

Mapping the wages with the cost of living

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MAPPING OF MULTI-SECTORAL WAGES IN RELATION TO THE COST OF LIVING Error!

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Executive Summary

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection with support from the Embassy of Ireland has been tracking and monitoring the cost of living for a family of five through the Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) in Lusaka, Kitwe, Kabwe, Kasama, Livingstone, Mazabuka and Mongu. Through the BNNB the cost of selected food and non-food but essential items are compiled on a monthly basis to determine how much a family will require to meet their basic needs in the selected towns. Based on the BNNB findings, the Centre conducted a study to compare the monthly wages citizens got from January to June, 2021 and the cost of living. The target group included nurses, teachers, marketeers, waiters, security officers, construction workers, domestic workers and bus drivers.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting and analysing data. While qualitative data was collected through interviews and analysed thematically, quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical packages.

The findings suggest that different workers in the selected target groups had different income levels. All the interviewed domestic workers, security officers and waitresses had an income level of K3, 000 and below respectively. Sadly, about 15% of domestic workers were getting an amount of K499 and below. Furthermore, among the construction workers only a proportion of 30.8% had a monthly range of K3, 001 and above as the rest were below this range. Similarly, among bus drivers and marketeers only 28.6 percent and 14.3 percent managed to raise a monthly income above K3, 001 respectively. On the contrary, nurses and teachers registered a different trend where 90.9 % of the nurses who took part in this study had a monthly income between K5, 001 and K7000 and 35.7 percent of teachers also fell within this range. The majority of the teachers (57.1%) said that their monthly income was between K3, 001 and K5, 000.

With regards to the cost of living in the first six months of 2021 as monitored by JCTR, a family of five in towns like Lusaka, Kabwe, Kitwe, Livingstone and Mazabuka needed an amount that was above K5, 000 to meet their basic needs while those in Mongu and Kasama needed between K4, 000 and K4, 900. However, the study established that only 20 (18%) out of 112 (100%) had a monthly income that was above K5, 000 while 92 (82%) were below K5, 000. Therefore, it was concluded that the monthly income was not sufficient for the majority of the participants to afford the cost of living.

Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Ministry of Labour should strengthen monitoring systems to ensure adherence to the labour laws, especially the adherence to stipulated minimum wages and statutory social security contributions. The Ministry should also ensure that legislation on emoluments by both state and non-state institutions include the requirement for periodic cost of living adjustments to salaries and wages as a way of enabling them to stay abreast with the cost of living. Alternatively, the legislation on minimum wage should have a clause enabling a constant review of the minimum wages in line with inflation and cost of living. Other recommendations among others were that; the government should not only create an enabling environment for small scale entrepreneurs to thrive in their businesses to curb income inequalities between civil servants and other

workers but also to improve the local food security system and market by supporting local farmers to make food items more accessible and affordable to the ordinary citizens.

BACKGROUND

1.1 About JCTR

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is a faith-based organisation and a Ministry of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The Centre was formed in 1988 to translate into action Christian principles and values in a 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. Key to its mission is the gathering and analysis of pertinent and topical data on issues, whose results are then employed in popular education and engagement with policy makers, service providers and other duty bearers on the identified issues.

JCTR has for over 30 years been monitoring the cost of living through its urban Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) and since 2008, the Rural Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (RBNNB). The findings from the surveys are used to advocate for improved wellbeing of Zambians especially the poor, marginalised and vulnerable. Specifically, the urban BNNB is a monthly survey of prices of essential food and non-food items in selected towns. The RBNNB on the other hand is a quarterly survey assessing prevailing caloric intake and service provision against recommended indicators. Additionally, in order to understand how people are coping given the cost of living in high density areas, the Centre conducts the Satellite Homes Survey (SHS). The urban and rural BNNB together with the SHS thus form key JCTR tools in its mandate of promoting a faith that does justice.

