

DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS MUST BE ACCELERATED IN ZAMBIA: JCTR BACKS CALLS FOR A MORE ROBUST RESPONSE TO NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

The *Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection* (JCTR) has strongly called for the breaking of the *norm of basic needs inadequacy* that has persisted in Zambia for so many years.

At all levels of the Zambian society, especially by the new government, inadequate food, shelter, incomes, employment and other social problems such as HIV/AIDS, children without homes, malnutrition, etc., must be fought in a more robust way than before manifested in tangible outcomes.

The endured long years of dehumanising experiences that have placed people in desperate situations must come to an end. People need to have at least adequate food to free their energies in pursuit of other activities integral to human existence such intellectual engagements, effective civic participation, etc.

It must be realised that Africa and Zambia's restricted contribution of its own people to their own welfare, including contributions to global processes and ultimately humanity's wellbeing has been seriously compromised by conditions of existence. Until this is addressed effectively, the contribution of Africa, Zambia, will continue being insignificant. That is the big picture that the leadership in Africa, indeed the leadership in Zambia, must reflect on and find ways of changing the status quo for the better. Central to that change are the people seen in terms of their access to adequate food, employment, conditions of reduced HIV/AIDS, access to quality education and health care, etc.

This urgent necessity for meeting the above conditions has consistently been highlighted by the JCTR over the years through its monthly *simplified* but *important* research of surveying the cost of the *Basic Needs Basket* for a family of six. For example, in the month of September, the cost of food, an important component of the *Basic Needs Basket* was K488,850 in Lusaka. This situation was similar across Livingstone, Kabwe, Ndola, Kitwe and Luanshya. It is important to note that these figures reveal to us the *kind* and *extent* of the challenge that Zambia has faced. When costs for transport, education, energy, housing, soap both wash and bath, etc., are added, the challenge even becomes bigger.

That the Zambia people's needs for food, quality education and health care are known is incontestable. The major problem, however, has been the *lethargy of response*. We have to act now with a great sense of urgency to move away from some norms of behaviour that have continued to contribute towards working against promoting the wellbeing of the people, especially those at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder -- those that have inadequate food, shelter, education, health, the poor.

The JCTR hopes to see a break from this *norm of basic needs inadequacy* by ensuring that the new government enables people to have access to quality education and health care, that the country sustains some of the gains in agriculture while paying attention to other needy areas such as crop diversification in its practical sense, irrigation, social protection, etc. These efforts must move along with employment creation. According to the JCTR, Zambia's natural resource base is too broad, too rich, to allow for continued deprived conditions of existence for its *only* 10 million people.

As the world community witnesses some emerging new thinking around development aid approaches, it is hoped that such a situation will spill over and give rise to new local ways and attitudes to addressing problems.

[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]