



Investing in People for Social and Economic Justice

Research report on Trends, opportunities and challenges faced by vending communities in Goromonzi & Mutoko Districts

About ZIMCODD

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) is a social and economic justice coalition established in February 2000 to facilitate citizens' involvement in making pro people public policy.

ZIMCODD views indebtedness, the unfair global trade regime and lack of democratic people -centered economic governance as root causes of the socio – economic crises in Zimbabwe and the world at large. Drawing from community based livelihood experiences of its membership, ZIMCODD implements programmes aimed at delivering the following objectives;

- To raise the level of economic literacy among ZIMCODD members to include views and participation of grassroots and marginalised communities
- To facilitate research, lobbying and advocacy in order to influence and promote policy change
- To formulate credible and sustainable economic and social policy alternatives
- To develop a national coalition and facilitate the building of a vibrant movement for social and economic justice.

Our vision

Sustainable socio-economic justice in Zimbabwe through a vibrant people based movement.

Mission

To take action in redressing the Debt burden, Social and Economic Injustices through formulation and promotion of alternative policies to the neo-liberal agenda.

Membership and Governance

ZIMCODD membership is based on the coalition model, bringing together various institutions and individuals who share the same vision. So far about 200 organizations subscribed and have shared the organization's mission and vision. These members are drawn from different thematic sectors and constitute the Annual General Meeting. A Board of Directors composed of representatives of specific sectors and regions is directly elected by the AGM in accordance with the constitution. The secretariat is responsible for the day to day programme management and administrative activities.

ZIMCODD is a member of regional and international networks working on Social and Economic Justice. In the SADC region, it is a member of the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN), whose focus is to support the development of alternatives to neoliberal corporate led globalization, with a negative impact on national and regional policies. ZIMCODD hosted this vibrant regional network from 2003 – 2011 and continues to be a member of the SAPSN coordinating committee and the SAPSN Focal Point for Zimbabwe. Currently it is host to the Zimbabwe Social Forum (ZSF) and through this platform, ZIMCODD aims to develop a vibrant space for reflective thinking, democratic debate, formulation and exchange of alternative ideas to the neoliberal agenda in Zimbabwe and beyond.

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List of Abbreviations

- ESAP – Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
- ILO – International Labour Organisation
- RDC – Rural District Council
- ZCIEA - Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations
- ZCTU – Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
- ZIMCODD – Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
- ZIMRA – Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

1.0 Executive Summary

Vendor issues have remained peripheral and uncoordinated in Zimbabwe due to disorganisation of the sector, which has stalled effective engagement of solution holders to influence policies that have a bearing in the sector. This research is part of a broader goal meant to strengthen the voice of women vendors in policy formulation and decision making by March 2016. The objective of this research is to influence policies affecting the vending enterprise through sharing evidence on key challenges and opportunities facing the vending enterprise and evidence based advocacy. The background to the situation affecting the vending enterprise is that there is no culture of demanding social accountability from solution holders in the country, which has been caused by the erosion of the formal sector which was once the backbone of social movements including the workers union. The vending enterprise is also dominated by women hence the need to build their capacity to maximise their opportunities within the sector.

This research sought to establish the trends, opportunities and challenges faced by women in the targeted vending communities in Domboshava, Majuru, Mutoko and Juru. A total of 76 people participated under the research, of which approximately 24% were between the ages of 31 and 40 years. A mixed methods approach was utilised to collect and analyse data. The following primary data collection tools i.e. key informant interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires were utilised to gather data. Furthermore, the study reviewed secondary data sources such as informal sector documents and project proposals. Currently vending is the main activity and source of income for these target communities. Vendors' main selling products are groceries, fresh produce, wild fruits and second hand clothing. The legal and policy

frameworks have not changed to recognise vending as a formal business. Vendors are operating as individuals and need to be mobilised to leverage engagement with rural district councils, access capital and markets. Politicians are taking vendors as opportunists for their political interests, which has caused polarisation in the sector. Rural District Councils have the opportunity to increase their revenue base whilst enabling communities to earn a decent living if they promote the vending sector. There is need to amplify vendor voices, advocacy for policy and legal frameworks, training and skills development and financing of vendor projects among other recommendations.