JCTR with support from Irish Aid is implementing the Nutritious Foods Availability and Affordability Promotion Project whose goal is improved wellbeing of women and children through improved access to locally produced diverse and nutritious foods. It is aimed at complementing efforts of other partners to combat malnutrition by making information on the affordability and availability of nutritious foods available. This information aids consumers to understand the cost of a nutritious diet, whilst encouraging Government to put in place policies that address the affordability and availability of locally produced nutritious and diverse foods.

It is clear that the highlighted key research works provide the institution with a general picture of the cost of living in selected communities. Wages remain an important source of household income and influence people's living standards. In developing countries, a significant number of workers in developing countries still depend on wages to meet their daily basic needs and fulfil their aspirations. Current JCTR surveys do not provide an indication of existing income levels of a diverse category of workers. While the SHS assesses this variable, given the target area of the study, it alienates a certain category of workers and

therefore not representative. Income is a key variable in providing a more nuanced assessment of the impact of the rising cost of living on households.

1.2. Policy and Context

Income inequality is one of the social injustices that has contributed greatly to the widening gap between the rich and the poor. According to the OECD (2015)¹, the gap widens because those who get high salaries are able to sustain their basic needs and invest the surplus, while those with low salaries may fail to meet their basic needs and consequently not invest in anything. As a result, the poor remain poor while the rich become richer. The consequences of these inequalities have prompted international and national mitigation efforts as discussed below.

At the global level, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) through ‘The protection of Wages Convention of 1949 (No.95)’ requires that people must be paid decent wages for the work they have done². While many workers in Zambia may not be considered poor in official statistics, given their very low wages that hinder them from providing sufficient safety net, they are a month’s salary away from falling back into poverty. The working population thus need higher wages and stronger safety nets to make the exit from poverty a permanent one.

In the Zambian context, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Labour has put up laws for decent wages/salaries and working conditions. Following the ratification of Convention No. 131 of the International Labour Organization³, Zambia enacted the Minimum Wages and Conditions of Employment Act No. 25 of 1982, CAP 267 of the laws of Zambia in 1972 that was further amended in 1994⁴. Through the Act, the country has adopted minimum wage legislation in an effort to enhance the wages of lowly paid workers for the reasons stated earlier. One such law is the Minimum Wage and Conditions of Employment Act, Cap 276. The minimum wage legislation covers domestic, shop and general workers (including casual workers), but excludes government and local authority and unionized employees covered by collective agreements and management. The minimum wage inevitably has negative effects such as the ones mentioned above. However, it remains among the instruments Government can use to improve the remuneration of lowly paid workers and reduce the prevalence of the working poor. The main objective of this Act is to regulate the minimum wage levels and conditions of service for casual and domestic workers. Civil servants on the other hand are paid according to their qualifications which are graded into

¹ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/data/earnings/minimum-wages-relative-to-median-wages_data-00313-en.

² https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312240#:~:text=Article%2012-,1.,collective%20agreement%20or%20arbitration%20award.

³ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C131.

⁴ Minimum Wages and Conditions of Employment Act No. 25 of 1982.

salary scales. All these measures show the effort the government is putting up to make sure that citizens are paid according to the value of their work.

In the midst of this effort, it is worthwhile to ask if at all these wages and salaries enable Zambian citizens to meet their basic needs. A search through literature in the bid to answer this question revealed that there are no studies that have been conducted outside JCTR to compare wages citizens get and the current cost of living. Therefore, it is against this background that this study seeks to establish existing income levels across different categories of workers and compare with the cost of living in order to strengthen JCTR's advocacy work.

2.0. RATIONALE TO THE WAGES MAPPING

The significance of this study was twofold; firstly, by mapping the wages of different categories of workers to the cost of living, it provided JCTR with evidence based information needed for advocacy work in an event that the salaries are too low for the cost of living. Therefore, this study provided an insight on how sufficient or insufficient the wages were in relation to the cost of living according to JCTR's BNNB monthly findings. Clearly, the findings of this study were important in informing wages related policy reforms. Secondly, the study also highlighted the different income levels among different categories of workers. As a result, it exposed the extent of income inequalities that existed in society thereby providing evidence of inequalities needed for JCTR's social justice work.

