

THE SOLIDARITY CENTER PODCAST

Nigerian Informal Economy Workers Demand Decent Work!

Host: Shawna Bader-Blau, Solidarity Center Executive Director

Guest: Gbenga, founder and general secretary of Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria, FIWON

Gbenga:

Poor working people must have access to basic social security, but it doesn't start with that. It starts with earn the right work without fear.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Hello, sisters and brothers, and welcome to the Solidarity Center Podcast, an interview show that highlights and celebrates the individuals working for labor rights, the freedom to form unions, and democracy across the globe. I'm your host, Shawna Bader-Blau. I'm also the Executive Director of the Solidarity Center in Washington, DC. We're the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization. We empower workers to raise their voice for dignity on the job, for justice in their communities, and for greater equality in the global economy. And for one just future.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Around the world, there are 2 billion workers who make their living in the informal economy, selling goods in street markets, driving cabs, delivering food, cleaning homes, and performing other essential tasks we all depend on. Many are women. And look, we're talking about jobs proliferating during the pandemic that are low wage, with no security, no paid sick leave, no healthcare, no pensions.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Today, we're focusing on Nigeria, where millions of workers have long supported themselves in the informal economy, but now are increasingly turning to street vending and other jobs in part because so many factories and other companies are closing. In the country's textile sector alone, more than 300 textile mills closed, and 700,000 workers lost their jobs. And all of these job losses has meant that over 80 percent of the population is now working in informal economy jobs. But here's the thing: All work is essential. And all workers should be treated with dignity. That's why I'm so excited to talk with my guest today, Gbenga, who speaks to us from Nigeria. Gbenga helped launch an organization in Abuja, the capital, so workers in the informal economy can join together and fight for their rights. Gbenga and other activists founded the Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria, FIWON, in 2010. There are now hundreds of FIWON branches across Nigeria, and as they work together for common goals, FIWON members are winning recognition by government and society that they must have the same rights and respect as all workers.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

A quick note to listeners. You'll hear us use the term neoliberal here, and by that we mean a set of global and national policies that promote deregulation, privatization, and reduction in government spending at the expense of working people.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, General Secretary and founder of the Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria, welcome to The Solidarity Center Podcast.

Gbenga:

Thank you.

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Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, as we get started, we're going to talk about the informal economy today and about your years of work and leadership in the informal economy organizing workers, standing up for workers. Before we get started, can you help us understand just generally more about the economy in Nigeria? How big is the economy? What percentage of workers are in the informal economy?

Gbenga:

Well, the Nigerian economy is supposedly the biggest economy in Africa, but unfortunately much of that big size is derived from the destructive industry, the destructive oil and gas industry with very little local addition. So Nigeria exports crude oil and unfortunately imports most of the refined petroleum products that's used locally, which means that while relatively speaking, a lot of cash comes in through crude oil exports, there's really very little contribution of that sector into the GDP, because there's very little local addition. And the oil and gas sector increasingly employs less and less numbers of workers. And in recent years, workers in that sector after deal a lot of precarity, as most of the companies laying off their staff and insisting on very flexible contracts, very flexible employment, and that's also true of most other sectors. Nigeria is actually a very, very poor country.

Gbenga:

So that foregrounds the reality of the fact that most people have to work in the informal economy. People have to find some means of surviving by working informally in the different sectors. It has become even more pronounced against the background of the last two, three decades' economic crises. So we've had to endure a lot of economic crises derived from extreme neoliberal policies that the government has pursued. It has meant massive privatizations, closed down government-owned enterprises, because after privatization, most of this enterprise actually gets closed down. Rather than have them with a foreign capital coming in, which actually was the initial promise of privatization. With privatization, all of those promises are never realized. Rather, while we have had very opaque privatization processes that have only led to scrapping of these companies by highly connected individuals who scrap these companies and simply put the money in their pockets.