2.0 Introduction

This research commissioned by ZIMCODD seeks to find out the operating environment for women vendors in Mutoko District and Goromonzi District. Specific objectives of the research:

1. Conduct localised field research meant to unearth the trends, opportunities and challenges in vending in Mutoko and Goromonzi.
2. Produce a detailed picture of the vending economy in the two case studies, focusing on such issues as the economic, gender and generational profiles of the vendors, the key vending sites and markets, main trading commodities, the contribution of the vending sector to the overall economies of the two districts.
3. Analyze the growth and development potential and opportunities of the vending economy in the two case studies

4. Outline the institutional challenges and opportunities to vending in the two districts, including those arising from the legal and policy frameworks.
5. Produce a detailed set of recommendations, based on both views from the ground and experience from comparative national and international case studies, on how identified challenges can be overcome and opportunities can be exploited.

For the purpose of this research, vendors are those traders who operate from the streets or occupy legally and sometimes illegal selling places in a given area selling different primary and secondary goods.

2.1 Methodology

The research used participatory methodologies to collect information which included key informant interviews, focus group discussions and administering of questionnaires. Furthermore secondary data sources were reviewed. The questions asked were meant to capture common areas of interest across the district communities under the broader ZIMCODD project. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically and quantitative information was analysed using Excel. Below is the data of research respondents and the methods used to collect data.

Table 1: Research respondents

	Domboshava	Majuru	Mutoko	Juru	Harare	Total
Focus Groups	22	18	14	13	0	67

Key Informant Interviews	1	0	2	0	2	5
Questionnaires	14	11	8	7	0	40

2.1.1 Planning meetings:

Planning meetings between the consultant and the ZIMCODD staff led to the development of the research survey framework, data collection tools, sampling and data capturing arrangements. The consultant and the ZIMCODD Projects Officer set appointments with communities and key informants in the districts.

2.1.2 Desktop review: A desktop review of informal sector documents and project proposals took place at the beginning of the research in order to learn about the context and objectives of the project. Data gathered from the desktop review fed into the design of key informant interview questions, questionnaires and focus group discussion questions.

2.1.3 Focus Group Discussions: The consultant conducted 4 FGDs with women vendors in Domboshava, Majuru, Juru and Mutoko; (Table 2). The FGDs took the form of open participatory discussions. Women vendors brainstormed on issues affecting them. These were listed and then organised into different categories, ones that could be solved with the local council and those that require national attention. Participants were also asked to suggest actions needed to resolve the challenges.

Table 2: Focus Group Participants

	Years					total
	15-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	above 50	
Domboshava	2	4	8	5	3	22
Majuru	0	3	5	6	4	18
Mutoko	0	2	7	2	3	14
Juru	1	1	4	6	1	13
Total participants	3	10	24	19	11	67

2.1.4 Questionnaires: A total of 40 respondents, (Domboshava 14; Majuru 11; Mutoko 8 and Juru 7) who completed the questionnaire were female vendors who voluntarily stayed behind after participating in the focus group discussions and indicated that they were literate enough to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to elicit vendors’ opinions on their capacity to participate in local government engagement forums, duty bearers responsiveness and vendors organisation/representation.

2.1.5 Key Informant Interviews

Interviews using semi structured questions were conducted with 2 key informants representing Mutoko community organisations, 1 community organisation representative in Domboshava, 1 official from the Labour Movement and 1 member from a Vendor representative organisation in Harare. The interviewees provided important information on key issues, work being undertaken, challenges and opportunities both at local and national level.

