


Social inclusion of street vendors in Harare: Challenges and opportunities

**Author:**Conrad Chibango^{1,2} **Affiliations:**

¹Department of Philosophy of Religion, School of Heritage and Education, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

²Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Conrad Chibango,
cchibango@gmail.com

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Zimbabwe's unending socioeconomic crisis has led to the flooding of informal street vendors in its urban areas, a development that has led to incessant clashes between the street vendors and the local authorities. Literature has shown that street vending is a global phenomenon and its problems could be addressed through best practices of inclusivity. This study examined the situation of informal street vendors in Harare in the light of social inclusion. It also made use of insights from Pope Francis regarding World Popular Movements. Data were collected through focus group discussions comprising six informal street vendors operating in Harare as its participants. Findings revealed that informal street vendors in Harare faced many structural challenges, one of which included operating in contested spaces characterised by violent evictions from vending sites, bribery and power struggles. Results also showed that street vendors lacked access to bank loans, information, and even the power to influence policies which directly affected them. Based on these findings, it was argued that the informal street vendors were socially excluded and needed to be integrated into the economic fabric of the urban society. This social inclusion process was considered as only possible if local authorities adopted an inclusive approach to policymaking. This would entail involving the street vendors when crafting policies that directly affect them. It was recommended that Harare City Council regularises street vending, aligns its by-laws to the National Constitution, and that it also formulates inclusive policies.

Contribution: The article makes a contribution towards the promotion of an inclusive society whereby everyone has equal access to social and economic opportunities.

Keywords: informal street vendors; social inclusion; social exclusion; World Popular Movements; Harare.

'... nothing can be christened to be for us without us.' (Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation [VISET] 2018a)

Background

This is an empirical study which, in view of social inclusion, examines the situation of street vendors in Harare in the post-Mugabe era. In this article, 'street vendor' refers to a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having any permanent built-up structure from which to sell (Bhowmik 2005) such that she or he operates in the streets and other related public places (Bromley 2000). A street vendor is informal insofar as she or he is not part of the formal economy. The relationship between street vendors and Harare City Council has often been characterised by misunderstandings and violent evictions, sometimes triggered by directives given by the Central Government's Ministry of Local Government (Kadirire 2018; Nehanda Radio 2018). While the evictions might have been carried out on the grounds of public health and order, street vendors complained of violation of their constitutional rights to livelihood and human dignity, also the violent manner in which they were evicted (The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment [No. 20] Act 2013 n.d.; VISET 2018b). Against this background, this study sought to consider the challenges and opportunities of informal street vendors regarding their social inclusion in the urban society of Harare.

The proliferation of street vendors in cities, resulting in problems related to urban space and the arising conflicts between the street vendors and authorities, is a common global phenomenon, and especially in developing countries (May 2005; Nduna 1990). However, this trade is commonly considered as operating outside normal legal regimes (Hays-Mitchell 1994), and a host of negative characteristics such as congestion, health and safety risks, tax evasion, and the sale of shoddy merchandise are associated with it (Bromley 2000). Vendors are also blamed for violation of zoning codes and non-compliance with labour codes and tax liabilities (Hays-Mitchell 1994). In response to this image of street vendors, city authorities tend to limit vending activities by

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adopting policies that Bromley (2000:12) describes as 'containment' – a complex mix of persecution, tolerance, regulation and promotion. The 'containment' approach is also implied by Mkhize, Dube and Skinner (2013) who established that in Durban, South Africa, street vendors lacked access to both basic amenities and the infrastructure necessary to do business and they operated in a predominantly hostile state. In Accra, Ghana, Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008) discovered that most of the vendors were continuously on the run because of constant harassment, assault and seizure of goods by metropolitan authorities and other users of the city space. Skinner (2008) propounded an inclusive approach to street trading whereby city planners should also consider the street vendors in urban space planning since they provided important goods and services to urban residents and especially the poor. Kumar (2012) advocated for a collaborative and inclusive design and development process that involved consultation between town authorities and association of vendors regarding the designated sites, services and licensing. In view of these problems in Africa, literature generally suggests that city authorities should adopt consultative approaches instead of confrontational ones in order to effectively address the problem of street vendors (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah 2008; Mkhize et al. 2013).