Gbenga:

So the last two decades we've had the emergence of a few billionaires, while actually we've had more and more unemployment, estimated 4 million workers actually lost jobs as a result of this closure. So it has meant, for instance in the textile sector, over 300 textile mills closing down, close to 700,000 workers losing jobs in that sector alone. All of these job losses meant that more and more people are forced into the informal economy. So whereas in the 80s, the manufacturing sector contributed 14 percent to the GDP. Right now, the share of the manufacturing sector is less than four percent, which goes to illustrate the other economy and which also illustrate the loss of jobs in the formal sectors, the massive loss of jobs in the formal sector and the burgeoning growth of the informal sector. So the implication is that according to the ILO, because we don't have exact figures in Nigeria, over 80 percent of the active working population actually function in the informal economy.

Gbenga:

Another implication is that it means there's a lot of competition, because where you perhaps had five informal workers in a neighborhood or locality, you now have maybe 15 or 20. So it means more people doing the same stuff. And which means more competition for the informal workers. It also means even

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more competition for space to work, because mostly informal work happen in public spaces. And especially in big cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta, Kaduna in up north, and to make matters worse, we also have highly connected, powerful individuals who also want this space for themselves. And so that has also resulted in a lot of evictions of informal workers, which further compound the precarity in the informal economy.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

I want to get into that, because you're painting a really incredible picture of over a 30-year period of time with neoliberal economic policies coming into Nigeria, leading to non-transparent, opaque, you said process of privatization, increase in foreign investment not providing the jobs that were promised. I read recently that 65 percent of the GDP of Nigeria in fact comes now out of the work and of the informal economy. Is that about right?

Gbenga:

Yeah. I think that's the latest testament from the IMF. Yes. About 65 percent of the GDP is contributed by the informal economy. Yeah.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So we've watched a real degradation of work in Nigeria over 30 years. And I want to ask you a little bit more about when we say the informal economy, what does that mean? Who are these workers in the informal economy?

Gbenga:

The informal work happening under pretty much unregulated conditions or regulated in terms of the fact that there is no defined condition of work like have in the former setting. You know when you resume work, you know when you close, you know what you're entitled to as a worker, you know your rights as a worker under the labor code. People working, there is really no employment contract with anybody. They are on their own. So the work environments also tend to be makeshift. Some of the other defining features are the fact that it's very easy to enter into the informal economy. You need little capital, you don't need so much to maybe rent some organized space or whatever. You can manage to find some public space to operate in and all of that. So it's easier to work in the informal sector.

Gbenga:

I can also say a few things about what informal sector is not, because there's some confusion. I've read some economic literature that referred to them as a underground economy. I think that's just a misnomer, because has nothing a lot of what they do. It's actually pretty much in the open. If anything, I think they're overexposed. I think they're visible. You can see, you step out of your home, you see them everywhere. By the time you walk about one meter, you are likely going to see barber shop, you likely going to see a lot of street vendors. You're likely going to encounter some little hairdresser salon, so on and so forth. So there's nothing invisible about this. There's nothing underground about this either.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

The idea that the informal economy is somehow underground and yet you're describing a scene, you walk out of your house and people working informally to make a living are literally everywhere. So if

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informal workers are contributing 65 percent of GDP, and it's 80 percent of employment, but the country is poor, it sounds to me like you're also describing very low wages, very low amount of money that people earn in these jobs. I wonder if you could say something about that.

Gbenga:

From some of the empirical studies that have been done, actually very, very widely, pretty much below minimum wage of 30,000 naira a month to perhaps three times that amount. But perhaps the more challenging aspect of discourse around wages and earnings is the fact that this actually very unstable. So it's possible for a street vendor to go out and come back in the evening with a lot of smiles. It's also possible for the same informal worker to go out tomorrow and she finds herself in jail because she has been arrested by some government task force against environmental whatever, or by the police. All manner of problems could just lead to some kind of crisis. So yesterday she was all smiles, very good, fairly good sales, today she's in prison looking for a lawyer to get her out. Or she gets to her shop and the place has been demolished. She has been a victim.

Gbenga:

So I think the key issue really is the instability, the uncertainty, especially in the bigger cities like Lagos, where there's a lot of competition, where also the politicians with a lot of money also competing for these public spaces, they want it for themselves, to build the big malls and all of that. In 2016, I actually did a field study. "The Poor Also Must Live." That's how I entitled the study, "The Poor Also Must Live." I tried to document various instances of arbitrary and whimsical evictions in Lagos state, and highly connected people actually evict, succeed in evicting, informal workers from their market. And then they take these spaces, build their big malls, and they don't even mind that years after those malls have been built, the malls are virtually empty, partly because it's too expensive for some to afford it, for informal workers to rent. Partly also because even the designs of these malls basically are inappropriate for the kind of use that informal workers want to put them to.

