



President Robert Mugabe
Private Bag 7700
Causeway
Munhumutapa Building
Corner Samora Machel Avenue and Sam Nujoma Street
Harare
Zimbabwe

13 October 2017

Dear Mr President

We are writing on behalf of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) to express our deep concern with the current situation in Harare City Central Business District where street vendors are facing evictions and clashes with City Police officers as part of “Operation Restore Order”. WIEGO is a network of informal workers’ organisations; researchers and statisticians; and development practitioners who work in support of informal workers around the world. We have 34 institutional members and 159 individual members in 45 countries and our institutional members between them represent over 3.5 million informal workers.

WIEGO considers actions such as those carried out through “Operation Restore Order” towards our sisters and brothers in Zimbabwe, brutal, unacceptable and in violation of their human and worker rights. In an economy where only 15,5% of all working people in Zimbabwe are paid employees with permanent contracts, forcing a large proportion of workers in the labour force to work in the informal economy, proper dialogue and solution-based approach, rather than forced removals which victimise informal workers, would be more appropriate. These workers have a right to earn a living for themselves and their families.

According to the information at our disposal, “Operation Restore Order” is in violation not only of the Constitution¹ of Zimbabwe which states that “the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must adopt reasonable policies and measures and provide everyone with an opportunity to work in a freely chosen activity, in order to secure a decent living for themselves and their families”, but also in violation of most ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

¹ Section 24(1) of the 2013 Constitution



As recently as 2015, WIEGO, together with our institutional member StreetNet International, participated side-by-side with government officials of Zimbabwe who also represented the African continent as group spokespersons, in crafting a new ILO Recommendation 204 on transitions from the informal to the formal economy. We were all in agreement that the principle *“Recognizing the need for Members to take urgent and appropriate measures to enable the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, while ensuring the preservation and improvement of existing livelihoods during the transition”* (R204 preamble) should be complied with.

We urge your government at both national and local level not to renege on the provisions of ILO Recommendation 204, especially not so soon after its adoption with strong Zimbabwean government participation. We urge the Zimbabwean government to adopt a more inclusive way of dealing with street vendors in Zimbabwe through negotiations with organisations of street vendors, including the WIEGO and StreetNet affiliate ZCIEA (Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations) and other relevant stakeholders. We stand in full solidarity with all street vendors and informal traders of Zimbabwe, and call for an end to Operation Restore Order – an attack on the livelihoods of the working poor which the world is watching.

Yours sincerely

Mike Bird
Operations Director

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
Room 521, Royal Exchange, Manchester, M2 7EN
Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee – Company No. 6273538 – Charity No. 1143510

Tel: +44 161 819 1200 - Email: payments@wiego.org
www.wiego.org