In Zimbabwe, while scholars have generally argued for the formulation of policies that are accommodative to the operation of street vendors, authorities have generally taken a restrictive approach. Zimbabwe's continuously deteriorating socioeconomic conditions have forced many to resort to vending in the urban centres of Zimbabwe (Connell 2017; Kadirire 2018; Ndoro-Mkombachoto 2018; Masawi et al. 2023). As Nyaya (2014) observed, street vendors constitute one-third of the population and about 100 000 are believed to be in Harare. They generate average annual revenue of US\$3.96 billion (Connell 2017). Arguments have been raised for the regularisation of the informal economy, street vending included, not only in order to promote development since it provided job creation, but also to increase the country's tax base (Connell 2017; Mazhambe 2017; Musarurwa 2018). However, quite often, they have been referred to as a public nuisance since they occupy public places illegally (Mazhambe 2017), and have been associated with the dirt, health hazard and disorderliness that ensues (Ndoro-Mkombachoto 2018). State-sponsored operations such as Operation Murambatsvina (drive out filth) of 2005, which resulted in the displacement of many poor people in Zimbabwe's major cities, street vendors included (Musoni 2010), were a result of viewing such groups of people as illegal and filthy. In their recent publication, Bhila and Chiwenga (2023) bemoaned that informal street vendors in Zimbabwe were being treated in a way reminiscent of the discrimination that blacks suffered under the colonial structures. The colonial system ensured that the minority white group was fully integrated into the country's economy while the black majority was generally marginalised, thereby creating an enclave economy (Kanyenze et al. 2011). Policy makers in Zimbabwe have not ensured the social

integration of the informal street vendors (Bhila & Chiwenga 2023), despite the fact that they are invested with the power to do so. However, problems associated with street vendors do not just demand city planners alone but also socio-economic practitioners who can also come up with answers regarding how best opportunities for the urban poor can be created (Mutami 2015; Skinner 2008).

Conceptual frameworks

Social inclusion

This article is informed by the conceptual framework of social inclusion. Social inclusion, also referred to as social integration refers to:

[T]he process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity. (UN Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration 2008:2)

The opposite of social inclusion would be social exclusion, and this notion is critical for understanding social inclusion. It was developed in Europe in the 1980s, whereby policies were deliberately designed to cater for those who were considered to be marginalised (Khan, Combaz & McAslan 2015). The concept was then adopted in development discourses as one of the means for reducing inequalities in societies as well as fighting poverty, and especially in developing countries. While the notion of social exclusion is a social concept whose meaning has remained contested (Silver 1994), scholars tend to agree that it is a multidimensional notion that refers to various interlinked deprivations such as lack of access to employment, finance, markets and political voice (Khan et al. 2015). These tenets of social exclusion are also implied in the definition by Amartya Sen, which is, hereby, summarised by Khan et al. (2015):

Social exclusion can thus be seen as a process leading to a state in which it is more difficult for certain individuals and groups to achieve certain 'functionings'. The impossibility of reaching a functioning leads to a state of deprivation, and the 'state' of social exclusion can be defined as a combination of deprivations. (p. 4)

The notion can also be simply understood as referring to 'ways in which individuals may become cut off from full involvement in the wider society' (Sociology Guide: A Student Guide to Sociology 2023:1). The social inclusion of street vendors, therefore, would mean identifying and eliminating all the ways that inhibit the street vendors from fully participating in wider society of Harare and promoting the values of equality and human dignity.

The World Popular Movements approach

This article has also borrowed insights from the World Popular Movements, an approach propounded by Pope Francis. World Popular Movements are generally those leaders who have been meeting with Pope Francis since 2014 in an effort to find solutions to their common problems, namely regarding land, work and housing (*Tierra, Trabajo and Techno* in Spanish, also referred to as the '3Ts') (Smith 2015). They consist of poor

and vulnerable people from different social, cultural and religious backgrounds across the globe, inclusive of those experiencing many forms of exclusion and injustice in workplaces and neighbourhoods, the homeless, landless, the unemployed and various unions (Iglesias-y-Mineria 2016; Pope Francis 2015:1–2). For Pope Francis, World Popular Movements is capable of bringing change that promotes an inclusive society (Pope Francis 2014). The following three main factors stand out regarding this approach:

- Underprivileged communities need space to solve their own problems since it is them who know best the situation that bedevils them. As such, the approach condemns a tendency to conceive social policies 'as a policy *for* the poor but never *with* the poor, never *of* the poor'.
- The right to land, work and housing is threatened by basic terrorism such as state terrorism, which causes fear among the vulnerable.
- Answers to the problems lie in dialogue and the promotion of integral human development (Pope Francis 2016).