Gbenga:

So I think the discourse around with this actually should be more centered on the associated problems of instability, evictions, harassment, extortion, and so on and so forth, such that even those of them that are a little bit relatively better off in terms of earnings are still experience a lot of precarity in terms people simply not knowing what might come the next day.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, when you're talking about people selling goods on the street to earn money and also provide a service for the community, informal workers getting evicted so that big politicians and the wealthy can make money by building malls and other buildings that they make money from while these workers lose their livelihood?

Gbenga:

Yeah. It will appear that these big people, they're not even interested in making money from these malls. I think they just want, somebody described it as actually a form of money laundering. So for instance, we've had several cases of these malls being built. Five, seven years after being built, they are less than 30 percent occupied. So you wonder where are these people that bought that? Are they

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recouping their money? So it's not so much about making the money as much as just laundering money, yeah.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

After the break, we'll focus on the experiences of women in the informal economy, and take a look at the extraordinary challenges informal economy workers faced during the pandemic. Then Gbenga will describe how his informal workers organization is connecting workers across Nigeria to build the kind of collective strength they need to win recognition of their work and improve their working conditions.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Hi there it's Shawna again. I just wanted to take a minute to invite you to check out Radio Labour, the international labor movement's radio service. Radio Labour produces daily newscasts about union events and issues, and it also produces special programs to support labor campaigns around the world. Check out Radio Labour at radiolabour.net, and find out more about worker rights struggles around the world and how the movement is supporting their efforts for decent wages, fair treatment, and strong communities. Follow and subscribe at radiolabour.net.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

You talked about the role of evictions and of powerful actors. Can you talk a little bit about the role of police and police interaction with informal economy workers?

Gbenga:

Yeah, that's really a very big issue. In a city like Lagos, for instance, we have about five, six different types of uniformed government personnel and operating where what we call the Road Safety Corps, who deal with traffic, road traffic regulation and all of that. Of course, we have the regular police. Then we have what they call the environmental task forces that are supposed to see to environmental sanitation and all of that actually make it a point of dictate to go around harassing street vendors in the name of trying to get them from road sites where they operate. We have the local government police, we have the tax people, and then you have different agencies of government that also go around to also collect all manner of taxes and levies. The Ministry of Environment collects its own levies, especially from waste pickers. The Ministry of Transport collects all manner of levies from transport workers, drivers of public transport, from transport operators.

Gbenga:

Then we have the local government officials, what you call the municipal government, who also collect their own rates and taxes from informal workers and so on. So we have this multiplicity of taxes, rates, levies and so on and so forth from different level of government, different ministry agencies and department of government. Part of our advocacy has been that, okay, we are not adverse to people paying their taxes or paying for public services, but let there be a centralized system for government to collect these monies and let everything be spent out very clearly and openly so that it won't be subject to so much abuse like we are having now.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

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I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about the gender breakdown in the informal sector. What percentage generally would you say are women or men? We're talking about 80 percent of employment in the country. How does the situation look different for women versus men?

Gbenga:

Yeah. Well, traditionally women have been disadvantaged in terms of access to a modern education, which means they're less able to enter into the formal job and because of traditional family responsibility, child bearing, child rearing and all of that, even highly qualify women sometimes choose not to take up formal employment. They want to work from home or they want to work from some shop close to the home so that they can take care of their children and so on and so forth. So historically, women has been much more represented in the informal economy. At the center we are aware of overwhelming number of women actually in street vending. Because we have practically every other woman with no formal employ engaged in one form of street vending or the other. Sometimes just in the frontage of our home, sometimes in the shop, close by home, sometimes in the market. So on so forth. So we have a huge number of women involved in street or market vending.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

We know around the world from our work in various countries, and also through this podcast where we've been talking to workers from all over the world, we know that in general, in the informal economy, we do see violence and harassment directed at workers, and for women workers this also often means gender-based violence and harassment. And I wanted to know if that's also the case in Nigeria.