¹Zimbabwe chamber of informal economic actions(ZCIEA) 2015

2.1.6 Limitations of the research

The main limitation was time constraint as vendors reluctantly move away from their source of livelihood either gardens or market stalls. Though a lot of research on the informal trade in general is available, there is limited secondary information specifically focusing on vending in rural communities.

3.0 Context and background

The informal sector in Zimbabwe currently operates as the main employment sector in Zimbabwe. In 1980, the informal sector consisted of 13% of the workforce. This number has been rapidly increasing and currently stands at 94.5% consisting of 98% youth and 52% women.¹The failure of economic policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) is cited as a major contributor to company closures and unemployment. Experienced personnel have resorted to starting their home industries' or backyard businesses both in urban and rural areas. The business environment pre and post-independence is structured to accommodate mainly the formal business models. Hence the Government and Rural District Councils treat the informal sector participants as illegal activities and Operation Murambatsvina demonstrates this fact.² ZCIEA notes the informal sector industry as characterised by work that is unprotected, exclusion, unregistered and unrepresented.

The legal and policy framework at national and district level is biased towards the formal sector. There are many by laws that are protective of the private capital e.g. The Town and Country

²Beyond the enclave, towards a pro-poor and inclusive development strategy for Zimbabwe. Kanyenze G, et al. 2011

Planning Act, Vagrancy Act, Urban Councils Act and Vendors and Hawkers by laws frustrate growth of informal sector activities. In the end the vending community is disadvantaged. Those engaged in informal sector are harassed by local government and law enforcement agencies. The operational space for the formal sector is often criminalised and politicised. It is acknowledged that the tripartite forum seeks to convene dialogue on moving the economy forward. However failure to include representation of the informal sector is a serious oversight, especially in light of the fact that the informal sector is now the largest employer.

3.1 Findings on trends, opportunities and challenges in vending in the 2 Districts of Mutoko and Goromonzi

This section is organised to highlight the following issues related to vendors: Employment situation, Vendor organisation and duty bearers' accountability, the vending context, opportunities and growth, types of commodities and products vendors engage in, opportunities and challenges. There are common trends, challenges and opportunities within the two districts. The report will highlight specific differences where possible. However the report outlines the situation as it affects vendors irrespective of their geographical region.

3.1.2 Employment situation

Major employers in the 2 districts include retail shops, general goods distributors, Government Ministries and NGOs. Those not employed formally engage in wholesale and retail of food items, second hand clothing, commuter transporting, illegal mining, cross border trading and subsistence farming.

However for women there are limited employment opportunities because they lack work experience and inadequate education. Therefore vending plays a major role in the lives of women in the 2 Districts of Mutoko and Goromonzi. All the women who participated in the research are also involved in subsistence agriculture related activities mainly home gardens to produce crops and fruits for resell. However the failure to access inputs e.g. seed and fertiliser, persistent drought and poor market prices make it unviable to engage in agricultural production. Therefore buying and selling of various commodities is seen as a better means of survival than crop production.

3.1.3 Vendor organisation and participation– whilst there exists vibrant vendor associations in the urban areas, this is not the case in rural areas. There is a vendors association in Juru and another one in Mutoko³. They comprise of voluntary office bearers but lack a strong and organised grassroots structure. When they call for meetings vendors usually ask the ‘what is in it for me’ question. The difficult economic environment means that vendors are looking for an association which gives them cash or loans. One of the largely attended meetings at Juru Growth Point was when the Vendors Association called members and non-members for a meeting to discuss allocation of market stands. Thereafter meetings to discuss issues such as engaging the RDC on problems affecting vendors have been poorly attended. The issue of passive participation goes beyond vending issues alone. The research found out that on any issues to do with council business citizen participation is low.