3.0. SCOPE OF WORK

3.1 Main Objective

- To establish existing income levels across different categories of selected workers to strengthen JCTR's advocacy work.

Specific objectives

1. To explore the wages selected groups of people get on a monthly basis.
2. To determine the sufficiency of the monthly wages of selected categories of workers in sustaining their cost of living.

Research Questions

This work responded to the following key research questions:

1. How much do the selected workers get for their salary on a monthly basis?
2. How has the cost of living been between January and June, 2021 in the ten Provinces of Zambia?
3. Compared with the cost of living, are the wages sufficient enough to meet the basic needs of the selected workers?
4. If at all the wages are not sufficient, which category of selected workers is more affected by the high cost of living?

4.0. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Study area

The study was conducted in 7 selected towns as outlined in table 1 below. These 7 towns were purposively selected because the cost of living in these places is tracked on a monthly basis by JCTR's BNNB research activities.

Table 1 Selected Study Areas for the Wage Mapping

PROVINCE	TOWN(S)
Lusaka	Lusaka
Central	Kabwe
Southern	Livingstone, Mazabuka
Western	Mongu
Copperbelt	Kitwe
Northern	Kasama

4.2. Research Design

A descriptive, comparative and analytical study type was envisaged to meet the objectives of this study. Additionally, both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting and analysing data were employed. This approach was useful because it facilitated the establishments of different income levels of different workers and also in determining the sufficiency or inadequacy of their monthly income. The study was based on both primary and secondary data.

4.3. Target Population

The study collected wage data from the below tabulated list of workers which provides a variety of workers from a diverse financial background. Nurses and teachers are public servants with a stable income whereas waitresses, security guards, construction workers, domestic workers and some bus drivers operate on contract basis and most of these work for private firms or individuals. Marketeers on the other hand are self-employed. Therefore, the findings from this study presented a multi-sectoral group of workers which helped the study to meet its objective of understanding the existing income levels among various groups. Above all, the selection of these workers was informed by the fact that this category of workers did not fall in the high or middle-income brackets and was therefore likely to experience financial stress in meeting the cost of living.

Table 2 Wage mapping-Selected Category of Workers

NO.	CATEGORY	JUSTIFICATION
1.	Teacher	Public Servant
2.	Nurse	Public Servant
3.	Bus Driver	Contract/self-employment
4.	Security Guard	Contract
5.	Construction Worker	Contract
6.	Marketeer	Self-employment

7.	Domestic Worker	Contract
8.	Waitress	Contract

4.4. Sample Selection

The participants of this study were drawn from 7 towns listed in table 1. Additionally, two participants representing each category of workers was selected in each town. Therefore, a total of 16 candidates for each worker category was interviewed in each town. This gave a total of 112 interviews as shown in Table 3. The study sample was purposively selected since the study did not need a representative sample. Rather, it sought to interview respondents that were well informed about the subject matter and were in a position to provide a rich set of information on the subject under study.

Table 3 Distribution of the sample among different worker categories

Category	Total No./Town	Total
Teacher	2	14
Nurse	2	14
Bus Driver	2	14
Security guard	2	14
Construction worker	2	14
Marketeer	2	14
Domestic worker	2	14
Waitress	2	14
TOTAL	16	112

4.5. Data Collection

Data was collected using both primary and secondary qualitative research methods. Specifically, while interviews were conducted to address the first objective of establishing income levels among different workers, document analysis was done to assess the cost of living from January to June 2021. The data from the documents was also meant to help the study establish the sufficiency of the wages in meeting the basic needs.

4.6. Data Analysis

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysing data. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to gain insight into what the workers thought triggered the cost of living and also their coping strategies. Additionally, quantitative research methods were used to understand the income levels of different workers and also to

determine how many fell in which income level for each group. To this end SPSS and Microsoft excel was used to analyse the data and generate graphs for the presentation of findings.

