

Press Statement

JCTR'S REFLECTIONS ON THE 2020 NATIONAL BUDGET

For Immediate Release

Kasama - Every year, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) hosts representatives from different sectors in different parts of the country. This is to identify the challenges they are facing and make budget proposals to the ministry of Finance for reflection in the National budget. The JCTR's Kasama Office has over the years been engaged in advocacy and lobbying of policy makers in order to promote social justice for all people especially the poor. On 4th July, 2019, stakeholders drawn from Health, Education and Water & Sanitation in Kasama met to identify challenges in their sectors and made their recommendations to reflect in the 2020 National budget. The National budget has since been compiled and presented in Parliament by the Minister of Finance Hon. Dr. Ng'andu Bwalya, but the question is 'were the proposals made by the people of Kasama included in the national budget?'

Under health, proposals on a number of projects such as the construction of a modern standard abattoir, a district hospital and an urban clinic, a clinic in Chishipula community, maternity wards at TAZARA and Namulundu clinics and construction of three health posts under the 650 health posts across the country were made. The minister pledged to continue with the construction of the 650 health posts across the country which has given hope to the people of Kasama. However, it has been noted with concern that each year government makes pronouncements towards completion of health posts yet it never materialises. The table shows figures of health posts stated in the national budget for three consecutive years (2018-2020)

2018		2019		2020	
Planned	Completed	Planned	Completed	Planned	Completed
650	575	No mention		650	342

It can then be concluded that there is no accountability and objectivity in reporting figures by the government, which leaves the people of Kasama with doubts as to whether the 3 health posts will be constructed in 2020. The 2020 National budget does not say anything on the construction of a district hospital, clinics and maternity wards in Kasama. However the budget states the continuation of the construction of health facilities to improve access to health services. This may mean continuing with construction works that began in 2019 without starting new constructions as proposed by the people.

The increase in nominal allocation to infrastructure development in the health sector; from **K274,580,400** in 2018 to **K620,188,226** in 2019 and subsequently **K1,479,947,346** for 2020 seems progressive, and may benefit the people of Kasama. However with the rise in the inflation rate, the difference may just be used to compensate the rise in the prices of goods and services. The minister could have stated the number of health posts to be constructed in the year 2020 so as to give room for accountability and for the people to be able to offer checks and balances

The other sector, Education which is important in the development of the country's economy, requires a good budget share for it to be implemented and offered effectively. Stakeholders in Kasama proposed a number of important projects which can help in the delivery of quality and affordable education to

the people. Among the proposals were; Construction of more classroom blocks at Chishipula Primary school, construction of VIP toilets at Chishipula and other Schools in Kasama District, procurement and distribution of desks to Schools in Kasama District and recruitment of more teachers especially in rural areas.

It is however noted that the 2020 budget has not considered the proposals made by the people of Kasama. It is clear from the budget that government intends to complete the projects started already and has no plan to start new projects. The budget also does not say anything on the restocking of furniture in existing school as well as on the recruitment of new teachers. Further, the reduction in the percentage share of education; from 15.3 in 2019 to 12.4 in 2020 is likely to limit the implementation of projects and quality service delivery in the education sector. Below is the table showing the nominal and percentage share of the education sector in the 2020 national budget for. This continuous decrease in the percentage share of the education sector from 16.1% in 2018 to 12.4% in 2020, signifies that proposals submitted by stakeholders in Kasama and elsewhere cannot be considered because the sector will have less to spend in the year 2020. There is need to prioritise education and ensure increased funding to the education sector to allow more schools to be constructed, furniture to be restocked and more teachers to be recruited.

Water is considered life for without water, one cannot survive. For this reason, stakeholders in Kasama proposed looked at their Water, Sanitation and Hygiene quality and to improve this proposed the construction of boreholes in Kupumaula, Chiba and Chibundu wards, piped water restorations and Kiosks in Chishipula Community as well as to have vacuum tankers provided and sewer treatment systems constructed. There has been an increase in the nominal allocation to water and Sanitation from 2018 to 2020

Year	2018	2019	2020
Allocation	564,508,860	1,984,759,404	2,620,137,161

Although there is no direct mention of Chambeshi Water and Sewerage Company in the speech, the increase in the budget allocation may result in the consideration of the proposals made by the people of Kasama. Boreholes and provision of piped water to rural areas has also been mentioned in the national budget. It now remains a prayer of the people of Kasama that government will prioritize rural and peri-urban areas when implementing projects under Water and Sanitation.

The budget shows that few proposals submitted by stakeholders in Kasama have been considered in the 2020 national budget. This is not only saddening but worrying for the people. To encourage ownership and sustainability of projects, government needs to embrace the bottom-up kind of approach, and sometimes prioritize projects identified by communities and see how they can incorporate those projects in national budgeting and planning.

About JCTR: *The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), a faith based organization which operates to translate into action Christian principles and values in its quest to promote social justice in Zambia. It provides from a faith inspired perspective, a critical understanding of current social, political and economic issues and generates action to address them. The Centre engages in research, advocacy, education and consultant on key social issues like cost of living, social implications of debt servicing, accessibility of healthcare and education, and integrity of local democracy.*

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