The survey found out that 85% of the respondents are not aware of any association or organisation in their area that represents vendor

³Juru Vendors Association and Mutoko Informal Traders Association

interests. Since the rise of the informal sector, there are now over 4 National Associations that represent the informal sector including vendors. There is a vibrant vendor representation at national level. The membership is mostly urban biased and rural representation or participation is low. Where there is rural presence or chapters it is common that they are usually inactive. A Cross Border Traders Association is mostly comprised of members across the country but with little rural representation. It emerged that vendors have experience of operating under a cooperative arrangement, instigated by government ministries such as Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Gender or Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises. In some cases vendors have been organized in groups by private companies under contract business arrangements. Participants indicated that there are previous bad experiences that make them reluctant to work as cooperative members or to join any organisation that comes in their area to mobilise them. These include (a) failure to see results derived from being an association member, (b) too busy to participate in meetings, (c) political issues highlighted more than vendor concerns during meetings. Resultantly, vendor operations are very individualistic. However experience elsewhere points to the fact that the organisation of vendors into an association has its advantages which include ability to engage authorities within government at national and local level with one voice. In terms of business, the organisation of vendors enables them to enjoy benefits in procurement of equipment, inputs and allow for better negotiation of market sites and market prices with big business.

3.1.4 Vendor Profile- The vending profession is made up of young and old women who have been engaged in vending from an early age. Most have been in the trade for over a decade. A vendor's

daily life takes on multiple roles including having responsibility for family chores continuously throughout the day, travelling in some cases long distances to source produce to sell, attending to backyard gardens and then spending time at the market place. 45% of the questionnaire respondents are female headed households looking after a family of 5 members or more. 80% of them spend at least 10 hours away from their homesteads selling produce or sourcing products for resell. School leavers and young women under 30 years (19% of respondents) are few as they regard vending as being a business for the elderly. However with time moving and little opportunities emerging, women when they turn around 30 years resort to vending as a means of survival. As a result of job loses, it is also common now to find men vending either individually or with their spouses.

In both Districts, vending is an individual business with unregulated mode of operations. Each individual is responsible for their own welfare, planning and accountability. It is not common to find vendors organised in a cooperative formation or grouping. They may belong to an Association as is the case of Juru and Mutoko but they operate at individual level. At Majuru, there was an Eggs Marketing Association established but it has since folded due to stiff competition.

Some of the vendors are proxies of established business people especially at the growth point. The business owners realised that customers prefer to purchase cheap products from outside the shops. So business people purchase clothing or agriculture produce and ask vendors to sell around the growth point on a commission basis. Some vendors are given products by relatives in urban areas to resell and in turn they get a commission.

3.1.5 Main vending activities in the districts—A vendor can take on multiple tasks simultaneously. Vending is not a business where the participant relies on a predetermined business model or set of products. The vendors take on what is possible at that time or sell what is available at the time. Since it is an informal activity and voluntary, vending tends to be determined by issues such as season of the year or availability of products and income available to the vendor.

Types of commodities sold by vendors - The vendors engage in buying produce and products to resell in their districts. The following economic activities are common in the 2 districts, Poultry products (chickens and eggs) wild fruits, tomatoes, maize, onions, potatoes, bananas, cabbage, cucumbers and butternuts and second hand clothing. Some of the commodities are purchased from Harare, Norton and Kariba. These include fish, electrical goods (solar panels), groceries and cellphone accessories.

3.1.6 Challenges faced by women vendors

The number of vendors has increased significantly as other employment or economic opportunities have shrunk. This has led to an intensified battle for markets, for instance in Majuru eggs are being sold as low as \$2.50 a crate. Due to the fact that there is little product diversity in the districts, it is common to find every vendor selling the same product e.g. mazhanje, mangoes and tomatoes. Ultimately this leads to unhealthy competition and produce is sold at give-away prices.

The market itself is constrained as people face liquidity problems. Whereas previously vendors were assured that their produce would be sold within a day or 2, this is no longer the case as customers are not coming and fresh produce is usually thrown away. To mitigate

this vendors are selling on credit but there is a high level of bad debts within communities. Whilst waiting for debtors to pay, vendors either stop operations or borrow money at exorbitant interest rates.