The World Popular Movements approach is insightful to this study and especially because it speaks to the street vendors' need for work space, among some of their needs.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature as it attempted to acquire an in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon (Myburgh & Poggnepoel 2007) of street vendors in Harare. Data used in this article were acquired through focus group discussions held in a venue conducive for participants to freely express their views (Hammersley 2013). The group consisted of six participants (four males and two females) purposively selected informal street vendors operating in various parts of the Harare. Acquired data were classified in terms of emerging themes and then analysed in the light of the reviewed literature and the conceptual frameworks of both social inclusion and World Popular Movements. The analysis was done in view of establishing the social relevance of this research (Hammersley 2013). The researcher also acquired ethical clearance from a registered vendors' association to which the FGD participants were affiliated.

Challenges and opportunities of Harare street vendors

Informal street vendors operating in the City of Harare come from all walks of life as they compete to provide a variety of goods and services in the country's capital. This City Council, the local government for the Capital City of Zimbabwe, is mandated to provide services to the residents of Harare. Some of these services include: provision of clean drinking water, refuse collection, housing as well as accommodation, and even health services (City of Harare 2020). There are both female and male street vendors of various ages. Also in the mix are 'junior street vendors', children below age of 18. Among the street vendors are also people living with disability, inclusive of the lame, deaf, dumb and the blind. While street vending was a trade considered as only there to

supplement salaries, things have since changed because of the current socioeconomic crisis in the country, as this trade has become the main form of income for many families in Harare. Many unemployed young people, including university graduates, have resorted to street vending in order to earn some income while hopefully waiting for better opportunities to arise. Findings from the FGD revealed that the street vending trade in the City of Harare comes with several challenges but few opportunities for social inclusion.

Challenges

Street vendors in Harare face many structural challenges, which makes it very difficult for them to operate. Vending space is contested and the designated places are not only inadequate but also lack proper amenities. Female street vendors also face their own challenges and so do informal street vendors living with disability. Lack of access to loans and failure to consult on the part of the city authorities are some of the challenges faced by informal street vendors. Street vending sites are also drug havens, a development which further tarnishes the image of a trade already considered as illegal.

Contested spaces

Street vending space in Harare is associated with several challenges related to by-laws and forced evictions. The local authorities expect street vendors to operate at designated sites, usually located near bus and taxi terminuses or ranks. Customers in the Central Business District of Harare usually find it convenient to purchase goods and services close to the taxi ranks where they get transport to travel back home after work. Vendors compete to get these customers. Wherever there is a taxi rank, street vendors are also there. However, not all taxi ranks have designated street vending sites and yet street vendors still operate there. This poses a problem with the City authorities who consider such sites as illegal, in terms of the by-laws. The taxi rank at corner Jason Moyo and Ruzende Streets, for instance, is not a designated market place or vending site, according to the Harare City Council by-laws. Street vendors operate there illegally. Copacabana, Fourth Street and Market Square are among the designated market places where vending is permissible.

Operating at undesignated vending sites attracts the attention of the city municipal police who usually react by raiding and arresting the vendors and confiscating their goods. Arrested vendors prefer to pay bribes to the law enforcement agents who willingly accept them. The raids have become so common in the capital city that the relationship between both the municipal police and the vendors now resembles that of 'cat and mouse' – as the municipal police frequently chase after the street vendors. The municipal police sometimes operate jointly with the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), and especially when they carry out forced evictions. In order to ambush the street vendors, the law enforcement agents sometimes operate in plain clothes, making it difficult for the street vendors to escape the wrath of operating illegally. For the informal street

vendors, paying bribes to these law enforcement officers is no longer an option, as one participant narrated:

'We are forced to bribe them because it is more cost-effective than following the legal route. If I am arrested, it means spending a night or two in custody. By the time I am released, I will have made a loss if my goods are perishable and also because of time lost. Most of the times, we flee these raids, leaving our goods unattended and we run a loss if police confiscate them. I actually find it cost-effective to pay them a bribe. Paying a bribe of USD5 is better than losing goods valued at USD100.' (FGD Participant No. 3, male vendor, aged 35)

Female street vendors who bring their children to vending sites are hard-hit by the sudden raids and arrests such that some have given up on vending in order to safeguard their children. They find it difficult to manage their babies during police raids. Some keep their babies in cardboard boxes while others have the legs of their toddlers tied and leashed to their market tables for easy monitoring. This becomes a challenge when there are raids as they cannot easily escape the municipal police.

