

**AT THE LAUNCH OF “PASTORAL CIRCLE REVISITED,” JCTR URGES
FOR STRONGER LOCAL LEVEL ENGAGEMENT IN
ZAMBIA’S DEVELOPMENT**

The need to monitor changes in living conditions at the household and local level is very critical to accurately judge Zambia’s new economic situations and to effectively plan ahead, says the *Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection* (JCTR).

The JCTR says this in light of a book it is launching on 05 April 2006 entitled, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*. This book provides important insights into not only understanding social analysis as a broad topic but how we can engage ourselves in different communities into effective and relevant social or situational analysis within our local contexts.

But the book is even more persuasive as an avenue for the effective empowerment of the people -- including local structures from the point of view of *active* engagement in policy dialogue. But it is also more persuasive in promoting *quality* engagement that truly reflects ownership of the process as well as people’s needs. It is the position of the JCTR that such a contribution will make the decentralisation policy that government is earnestly pursuing a lived reality in Zambia, true devolution of power to the Zambian people in terms of budgeting, policy formulations, priority setting, etc. The book is therefore useful to Zambia at various levels ranging from both central and local government to local groups of churches, women, the youth and others involved one way or the other in promoting people’s welfare.

The JCTR monthly *Basic Needs Basket* that measures cost of living for a family of six (covering Livingstone, Kabwe, Ndola, Kitwe and Luanshya and now being expanded to rural areas) is as a matter of fact a derivative of the framework offered by the “Pastoral Circle,” what the book being launched is all about. It is founded on the idea that to concretely monitor people’s living conditions and performance of development programmes or policies, we must be able to see what is truly happening in people’s daily living experiences. This means looking at conditions of housing, health, education, food security, cost of living, gender relations, etc. The JCTR strongly believes that affordability of basic needs or lack thereof determines in various dimensions households or people’s welfare.

Are the people able to afford basic needs, if that is not the case, why is it so? These are simple but very important questions that should be at the centre of development policy or discourse. For example, to meet the cost of basic needs in Lusaka, a family requires K1,408,050 in total expenditure without the inclusion of the cost of personal care, transport, education or health. Food alone is costing K500,950. The obvious question, of course is, are the people able to meet these costs? But what about all the “positive developments” in the country today, how can we judge them in light of these figures? These questions have been raised before and to date still beg for honest and accurate responses.

The book, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited* offers us a practical approach to examining our situations and perhaps more importantly also how we can respond to those situations. Is it some of our cultural beliefs and the attendant actions responsible for our poor human development record? It is obviously the case that the majority of the Zambian people cannot afford an expenditure of K500,950 on food, let alone the entire cost of basic needs which includes the cost of some relatively decent housing. Moreover the book is useful in exploring both micro and macro level situations and in that way helps in effective identification of problem areas as well as points of action. “Its launch is therefore very critical,” says Muweme Muweme Coordinator of the Social Conditions Research Project of the JCTR, “as it coincides with macro level changes, such as change in the debt structure, appreciation of the Kwacha, etc., in the Zambian society.”

**[For more information, contact Muweme Muweme, Social Conditions Research Project of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, P. O. Box 37774, Lusaka, Zambia;
tel: 260-1-290410; fax: 260-1-290759; e-mail: socialjctr@jesuits.org.zm;
internet: www.jctr.org.zm**

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