5.0. FINDINGS

5.1. Existing income levels across different categories of selected workers

The study sought to establish income levels among different categories of selected workers who comprised of teachers, nurses, bus drivers (that operated within the selected towns), construction workers, marketeers domestic workers, security officers and domestic workers. In order to clearly, understand the income levels, each category of workers was analysed individually as outlined below;

5.1.2. Marketeers

Figure 1 below shows the income levels for marketeers between January and June, 2021;

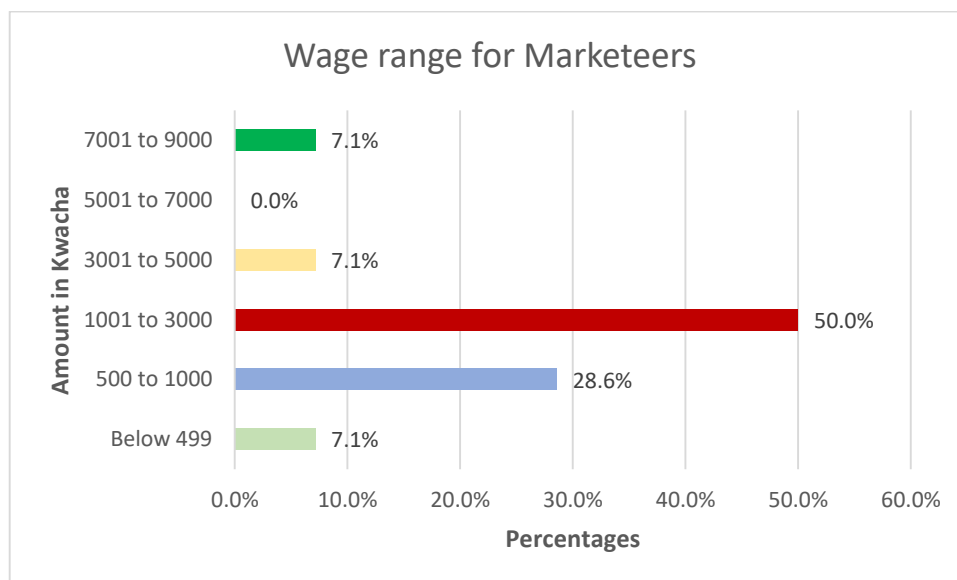


Figure 1 Wage range for marketeers

The findings in the figure above suggest that 50 percent of the marketeers had their monthly wages in the range of K1, 001 to K3, 000 while 28.6% were in the range of K500 to K1, 000. Additionally, the percentages of those whose income levels were in the ranges below K499, K3, 001 to K5, 000 and K7, 001 to K9, 000 stood at 7.1 percent for each category respectively. Clearly, 85.7% of this category had an average income of below K3, 000 in all the towns between January and June, 2021.

5.1.3. Domestic Workers

Figure 2 illustrates the income levels for domestic workers. The results show that about three quarters (76.9%) of domestic worker's income levels fell between K500 and K1, 000 with only 7.7 percent getting above K1, 000 (Between 1001 to K3, 000 to be precise). Unfortunately,

within the category of domestic workers, 15.4 percent were being paid an amount below K500.