Furthermore, informal street vendors operating in suburbs and other locations in Harare have become easy preys to law enforcement agents who frequently show up to take bribes even when they are not on duty. In Eastlea North, for instance, local law enforcement officers show up about twice a week to claim US\$5 for each table on the streets of this neighbourhood. Some participants in the FGD felt that the local authorities are, apparently, more interested in enforcing their outdated by-laws than aligning them to the Constitution of Zimbabwe, a move that would otherwise help regularise the informal street vending trade because the Constitution recognises everyone's right to work and pursue a livelihood of their own choice.

Power struggles to control vending sites have also limited access to vending space by vendors. The market at Mupedzanhano, for instance, has been long closed, allegedly because of power struggles between some political muscles and the Harare City Council authorities. The Park Street market, a stretch between Nelson Mandela and Jason Moyo Avenues, was recently closed, allegedly because the street vendors refused to close the market in order to go and attend a political rally organised by the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). In Mbare, for instance, only members of ZANU-PF may operate in certain market places. Furthermore, street vendors also lack social protection and especially if they do not have a union of their own. As a result, they become victims of what one participant referred to as 'enemies of formalisation'. These are people, usually aligned to some political party, that dismiss the importance of operating in a formal way and claim to offer 'security' for vending tables or spaces. This practice is mostly common at the market in Mbare. Some market places are controlled by self-imposed middlemen who take-over the sale of goods from vendors or farmers and then proceed to dictate the prices of those goods. Such people are referred to as *magombiro* and they commonly

operate in Mbare where potatoes and other farm produce are sold, as well as at the flower market at Africa Unit Square.

Lack of access to bank loans

Street vendors find it difficult to access loans from the banking sector because they do not usually have anything for collateral. Most of them do not have the necessary requirements such as a functional bank accounts in order to access bank loans. According to some participants, running local currency account, also referred to as Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), is not feasible in terms of savings, owing to the intermittently fluctuating and high inflation. Instead, street vendors prefer to convert the money they earn in local currency to the stable USD currency. Loans are ideal for the street vendors as they enable them to order their goods in bulk and make more profit.

In addition, if loans were at their disposal, street vendors would have been in a position to rent up-front market spaces which are usually expensive at first but have quick high-returns. Since public market places offered by the local authorities are inadequate, vendors are forced to seek assistance from land barons. These are people who own or claim to own private market spaces. However, the rentals of these land barons are too expensive for many vendors such that operating in the streets remains their only alternative. At Shasha Mall, for instance, located at corner Speke Avenue and Chinhoyi Street, a table space costs US\$80 per month, a structure or tent costs US\$7 a day, while self-imposed advertisers charge US\$4 per day. Furthermore, the privatisation of markets in the city has also made it a difficult venture for many poor and unemployed. Front markets are usually privately owned and can cost about US\$1200 per month. The Fourways Mall, a public-private-partnership (PPP) entity run by both the Harare City Council and Fourways, is one such market that is too expensive for an ordinary street vendor. Many vendors, most of whom have no access to finance, therefore, end up preferring to operate in the streets.

Poor amenities

Designated market places are not only few but also have poor amenities, a risky situation in terms of public health and sanitation. There are no proper facilities at many designated market places. Sites such as the Coca-Cola Flea Market, corner Seke Road and Dieppe Avenue are operating in dusty conditions without any pavement. Other market sites do not have proper ablution facilities and running water. Such challenges lead to a chain of problems related to public health. In particular, these public market places can be a haven for cholera and dysentery outbreaks. Participants observed that market places with poor amenities discourage customers from visiting them.

People living with disability

People living with disability who are into the informal street vending trade have their own particular challenges. The

existing structures are not favourable for those with mobility challenges. For instance, public toilets and even other public places do not have any ramps for easy access by those living with mobility challenges. Council offices do not have any disability desk to attend to street vendors living with disability. The deaf and dumb, in particular, find it difficult to communicate their issues when they approach council premises, for instance, in order to claim their confiscated goods. Blind street vendors are assisted to market places by their children, even if the children may be of school-going age, a situation that creates concerns regarding the education of their children.