Gbenga:

Yeah, that's correct. It's specific sectors like domestic work, where women also predominate. There's a lot of gender-based violence. [inaudible 00:22:08] don't, we've done some work around domestic work. And we've had cases of rapes. We've had cases of abuse, both physical, emotional, and verbal abuse of domestic workers. We've actually taken up cases of such gross abuse with the authorities. We also have a lot of gender-based violence around informal cross-border trade. A lot of women, especially those of them living in border communities involved in informal cross-border trade with neighboring countries, because of very ill-defined laws regulating cross-border trade, subjected to a lot of harassment, abuse, extortion, and all of that. So apart from those specific sectors, I think women suffer just as much as men in terms of the extortion, the evictions and all of that.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, Nigeria's been dealing with the COVID-19 crisis like everywhere else in the world. We interviewed President Ayuba Wabba of the Nigerian Labor Congress in an earlier episode. Great labor leader in Nigeria, great global labor leader. He talked about the challenges workers were facing during COVID. I wonder if you could paint a little bit of a picture of how the COVID crisis has affected workers in the informal economy.

Gbenga:

As we speak now, almost a year after the lockdowns have been eased, a lot of informal workers can't get back to work. It has meant a lot of livelihoods being wiped away. That's apart from the suffering and indignities, the hunger that people are to endure during the lockdowns. With extremely limited

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provisions, they made by government for feeding, for basic supplies, of the most essentials. So the lockdowns actually meant widespread hunger for most informal workers. Especially the big cities erupted in widespread violence, because there was a lot of pent up anger and frustration of poor people who didn't have food to eat. We have a Cooperative Society. We correctly anticipated that people will want their money which they saved in the cooperative. So we made arrangement for mobile transfers of their phones on requests. Before the end of the lockdowns, the account was zero.

Gbenga:

Practically everybody that had any money in the recovery society withdrew their money to feed their families. Since then, since the lockdowns have eased around July, August last year, it has been difficult getting people back into the Cooperative Society, because most of them are not yet back in business, or even when they're back in business, they're operating under extremely difficult situations. Most people suffering serious famine because food is becoming increasingly expensive, and while income is declining. And government policies have not helped matters. In the past one year, we have had three increases in the cost of petroleum products. We've had three increases in the electricity tariff. We've had an increase in value added tax. So all of this has escalated, resulting in inflationary spiral, combined with the declining value of the national currency, the naira, and less and less supply of food. The situation is really getting much more worse than it was just a year ago.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, I think it's so important that you have just shared what you did about hunger and reemerging hunger as a problem in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. That's in Nigeria, but that's also a global crisis that workers are facing all over the world as governments have to provide social safety nets for workers. Has there been any wage support or extension of any kind of benefits to help workers get through this crisis?

Gbenga:

That was a very challenging aspect. Even the best of time, informal workers have no access to social protection, no health insurance services. That's by the fact that available health care, public health care facilities are grossly inadequate. Old age care, pension, maternity care and support. We don't have systems that deal with all of this. And then with the escalating economic crisis and food crisis, you can just imagine the situation. Now, the government came with a number of measures. They came with what they called survivor fund, which was actually targeted at the informal sector. They said they will pay some amount of money to about 300,000 Nigerians, where... Now, both the amount of money they wanted to pay and the number targeted was simply grossly inadequate. And as it is, perhaps the more annoying aspect is the fact that the process of applying for this fund and disposing these funds has been extremely opaque.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Precarious work. Yeah. Indecent working conditions, corrupt and opaque, untransparent systems and politicians. Neoliberal economic policies adding insult to injury and making it even harder. What comes to mind, brother Gbenga, is the role of worker organizing and your longtime leadership as a worker activist yourself, and a leader of an informal economy worker's organization. This is a big set of challenges to take on, but it's ready made for the labor movement in that sense, right? So can you tell us

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a little bit about the work you've been doing to fight back against these conditions by organizing workers?

Gbenga:

We've had to work with different kind of coalitions at different levels to ensure that these issues are brought into the fore and that they receive relevant attention and all of that. In Lagos state, we are working with a group of civil society groups, including progressive academics and journalists, and all sorts of people to address some of the specific challenges. Then we also work with an organization that came up in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, called ASCAP. ASCAP was formed specifically to address issues around COVID-19, the policies for its containment, and showing that people received basic rights, working people are not on starvation and so on and so forth. And that also brings to a lot of human right activists, a lot of progressive academics, some faith based organizations, and so on and so forth.

