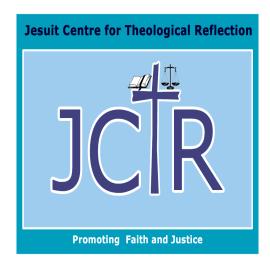## About JCTR

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is a centre operated for Zambia and Malawi by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), working on issues of faith and social justice and was established in 1988 with a vision to see a society where faith promotes justice for all, especially for the poor. The Centre does research, education and advocacy on issues that affect the day-to-day lives of Zambians with the aim of promoting the fullness of human life of all people, especially for the poor.

Mission Statement

The mission of JCTR is to foster, from a faith-inspired perspective, a critical understanding of current issues. To fulfil this mission, the JCTR works through three core Programmes and an Outreach outside Lusaka. The Programmes are Faith and Justice, Economic Equity and Development, and the Social Conditions.

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection

JCTR

Promoting Faith and Justice

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

"Promoting Faith and Justice"

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JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

What is Active Citizenship?

Active Citizenship is essentially about citizen's engagement in the political, social and economic affairs that affect them at any appropriate level (Local or National) where they are able to play this duty effectively thereby contributing to the well being of the Country. It is a call to promoting the common good and working towards the attainment of this common good by performing subsidiary roles or functions effectively for the benefit of all especially the poor people.

Why Active Citizenship and what are the benefits of being an Active Citizen?

The Church's Social Teaching teaches that how we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affect human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Organizing a society is a collective responsibility. Therefore an active citizen should not get tired of doing good. The following are the benefits which come as a result of persistence:

Active Citizenship is key to development.

> " it is the duty of our Member of Parliament to bring development to his constituency otherwise we are just observing and if he does not we shall vote for another one." **Words from a workshop participant.**

For citizens to contribute to national development they need to be active citizens and not just sit idly finding faults in the Area Member of Parliament. Active citizenship puts in focus the rights and obligations of citizens. It demands that each citizen

(Electorate or the Member of Parliament) carries out his/her duty. Development cannot just happen if none of the citizens played their particular roles. In a democracy citizens are offered, a unique opportunity to determine their future collectively. Active citizens, for example, take part in arguing for the enactment of Laws that ensure justice for all, they debate public issues of concern, they pay tax so as to make available enough national resources for development among other duties, and they participate in putting up health control measures.

Active Citizenship enhances good governance.

> "Our Parliamentarians have made us to be inactive because they are liars and we are tired with their lies, ... nothing will change" . **Words of hopelessness from a workshop participant.**

Citizens have an important duty to ensure that public leadership plays its role effectively. When citizens bring to the attention of the public leadership their concerns, perspectives, good government policies and actions etc, public leadership is informed of what citizens are thinking and this enhances possibilities of good governance.

Active citizenship ensures citizens' participation which is a cornerstone for transparency and accountability.

In democratic states where citizens merely vote and leave the rest of the public affairs to elected leaders, leaders tend to abuse their power and pay little attention to public interests. However, when citizens are actively involved in national affairs beyond elections, the demands placed on leaders help them to be both accountable for and transparent about their actions that have significant implications for the daily lives of their citizens.

> " Why even participate in voting? Because of fake promises by those who stand as Councilors and MPs I have stop voting in a general election". **Fury words from a workshop**

Staying away from voting is not a solution. In a democracy, the participation of citizens in public affairs is critical as the whole idea of democracy rests on citizens governing themselves. To form a democratic government, for instance, it would be impossible if citizens do not participate in elections in which they choose leaders to represent them. Thus, success of democracy is largely dependent on the participation of citizens. And citizens only participate when they are active and concerned about public affairs.

Active citizenship promotes Implementation of Programmes.

> "We do not know what happens with Constituency Development Fund (CDF) every year when it is allocated. No project has taken off in our place" . **Sentiments from a workshop participant.**

Citizenship demands of citizens' engagement at local level where implementation takes place. An example of this is the following up on CDF and other loans meant for local initiatives such as the building of schools and clinics in a particular Community. When citizens are not actively involved, resources reserved for such important initiatives are prone to corruption as there will be no one to question what happened to the resources when active citizenship is lacking.

Are you an active citizen?
If you are well and good but if you are not the time is now to became an active citizen.

2017

Active Citizenship

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