Vendors face strong competition from nearby farmers. Traditionally vendors would go to the farms and purchase products for resale at growth points. This is now changing as farmers are now delivering the produce to the growth point and selling directly to the public. They offer produce such as tomatoes, bananas and potatoes at such a low price that vendors are easily squeezed out of the market. Shop owners are no longer sticking to retail alone. In a shop, it is common to find a section set aside for groceries, clothing, fruits and vegetables as well as pesticides.

In both districts, there is virtually no source of capital for women to start businesses. A few women indicated that they obtained seed capital from either the local Member of Parliament, NGOs who put them in small groups or obtain loans from locally based savings group at interests rates as high as 20% per month. Ultimately they fail as revenue streams are very poor. Respondents indicated that it is nearly impossible to make a profit of \$10 per day.

Most vendors are dealing with perishable products such as fruits, fish and garden produce. The shelf life of these products is short and given adverse weather conditions such as extreme heat or moisture, vendors lose a large portion of their consignment daily. At the market sites, the councils just offer open space to vendors. There is no overhead protection for vendors and their produce and the ground is dusty and in the raining season, crops are infested with germs and bacteria.

Where there is potential to improve, vendors lack inputs and capital to produce at an economically viable level. Lack of farming equipment, seeds, fertiliser and special horticulture shed plastics is curtailing the development of potential horticulture in Domboshava.

Women vendors face harassment from local security officers who confiscate goods. In order to avoid this situation, the vendors are continuously on the lookout for the local police or pay bribes to avoid arrest.

Vendors not only have to contend with local competitors but more and more suppliers from Harare, Chegutu, Hatcliffe are delivering the same products into the Districts at prices lower than those of vendors. At Majuru, a private company assisted farmers with inputs for eggs and chicken production but the market has since been flooded. To complicate issues, Irvines came into the market directly and started distribution products thereby bringing prices down. Small producers could not compete and poultry rearing is a loss making business.

Women vendors face specific gender challenges. Prevailing economic hardships force mothers with babies to go back to vending whilst the child still young. There is a feeling of powerlessness among women as goods taken on credit are paid for late or never paid for. There are unscrupulous traders who do commodity broking and never meet their obligation. For instance in Goromonzi, a company facilitated a first group of women to go on a shopping trip to Dubai. This enticed more women to join the scheme. After paying subscription and passport application fees, nothing ever materialized.

Vending sites and conditions– In the 2 districts, there are places that have been set aside for vendors to operate from. Traditionally vendors have chosen to operate from busy sites such as along the road side, shopping centres and bus terminus. These are Mverechena in Domboshava; Musasa in Mutoko; Chinyika and Majuru Growth Point in Majuru and Chakanyuka in Juru. The councils without consulting vendors imposed new vending sites which are deemed business unfriendly by vendors.

The big dispute between councils and vendors is that the council expects vendors to pay daily or monthly rental fees for vending sites that are not ideally located for vendors, customers and suppliers. In Majuru vendors pay \$12 a month for operating a tuck shop; \$2 per day to sell at Majuru Growth Point. In Domboshava, vendors pay \$3 per day for selling at the Mverechena market. Selling outside the designated places attracts a fine of \$10, the same as at Majuru. In Mutoko, vendors pay \$5 per month at Musasa market and those operating flea markets pay \$30 per month. At Juru, vendors pay \$10 per month. Their council accepts payment terms but vendors indicated that they are in arrears going back to June 2015. Vendors are for the idea of paying a nominal fee for the market stalls but in turn they expect ablution facilities, running water, protective sheds, sleeping places and improved security at the vending sites provided by the councils. These issues have been raised with councillors before but nothing has been done. In Mutoko, vendors were made to pay \$5 a month to the RDC for the erection of market stalls up to now no construction has taken place and the vendors have quietly accepted that outcome.