Gbenga:

In Nigeria, we are pretty much like in the US, we have states, and the state governments also have a lot of leverage to make a lot of difference in the life of informal workers. Luckily, we have been able to leverage on some of these coalitions to get a lot of support for our members. We have also been able to directly deal with the more flagrant cases of rights violations and such other abuses. I would just give an illustration of how some of this networking has helped. During the lockdown, the Lagos state government amazingly started evictions in some communities. So they were driving families out of their homes and destroying their homes. We were able to capture that on video, and then we got all the coalition member to put on Twitter and we tag as many local and international organizations. That actually shamed the Lagos state government to actually stop the evictions right on Twitter.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

You hear about all kinds of bad disinformation and negative stuff on social media, governments misbehaving on social media, but the use of social media by activists to pressure a government to make a change like that is pretty powerful.

Gbenga:

Yeah. But that was also why they banned Twitter later on.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Oh yeah. Right. Well, this was going to be my question to you. So informal workers face harsh conditions, but clearly there's a lot of organization among informal workers in Nigeria. You lead an organization of informal workers and networked across the country and progressive coalitions. What kinds of leveraged tactics work to achieve change for informal workers in Nigeria?

Gbenga:

We actually use a combination of tactics and strategies. We having to get a lot of responses at the federal level. We've been trying to interface first with the federal Minister of Labor, which is directly responsible for the national policy on social protection. We want to see how we can win with some of the present issues around the challenge of social protection in the informal economy with these agencies. The Minister of Labor now make it a point of duty to relate with us and make sure we are

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present in some of their program. They have even created a special desk for what they call social security informal sector desk, which wasn't there before. And they work closely with us. Some state governments have also accommodated some of policy proposals, and I've actually tried within very limited capacities and resources to implement some in Osun state in southwest, Kaduna in the northwest readily comes to mind.

Gbenga:

And then in the other spectrum, we have states like Lagos state that have been extremely hostile to our organization, partly because we have also very loud, because some of these contradictions are also much more grave in Lagos than other parts of the country, especially just around evictions, around extortion, around political profiteering, nepotism and all of that. And so we are very loud in taking out some of these issues without apologies. And so the civil servants are extremely hostile. The politicians are also extremely hostile. That within the context of some of these coalitions, we have been able to still get a few things done. Just give you that example, we have also been able to actually stop a lot of evictions. Just about six weeks ago, we had a mass protest. Three mechanic... We call them mechanic villages. These are special clusters for auto technicians.

Gbenga:

It was actually created by this Lagos state government, these clusters, about 40 of them, but progressively over the past two, three decades, they have been taking over these clusters. And now from 40, we have just about 27 left. And so they were going to take over 30. And so we had to engage in a massive protest in Lagos state so they had to stop that. And the Lagos State House of Assembly took up the issue, they set up a partner, they're having hearings and all of that. And so this has been the kind of stuff we have in Lagos state. So it's been a lot of push and shove. Despite their hostility, they are being forced to respond to some of the agitations and demands.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

They say power concedes nothing without a demand. Given what you've described, really illustrates the power and quite active success that organizations like yours have had in raising these issues in Nigeria, which is quite inspiring given the proliferation of the informal economy everywhere in the world. The idea that workers are organizing collectively through the Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria really is quite inspiring to think about when we think about the future and a post-COVID future. Gbenga, can you tell us a little bit about how you work with informal economy workers through your organization and in the coalitions to develop strategy for the coming months and years?

Gbenga:

Yeah. At the strategic level, we have been consistently focused on issues around social protection. So we've had three, four strategic planning sessions where we've been able to actually sit down with the leaders, come up with the issues and articulate charter of demands, which has formed a basis of our engagement. And we have recorded different levels of successes. And one of the most dramatic was the Solidarity Center-supported strategy planning session we had in the Northeast conflict zone, Borno state. We had a very cooperative and a general labor congress, local leadership, which also assisted our process. And we also, especially since 2019 specifically, have a very enlightened political leadership in the person of the governor of Borno state. So he has been very receptive to what came out from that

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strategic plan, and has actually tried to implement some of the specific programs, policies we pushed forward.

