

Press Statement

19th September, 2018.

JCTR welcomes revised minimum wage

The minimum wage and conditions of employment Act Cap 276 of the Laws of Zambia have been revised following issuance of Statutory Instruments No. 69 of 2018 covering domestic workers, Statutory Instrument No.70 of 2018 covering shop workers and Statutory Instrument No.71 of 2018 provides for general application of all protected workers. The Minister of Labour and Social Security, Joyce Simukoko, stated, “the new wage structure was arrived at on May 18 2018, following extensive consultations and consensus with stakeholders.” The Minister announced that domestic workers will now receive a gross salary of K993.60 from K522.40 while Grade 1 shop workers and general workers will receive K1, 698.60 from K1, 132. The Minister further acknowledged that the revision of the minimum wage was long overdue as the last revision was done in 2012.”

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, welcomes this development and commends government. Not too long ago, the Centre called on government to attach great importance to revising the minimum wages in view of the rising cost of living. The results of the JCTR’s Basic Needs Basket, for a family of five, have shown that the cost of living has consistently been on the increase in the past 12 months. For example, the Lusaka cost of living has risen from K4, 928 in August 2017 to K5, 402 in August 2018. This increase in the cost of living has caused a lot of financial distress especially in the low-income households. In respect of this situation, the centre urged government to prioritize the enactment of laws in the employment and labour sector that will protect workers from being exploited by their employers. The increment in the minimum wages will therefore provide some relief on low income households. More also, the revised minimum wage will help to close the income gap between the rich and poor.

The JCTR has however observed that the increment in the minimum wage may lead to loss of some jobs for some domestic workers as the new wages may be beyond the financial capacity of their employers whose salaries have not received a corresponding increment. In such a situation, the Centre urges that ways on how the minimum wage could be met should be explored between employers and employees to ensure that justice prevails but more also to avoid job losses. The JCTR has observed that despite the wide gap between the cost of living and the revised minimum wage that still exists, the increase will help mitigate domestic workers and other category of workers affordability of basic essentials such as basic food and services (electricity, water).

The JCTR is therefore urging government to implement and lead public sensitisation and awareness on the revised minimum wage. “Making the Public aware about the revised minimum wage is key to successful implementation of the revised minimum wage law as some employers and employees do not understand what the law means and what it entitles”, observed the JCTR. Further, the Centre recommends that in situations where employers could have a challenge to meet the revised minimum wage, they should mutually engage their employees to explore ways that would ensure their obligation is met and justice prevailed. Lastly, the JCTR is urging government to come up with a sector minimum wage so that workers in other sectors could also be protected from exploitation by their employers. Government should also lead by example in the pursuit of paying living wages to workers by revising upwards wages for civil servants who might be the major employers of domestic workers.

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