Vendors are an opportunity group for politicians. Hence the allocation of vending stalls is manipulated by Zanu PF and

nepotism by council officials is rife. Vendors indicated that belonging to a political party makes one immune from harassment and places you in a position to be allocated a market stall in the busy part of the growth point. The absence of dialogue between vendors and council leads to vendors selling outside designated sites

3.2 The growth and development potential and opportunities of the vending economy in the two case studies

The large numbers of vendors in the targeted areas provide a strong possibility for growth. The vendors in Mutoko and Domboshava obtain their agriculture produce from farmers in the local area. In terms of opportunities, the model could be to support vendors to enter the production chain firstly as farmers and then as retailers. In both districts, vendors were clear that they are not realising as much profit as they would likely partly due to the fact that the farmers sell to vendors e.g. vegetables. . Vendors are not organised in a way to bargain with the RDCs, suppliers and customers. This exposes them to manipulation and unfair business trading. Informed and united vendors stand a better chance of survival in this difficult economic period. An example from Mutoko shows how a boarding school entered into an arrangement where surrounding farming communities take turns to supply the school's fresh produce needs. This is a better option than selling individually along the highway. A former Member of Parliament who operates restaurants in Mashonaland East Province has an arrangement where neighbouring villagers jointly supply chicken and other food requirements on a weekly rotational basis. At Juru, the Vendors Association has been able to negotiate for staggered payment of the monthly \$10 market stall rent fee. This capacity to negotiate can be

used even further to negotiate for improved working space for vendors, protection from unscrupulous business people and newly resettled farmers who are acting as producers and retailers at the same time.

3.3 The opportunities to vending in the two districts, including those arising from the legal and policy frameworks

Rural District Councils as part of their mandate should hold consultation meetings, public information meetings and report back meetings. A majority of the respondents (65%) indicated that they have not been part of any consultation process organized by the RDCs. There is a general sense of fatigue and disillusionment by citizens to engage local authorities. These RDC platforms ideally would be the right occasions to raise the issues affecting vendors operations.

Residents in general and vendors in particular do not have information about general developments in the districts. 65% of the respondents indicated that ward councillors or officials from the district tell them about plans and developments for the year. 35% indicated that they do not get this information. The end result of this information is that vendors remain short changed with regards their interests.

The information is shared mainly through the councillor who organises feedback meetings. The main sources of information for vendors in rural and peri urban areas are the 15% Village Heads and 75% Councillors. Depending on the willingness of the councillor, there is no guaranteed time when feedback occurs. The vendors indicated that sometimes they hear about consultation meetings sometimes they get this information when the event or consultation

has been held. This disadvantages the vendors in terms of making representations and receiving feedback. At ward level there is interest in attending meeting with recorded averages of 60 people per meeting. The shortcoming is that they fail to take up issues to conclusion.

Other opportunities for furthering vendor issues are platforms offered by councils. The most common public platforms that vendors participate in are public planning meetings budget consultation meetings. Of these opportunities for council and vendor interaction is through development plan consultation 47.5%, followed by budget consultation and councillor feedback meetings at 25%. These spaces offer vendors opportunities to raise issues in formal platforms. 60% of the respondents indicated that the plans for 2015 reflect some of the proposed developments they had suggested. The plans are not specifically to do with vending. This gives a hope that with advocacy work, it is possible to influence the councillors to include vendor specific issues in development plans.

Generally vending is a transitory activity for many and there has been no attempt by vendors to further their business or financial planning skills. There are some NGOs and private institutions that have come offering training in business management, crop and seed production. Vendors indicated that this is not the type of training they want. In order of priority vendors requested training in accessing finance for their business, and marketing skills. Women vendors indicated that they possess knowledge on farming at subsistence level because this is what they have been doing all their life. They can do with being organised in a way to address structural barriers imposed by council and buyers. They do not necessarily

need to produce as a cooperative but be organised at marketing and sourcing level to do group procurement/bulk procurement.

