

THE SWAZI OBSERVER



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Church tackles trade issues



THE Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC) in collaboration with CANGO and Bizaid is conducting a series of activities aimed at raising awareness on salient trade issues, such as the inclusion of trade issues in sermons of CSC member churches.

This is part of commemorating the trade week of action, which commenced on October 14. The action comes to an end on Sunday.

In a statement, CSC's Lungile Magagula said the trade week of action was a chance to tell the world that enforced free trade was inflicting misery on millions of poor people and that there were alternatives.

"When the Church gives food to the poor, it (church) is often called a saint but when the church asks why the poor have no food, it is labelled as political. Moreover, it would be expected that as the world gets richer, so should the poor, but they aren't.

"The reason is that millions of small farmers have become increasingly disempowered and impoverished. As borders have opened up, prices paid to small farmers are unable to obtain fair and stable prices for their produce," Magagula said.

She said many people were no longer able to feed their families and produced much less extra food for sale.

The current global market, she noted, works only for a few and such a model does not work for the rural poor majority in Swaziland.

"As Christians and as members of faith communities we are compelled to action by the old and new Testament, understanding justice as taking the side of the poor and oppressed."

She said trade justice was about recognising the right that farmers have to feed their families and send their children to school.

Trade justice is people centred, respects human rights and guarantees food security, livelihood and sustainable development for the whole society.

Magagula said trade justice calls for basic changes to the rules that govern international trade and requires that rich country governments and institutions, such as World Trade Organisations (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) stop forcing liberalisation and free trade on poor countries.

Last weekend, CSC member churches were expected to include in their sermons trade issues ranging from food security, poverty and the plight of small farmers in a global world.

Dialogues were also held on Tuesday and Wednesday on trade issues at Caritas (Catholic Centre) in Manzini. Yesterday, another dialogue was hosted at Thokoza Church Centre and today the last leg of the dialogues will be held at Msunduzi Hall commencing at 8.30am.

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