Drug trafficking

Drug trafficking at vending places is a cause for concern as it will negatively impact on the trade itself as people may shun the vending markets. Participants in this research expressed concern that some market places have become drug havens. Some street vendors, unfortunately, are into selling drugs, which are supplied by high-profile and politically connected persons. At face value, these street vendors run a normal vending business such as that of selling clothing, while behind the scene, they major in selling drugs. In the process, some street vendors have also become drug addicts. One recently elected councillor of the Harare City Council is allegedly a drug lord and is behind the supply of drugs in the ward he represents. Police are also allegedly involved as they arrest those into drug trafficking and release them without charge. Image-wise, this is bad news for the street vending trade which is already viewed as illegal.

Lack of access to information

There are virtually no awareness programmes deliberately targeted at those into informal trade and, in particular, street vendors. Awareness programmes on topics such as voters' education, drug abuse and outbreaks such as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) are rarely targeted at street vendors. Moreover, street vendors also lose opportunities because of the language barrier. Econet Wireless, for instance, has a programme called Dura, which offers savings in the USD, a more stable currency than the local one, but very few street vendors are aware of such a facility because of the way it is packaged. As one participant put it, there is a need:

'... to decolonise the language' so that ordinary people can easily access information on such empowering programmes. (FGD Participant No. 1, male vendor, aged 27)

Lack of consultation

Findings also revealed that some of the challenges of trading as a street vendor are exacerbated by lack of consultation on the part of the local authorities. Harare City Council has, in the past, provided wrong solutions to problems that could have been easily solved through consultation with vendors themselves. The Coventry Bay, which was well-constructed, has since turned out to be a

white elephant because there is no market and no vendors showed up to trade there. The same applies to the vending site constructed in Warren Park, along Bulawayo Road. Despite the fact that the site is well-tarred, there is no market to attract vending activity. All this could have been avoided had authorities involved the street vendors in the planning phases.

Opportunities

Despite all these challenges, there are also opportunities as Harare City Council has recently improved in terms of consultation and decentralisation of market places. Progressive associations are lobbying for the Harare City Council to align its by-laws with the New Constitution of Zimbabwe so that street vendors' right to livelihood is protected. The new policy on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was also a product of wide consultation in which vendors partook. The Harare City Council has also been, of late, inviting vendors to participate in the budget consultation meetings, something which was not happening before. There is now a form of collective bargaining between the informal sector and the local authorities in economic matters. The move to decentralise markets, establishing satellite centres in residential areas during the COVID-19 pandemic period, was also a result of a wide consultation process between local authorities and progressive associations in which vendors were also represented.

Furthermore, there has also been a success story in relation to access to information. The Vendors Initiatives for Socio-Economic Sustainability (VISET), for instance, has made strides in raising awareness on various issues among street vendors. In particular, it has penetrated into vending sites, distributing material on social and economic rights of the vendors. In spite of poor amenities, the Coca-Cola Flea Market is one success story as it is operating without many glaring challenges. Participants viewed that this was also because the Harare City Council involved the vending community in planning and implementing this initiative of decentralising vending sites across Harare.

Towards an inclusive City of Harare

As stated in the background section above, this study sought to consider the social inclusion of informal street vendors in Harare. Research findings have shown that the informal street vendors face a myriad of challenges that compromise their trade. Based on the above findings, it is argued that informal street vendors in Harare are one case of social exclusion. Implications of this assessment point to the need for reversing the unfortunate situation of the vendors by fighting the causes of this social exclusion. The World Popular Movements approach is a useful tool for promoting social inclusion. While the research may have its own limitations, recommendations based on the findings may also help policymakers to improve the environment in which street vendors operate, not only in Harare, but also in other urban areas in the country.

Informal street vendors as a case of social exclusion

The findings of this research strongly suggest that the informal street vendors in Harare are socially excluded. The access challenges experienced by the street vendors resonate with the challenges faced by street vendors in Durban, whom Mkhize et al. (2013) reported as operating in a predominantly hostile state and lacking access to both basic amenities and the infrastructure necessary to do business, and they operated in a predominantly hostile state. The attitude of intolerance to street vendors is common in developing countries and is also tantamount to social exclusion (Bromley 2000; Hays-Mitchell 1994). The challenges faced by Harare street vendors make it difficult for them to fully integrate in their urban society of Harare. As in social exclusion whereby a multidimensional and interconnected factors cut off certain individuals from participating in the society (Khan et al. 2015), so are the informal street vendors cut off from participating in Harare's social and economic activities.

