

**Deutsche Welle
“Learning By Ear”
Jobs & Training 06: Informal Sector**

Text: Richard Lough, Kenya

Editors: Ulrich Neumann, Maja Dreyer

1 Narrator/ plus Intro & Outro

3 Voice-overs: Peter, male fruit vendor, elder

Scholastica, female street vendor, mid-age

Julius, male puppy vendor, younger

Intro

Hello and welcome to Learning by Ear. You are listening to our special series about jobs and training where we introduce you to people from different careers and discuss education and job prospects. Today we will take a trip through two neighborhoods in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi. We are going to meet several people who perform activities that fall outside the formal regulated economic sector. These people work “off the books”, in the so-called informal sector. Without a formal education, they earn their living for instance by trading on a small-scale. And their daily routine is quite tough as you will see. So let’s get going and visit the suburbs of Nairobi.

1. SFX Atmo Straße

Kilimani is a neighbourhood a few kilometres away from the centre of downtown Nairobi. It’s a pleasant suburb, there’s plenty of greenery and it’s home to many middle-class Kenyans and expatriates who work in the city. The street we are on is called Argwings Khodek. It’s one of the main roads in and out of the centre of Nairobi and during most of the day the traffic is pretty heavy along here. It’s an ideal location for workers in the informal sector, known here as ‘Jua Kali’. ‘Jua Kali’ means ‘hot sun’ in Swahili. Thus it refers to the people who work under

the baking equatorial sun all day long. So, let’s go and meet some of them and see exactly what they do...

2. SFX road traffic

3. O-Ton: Fruit Vendor 1

My name is Peter Muamaingay and I am at Yaya centre at Kilimani. That’s where I am doing business of selling fruits and vegetables.

Peter’s fruit and vegetable stall is an array of colours. There are pineapples, bananas, tomatoes, onions and lettuces piled up high on wooden crates. It’s only 11 o’clock in the morning but Peter’s already been working for five hours...

4. O-Ton: Fruit Vendor 2

I wake up very early in the morning. I wake up at 6, that’s when I arrive at the market. There I start arranging my things, fruit and vegetables, then I start selling to customers who arrive early and it goes up to 7 in the evening.

He claims he makes little profit despite the long hours he works. For example he pays 30 shillings – that’s not quite half a US dollar – for a kilo of tomatoes. He then resells them for 50 shillings, that’s less than 30 US cents profit. The beginning of the of the month is the most profitable time, he says, that’s when people receive their pay-checks from the previous month. Peter has been in the fruit and vegetable business for more than ten years and considers himself quite a good salesman.

So what’s his secret?

5. O-Ton: Fruit Vendor 3

To be a good salesman in my experience, you have to control your temper. That is essential. Because you meet different customers; you may meet a bad customer who may say “I don’t want what you are selling”. You have to humble yourself a bit so that the customer at least can look at your stuff. Although he is in a bad mood, he can also moderate his temper and then you can communicate with each other. Because if you are angry and the customer becomes angry, then you have lost the business.

There aren’t any shops along the stretch of road where Peter stands. Everyone is selling their wares out of improvised shacks. And indeed some don’t even have shacks.

Across the road stands a lady selling second-hand swimwear. There are some huge, stretched swim dresses for men and next to them some brightly-coloured swim suits for young girls, and also some straw hats hanging up in the thorn bushes....

6. O-Ton: Swimwear 1

My name is Scholastica Njoki, I am a Kikuyu lady, I have three children and this is my small business across the road...

Each morning Scholastica has set up her business by 8.30. She says it’s not easy working by the road side. If there’s a cloudless sky it’s too hot out in the open. If it rains, then she has to pack everything up.

7. SFX Swimwear_Customer

Scholastica talks to her second customer this morning. But some days, she says, she doesn't sell a single item. On a good day she may make five hundred shillings - that's about 7 US dollars. It's not enough...

7. O-Ton: Swimwear 2

Even I don't save because when I save like 500 one day, sometimes it's good luck to save five hundred. That five hundred shillings is for food, is to buy maybe soap, to do something small small, like buying Unga (flour) for cooking so is it not enough! I can't save money with this business!

Because these are makeshift shacks, the owners don't pay any rent. This often gets them into trouble with the Nairobi City Council who either come to the neighbourhood looking for a bribe or take away the vendor's merchandise...

8. O-Ton: Swimwear 3

Sometimes they come and ask us for 25 shillings, sometimes they ask for bribe. Like if they are many they say they want 500 shillings, 300 hundred shillings and if you don't have they take your belongings.

Scholastica says the police then often sell the clothes for their own profit. Or they offer them back to the owner, but at an unaffordable price...

9. O-Ton: Swimwear 4

They ask for a lot of money. Like this business it can't cost more than 5,000 and they ask more. So you see instead of going to pay 5000, the money I don't have, I leave them and then I go somewhere to get some money, to beg or someone to help me with money.

10. fade into SFX_Sarit_traffic

There are other areas of Nairobi that are more commercial than Kilimani. One is Westlands, where you can find Nairobi’s biggest shopping centre called the Sarit Centre. It is frequented by wealthy Kenyans and foreigners living in the city. But all around the centre are hawkers selling everything from pirated DVDs to second-hand clothes and shoes. One man even sells little puppies...

11. O-Ton: Puppy vendor 1

My name is Julius Kinyanjui, I am 29. My business is to selling these puppies. I normally sell it to Kenyans, sometimes for security for companies.

12. SFX_puppies

29-year-old Julius and several friends walk through the traffic thrusting the puppies through open car windows. He buys the puppies from a breeder. The cost depends on the breed. Most expensive are Rottweilers and Dobermans that are favoured by people as guard dogs. One Rottweiler costs him 20 US dollars says Julius ...

13. O-Ton: Puppy Vendor 2

I can buy it 1500 and I can make it 2000 or 2200. For about one week I normally sell four or five puppies. Not for each and every day to sell the puppy. It could take two days or three days maybe.

Julius is like many in Kenya’s Jua Kali (informal) sector. He’s poorly educated with no formal qualifications. He can’t get a proper job. But he

prefers to do whatever he can to earn enough to live on rather than sit around and do nothing...

14. O-Ton: Puppy Vendor 3

I do this job because I don't have another job to do. Because of the poverty here in Kenya, you have to work hard in order to get something to eat, ya. In one week maybe I can make 1,500 profit. It's ok because I am surviving on it.

We let Julius get back to work. He rejoins the many other hawkers plying their trade up and down the lanes of traffic in Nairobi.

Fade out Atmo

Outro Part 1:

All across Africa, street hawkers like Julius lead quite a tough life, working many hours a day to earn their living, from week to week. With no formal profession and no secured income, their career is in the informal sector. But, even in this field, with a good business concept and a little bit of good luck, you can make it and earn your living. If you want to hear how, listen to our next part...

Part 2

JINGLE “Ways into the job”

Intro Part 2:

That was Rebecca Odonko from Accra in Ghana talking to our reporter Rahmatu Abubakar. If you want to find out more about different kinds of job, or if you just like to listen to this show again, go to our website at

dwworld.de/lbe. So that was today’s episode from the Learning by Ear series on job-profiles. Thank you for being with us. Good bye!