst the urban local authorities insisted that vendors were operating from streets on illegal basis, exchange of blows became inevitable as vendors saw the local authorities as adversaries. The Herald (2015) confirmed the words by the Zimbabwe Vendors Union National Director who said that 'we are peaceful vendors who just want to be heard by the relevant authorities. We will not move until they finish constructing alternative vending sites for us'. Again, Ruwende (2015) reports in the herald, state newspaper about vendors in

Harare city that ‘vendors told the herald that they were willing to move to a designated site, but there was no infrastructure and ablution facilities’. It is the council’s responsibility to provide the required infrastructure at the vending sites (ibid). Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA) in Bulawayo said the government should first look for proper vending marts before evicting (Chitumba and Masara 2015). From such a backdrop, urban local authorities have their own flaws, just as street vendors who also fail to abide to council bylaws. To enhance implementation of by-laws, local authorities are obliged to provide proper infrastructure for the vendors. While secure sites for operations remains a major pre-requisite of street trade, research from most African cities points out that very few cities have planned sites for vending (Mitullah, 2004). This remains a peril to street vendors in that the local authorities are failing to provide them with required infrastructure and at the same time they are casted out of the streets. For those vendors who were registered they were taken to places outside the cities where there were no proper facilities like toilets and shades.

Attacks from the municipal and state police were inevitable in urban local authorities in Zimbabwe. Chiripasi (2015) in a report filled to Voice of America (VOA) released that municipal police destroyed market stalls and allegedly looted some vendors’ wares. Ruwende (2015) similarly reported in the Herald that ‘there was chaos in Harare yesterday when municipal police pulled down illegal vendors’ tents and tables to force them off the streets, but their action was in vain as the traders were back on the streets and pavements within hours. This happened within the city centre in a bid to create sanity. Matenga (2015) in News Day gives a highlight about vendors being beaten and having their wares burnt by the municipal police in the city of Harare. Njaya (2014) confirms that the majority of unlicensed vendors in Harare city complained about raids and confiscations of their food and cooking pots by both the national and the municipal police. Such threats were more intense in Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare. Mbanje (2015) shared that vendors affiliated to the Zimbabwe Informal Sector’s Organisation (ZISO) were preparing to take the then first Lady Grace Mugabe to court for taking their goods confiscated by authorities at border posts and from their trading places’. In this regard, confiscation of wares for street vendors appeared to be more as a politically motivated agenda.

CONCLUSION

A review of the current literature exposed the major threats that street vending as a livelihood for the urban inhabitants is undergoing in recent years. The evictions of street vendors occurred at the heart of the cities in Zimbabwe. Street vending largely developed from the economic slump that hit Zimbabwe. Other factors that engineered street vending revolve around poverty, retrenchments and unemployment, and desire to fulfil human basic needs. The legal framework in Zimbabwe is weak in terms of implementation to meet the basic requirements of the urban inhabitants who end up in streets but unfortunately kicked away by the local authorities. Vendors have been accused of operating illegally, seeking to pursue political agendas, and causing disorder and lack of sanity in cities. Other threats involve street vendors losing their wares to municipal and state police, destruction of their places of operation and lack of protection. The situation of street vendors has then raised a mass of unanswered questions with reference to livelihoods of the urban areas. Therefore the paper concludes that though the economic crises and unemployment drove people into street vending, the mist around street vendors and street vending have some political manifestations that the politicians take advantage of to pursue their agendas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After the review of the current literature pertaining to threats to street vending as a livelihood for the urban inhabitants, authors have arrived to the following recommendations:

The government of Zimbabwe is encouraged to craft and implement clear, specific and succinct urban pro-poor legislation that can recognise, protect and support the informal sector in general and street vendors in particular and consider vending as an income generating activity. Also, the government is encouraged to engage in dialogue with the street vendors rather than making draconian and unfriendly legal impositions that spill into friction that distort relations. Again, there is need for the government to enforce the ethical infrastructure which has demised in the country. This can assist reducing unethical practices like bribes and other corrupt and illegal practices by the municipal and state police. In other words, the government needs to educate people about the laws of the country.

Local authorities as at the heart of social service provision and as law makers in terms of bylaws and policies, they need to fully allow the involvement and participation of street vendors. Again, urban local authorities need to observe conflict management strategies so as to prevent provocation of ironic relations with the street vendors, which may further strain resources of council by dragging each other to courts of law. Any by-laws and any related legislation and policies crafted have to be taken to the affected people. Whatever is done for or against vendors, local authorities are advised to follow the legal procedures, putting into consideration the circumstances under which people live so as to reduce harm and pain, and to increase happiness. Also, with reference to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, Local Authorities need to engage in building capital for the residents so as to create livelihoods that may not discard sanity in the councils.

As the ones affected, street vendors are advised to follow the legal procedures in their operations. Where there is likeliness of misunderstandings, street vendors have to call for peaceful means of resolving issues before they spill into flames that no one would wish to confront. Vendors have to increase and strengthen their representation in terms of vendor associations that speak with one voice.

Media is a major stakeholder that can assist exposing the threats under which street vendors are undergoing. In doing so, the media needs to take a neutral position and without bias or fever. Media is encouraged to take important aspects from the authorities to all stakeholders and reverse. For example, their presence in urban council meetings as enshrined in Urban Councils Act 29:15 can be of importance. Media can also probe for some issues that need clear understanding between street vendors and the authorities.

Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) NGOs involved in advocacy and human rights issues need to strengthen their capacity and also focus on threats befalling street vendors without fear or favour. Active civil society organisations and groups are required so as to assist vendors in lobbying for or against issues affecting them.

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