As in social exclusion, the challenges faced by the informal street vendors are interconnected and they contribute in inhibiting them from full social inclusion. The logical chain of the interconnected inhibiting factors can be schematically laid out as follows: They cannot access vending space – without vending space, no income – without income, no collateral – without collateral – no bank credit – without credit, no capacity to order goods or services for sale – without goods for sale, no work – without work, no food, no school fees, no shelter; and the chain gets longer and worse, down the path of poverty. The findings revealed that the Harare street vendors are more characterised by features of social exclusion than inclusion. With such a chain of deprivations, the street vendors share a common cause with the World Popular Movements groups, whose concerns are associated with land, work and shelter (Pope Francis 2015).

The need for inclusivity

The drive to promote social inclusion of street vendors is reflected in both literature and research findings. On the one hand, literature highlights that there is a tendency by authorities to limit street vending activities as they regard them as a nuisance in urban centres (Bromley 2000; Hays-Mitchell 1994; Mazhambe 2017; Nyaya 2014). On the other hand, current development debates are in favour of promoting the trade of vending by finding innovative ways of integrating it into urban structures (Skinner 2008). As already highlighted, some scholars such as Kumar (2012) underline the importance of authorities consulting the street vendors whenever they craft laws or policies that directly affect. This also resonates with the position of Pope Francis (2016) who by condemning 'a policy for the poor but never *with* the poor, never *of* the poor', emphasised the need for consulting relevant stakeholders. He maintains that, as vulnerable as they are, the poor are capable of finding solutions to their own problems (Pope Francis 2015). Findings have also revealed, as exemplified by the constructed vending

sites that never worked, that policies *for* the vendors but never *with* the vendors and never *of* the vendors cannot be sustainable. As a vulnerable sector of the society, street vendors lack the power to negotiate their way so that public policy is also crafted and implemented in their favour; hence, involving them in decision-making processes also becomes a way of empowering them as they are given space to suggest solutions to the many factors inhibiting them from their social integration. It also becomes a way of recognising and respecting their equality and human dignity.

However, the recent developments whereby the Harare City Council involves the public, street vendors included, in coming up with public policies and budgets is commendable since it gives an opportunity for the vendors to influence decisions on issues that directly affect their welfare. This gesture of willingness to consult realises the idea mooted by Kanyenze et al. (2011) that Zimbabwe should craft pro-poor and inclusive strategies. In the case of street vendors, regularising the vending activity (Mazhambe 2017) would be the way to go. This will also help to reduce cases of bribery and victimisation of the street vendors through raids and hopefully, create positive chain factors favourable to the street vendors. Given the fact that street vendors constitute one third of the population and the majority are operating in Harare (Nyaya 2014), regularisation would not only promote development but also increase the country's tax base (Connell 2017; Mutami 2015).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this article makes the following recommendations:

- Harare City Council to consider regularising street vending.
- Harare City Council to align its by-laws to The Constitution of Zimbabwe: this will provide social and legal protection to the street vendors.
- Harare City Council to continue consulting street vendors' representatives when crafting laws or making decisions that directly affect the vendors: this helps the authorities to design informed policies and to avoid scenarios such as forced evictions, raids and confiscation of goods.
- Informal street vendors to have their own union and leadership: this gives them a voice and increases their social protection.
- Future research to consider the impact of drug trafficking on street vending in Harare.

Conclusion

This article has assessed the social inclusion of street vendors in Harare. In the process, it has also shown that addressing the needs of street vendors without compromising the provision of standard service delivery is a challenge that has often led to violence and chaos in Harare. As literature has shown, this problem is not unique to Zimbabwe but is a global one. The study was qualitative in nature and it used insights from both

the notions of social inclusion and the World Popular Movements, the latter of which is an approach championed by Pope Francis. Findings, which were empirically collected through FGD, revealed that street vendors in Harare faced several challenges that compromised their capability to fully participate in the social, economic and political life of the urban society of Harare. Some of these deprivations included a lack of access to vending space, loans and information. Furthermore, street vendors were rarely consulted as decisions were made for them but *without* them. Results also showed that it was this very lack of consultation that misled the local authorities to come up with uninformed decisions such as the construction of the Coventry Bay, which has since become a white elephant. This article has argued that the informal street vendors in Harare are a socially excluded group and that Harare City Council has to intensify its efforts to promote their social inclusion.

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Authors' contributions

C.C. is the sole author of this research article.

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Data availability

The publicly available data that support the findings of this study are openly available and cited within this article, where possible. However, data acquired from FGD have been safely kept by the author.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author, and the publisher.

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