Gbenga:

Like I said earlier, we recorded similar achievement in a few states, like in Kaduna, where just a few months ago, the state government actually invited our representative in the state to meet with all the commissioners. It was a very big meeting with all the state officials, the commissioners, the heads of ministry, department, and agencies of Kaduna state government, and they listened to all our demands and so locally that's we're able to come up with some of those issues.

Gbenga:

And we had some very specific commitments by the state government to address some of those issues. In Osun state FIWON became part of practically all policy initiatives of the state government, from taxation to some of our demands for the organization of taxes and levies and charges and rents implemented in Osun state. We now have very strict regulation of how some of these taxes and levies are collected, and there's growing respect for informal work and people who work in the informal sector. So we have some of the success in some of the states, which derive directly from some of the training, strategic sessions that we have had in the past, which actually equipped local leadership with the skills, the demands, so on and so forth to be able to push these things forward.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Nothing compares to the power of collective action and worker organizing to create inspiring, transformative change. You mentioned you did a study that led to an article you wrote called "The Poor Must Also Live." When you think about the future of Nigeria and your vision that you're working on, what does that phrase mean to you?

Gbenga:

It simply means that poor working people must have access to basic social security, but it doesn't start with that. It starts with even the right to work without fear. The right to work without harassment and unnecessary molestation. The right to access public spaces as commonwealth, as something that belongs to all of us so people have a right to access these spaces and earn their livelihoods. We agree with the ILO that talks about regulated access. We agree that that access should be regulated, but we also insist that the process of regulation itself should also be inclusive. So we should be part of processes and mechanisms put in place to regulate that. Because people must have access first. People must be able to do whatever work is available, because most people cannot resort to crime. So people must survive. There are no jobs out there.

Gbenga:

And if the only avenue is true informal work, then people should be allowed to do their work with little harassment and molestation. And that the government must fulfill its part. It's not just about collecting taxes and levies, rent, so on and so forth. It's also about providing basic municipal services. People have the right to access potable water, sanitation services, public bathrooms and toilets that are functional and are clean and well maintained. So some of the simple, small things just being there makes life much more easier for people to work under more humane conditions. And then we graduate toward the other, to the higher demands around people having their vulnerabilities taken care of. Old age care and

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support, maternity care and support, stability care and support. Systems must be in place, however rudimentary, however small scale you want to do it, there must be something available to take care of people's vulnerabilities. So these are the key issues. And with that with [inaudible 00:41:46] being in place for people to work and live without fear, with some confidence, at least, and their vulnerabilities are taken care of.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Decent work with dignity, a life without fear, functioning and transparent governance and government. You're describing a vision of fairness and equality and democracy that workers everywhere, regardless of income, deserve.

Gbenga:

Yes.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Gbenga, General Secretary and founder of the Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria, thank you so much for sharing your incredibly powerful and moving story.

Gbenga:

Thank you very much. The pleasure actually is mine. Thanks a lot for the opportunity.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

We heard an often disturbing description of how economic policies that benefit the well-connected have resulted in millions of people working long hours to make a living as street vendors or petty cab drivers, and yet face hunger, homelessness, and constant uncertainty about whether they will even be allowed to keep working from one day to the next. But we also heard how these workers are connecting with each other, finding allies, and building this collective strength they need to win concrete changes in their cities, states, and nationwide. The right to work without fear and harassment and the freedom to access public spaces are fundamental. Safe, working conditions, healthcare, wages that support families all are essential to a future of work that values workers. As their issues become more visible to lawmakers and the public, informal workers are claiming their democratic freedoms and gaining the rights and respect on the job that all working people deserve and must have.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Thanks again to Gbenga, General Secretary and founder of the Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria for all his incredible work with informal economy workers and for sharing his powerful vision of a just future for all workers.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

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Host: Shawna Bader-Blau, Solidarity Center Executive Director

Guest: Gbenga, founder and general secretary of Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria, FIWON

world, we work to ensure a righteous future for workers. Dignity, freedom, equality, and justice. For the Solidarity Center Podcast, I'm Shawna Bader-Blau. Thanks for listening.