In June 2015, the International Labour Organisations adopted the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation 2015 which precisely states that *‘members should undertake a proper assessment and diagnostics of factors, characteristics, causes and circumstances of informality in the national context to inform the design and implementation of laws and regulations, policies and other measures aiming to facilitate the transition to the informal economy’* (III Legal and Policy Frameworks, 8).⁴ Such international instruments once domesticated offer numerous possibilities for the informal sector to be recognised and contribute towards national and economic development.

4.0 Recommendations

The research findings form the basis of these recommendations.

a) Amplification of rural vendor voices

Rural vendors’ representation is weak. Effort should be made to enable vendors in rural areas to have self-facilitated platforms where they organise themselves as an interest group. This should be followed by capacity building in areas such as lobby and advocacy, group formation and organisation, mobilisation and leadership. Generally the community has access to the councillor and headman and the vendors should be enabled to engage these two authorities to further vendor interests. This approach should help address the despondency people have towards duty bearers’ engagement.

⁴ Adopted by the International Labour Organisation Conference one hundred and fourth session , Geneva, 12 June 2015

In order to draw people to the vendor associations, there should be programmes that facilitate vendors' collaboration on issues such as marketing, pricing and sourcing of inputs. The current unhealthy competition and lowering of prices can only lead to many vendors in the market who can barely make a profit. Collaboration can also reduce 'overcrowding' in some sectors e.g. horticulture production, lead to production of quality produce and eliminate the middlemen who exploit vendors.

ZIMCodd should explore possible working collaboration with Wadzanai Community Development Association, Juru Vendors Association and Mutoko Informal Traders Association.

b) Advocacy for policy and regulations changes

Vendors are expected to comply with health, safety and hygienic conditions expected of all traders. In order to strike a win-win situation between vendors and RDCs, support dialogue between the 2 parties to expedite development of safe and secure trading space at affordable rates and at commonly agreed sites. The issue should be about facilitating responsible vending. On the other hand vendors should be advocating for accountable local authorities regarding revenue collected from residents.

Vendor representatives should develop alternative solutions that enable a win –win situation between council and vendors. Vendors need to conduct their business in a hassle free and safe environment. On the other hand council needs to collect revenue. Support should be given towards holding of a multi stakeholder consultation where vendor alternative solutions can be deliberated. In the short term it may be difficult to effect changes in RDC policies and by laws. What is needed for now is engagement with

solution holders on how some of the by laws and policies can be enforced in a manner that recognises that the informal sector is the only employment opportunity available in most rural areas.

c) Training and skills development

The research points to the fact that most vendors learn their way into the trade. Information availability is crucial to turning this fledgling sector into a functional economy that sustains rural livelihoods. Information on markets, human rights, opportunities, consultative meetings, needs to be readily and easily accessible to vendors.

Categorise vendors into thematic areas e.g. those selling airtime, sweets and trinkets from those selling agriculture produce, clothing, furniture and electrical goods. This helps to develop specific negotiating terms with suppliers, RDC and other stakeholders. At the moment the term vendor is very wide and those involved in vending cross from one category to another within a single day. The research identified needs of vendors mainly trading in agriculture produce and the aim should be to facilitate vendor market opportunities and increase in market share.

d) Financing Vendor Activities

During the research, a commonly asked question was, ‘is the project going to provide us with funding?’ There is need to arrange for vendors to have access sources of funding or at least organise them to receive training on sourcing funding. Furthermore ZIMCODD should enable vendors to access information on available sources of financing vending or informal sector activities. This will enable a re-

think on the part of vendors on what vending business is really viable and profitable to be funded.

e) *Policies and regulations and constraints*

Linkage with other businesses in the supply and retail chain– there is an influx of products in the market especially fresh produce. Newly resettled farmers, farmers’ undertaking backyard farming and local business people are competing in a small market. There is need to enable dialogue focusing on marketing and innovative business solution between retailers, suppliers and vendors.