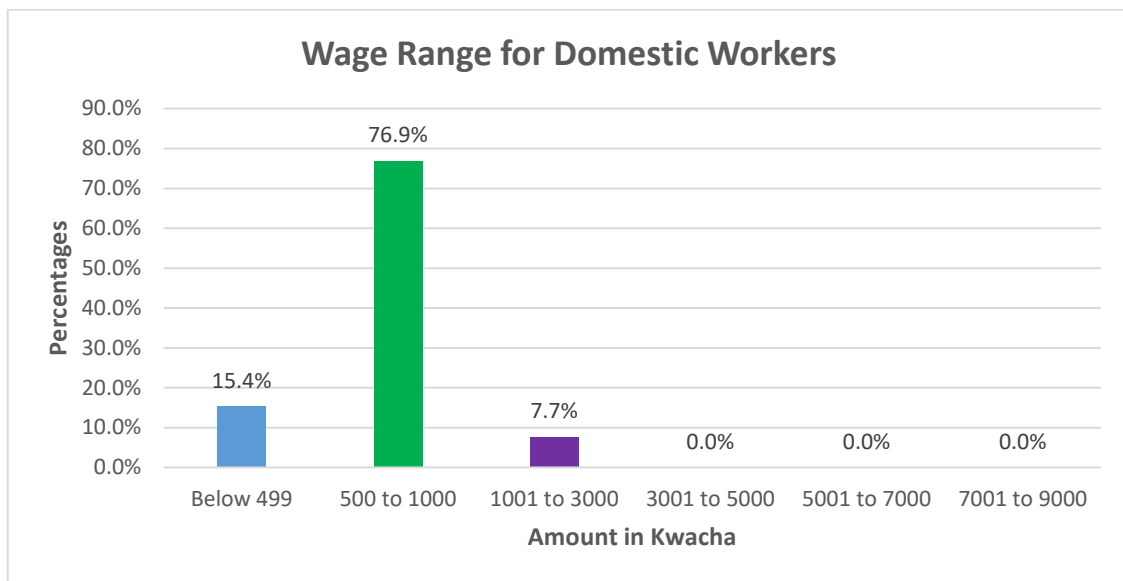


Figure 2 Wage range for Domestic Workers

5.1. 4. Security officers

Security officers and domestic workers followed a similar trend where more than 70 percent of the respondents were getting between K500 and K1, 000. Specifically, *figure 3* below shows that 71.4 percent of security officers who were interviewed were within the range of K500 and K1, 000 while 28.6 percent had an income which was above K1, 000 kwacha but not beyond K3, 000.

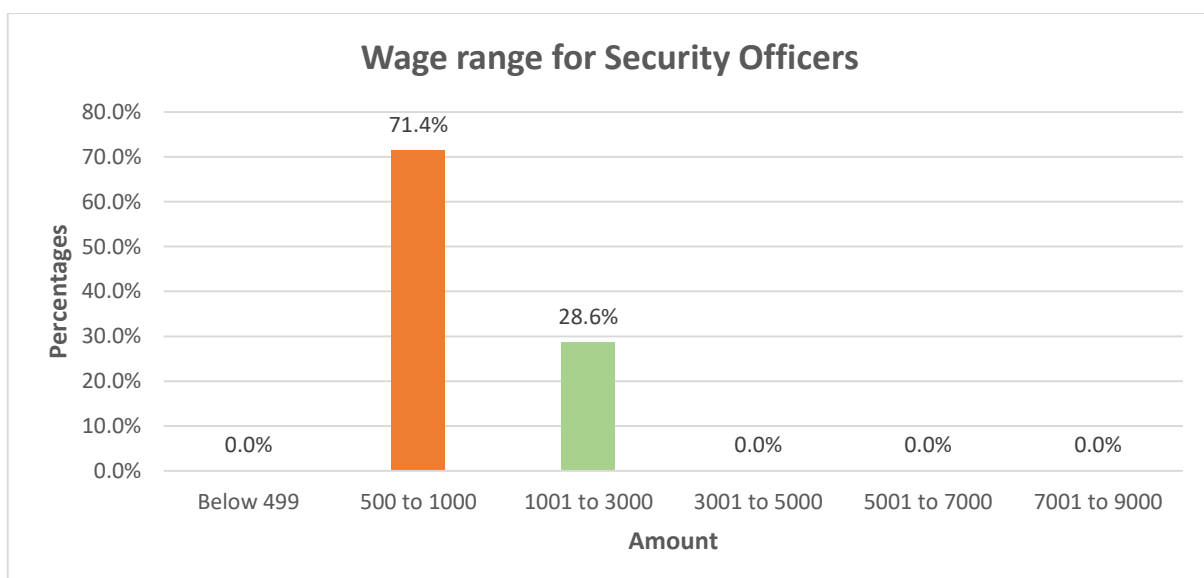


Figure 3 Wage range for Security Officers

5.1.5. Nurses

Figure 4 illustrates the income level of nurses. The findings revealed that 90.9 percent of the nurses who took part in the study had an income that ranged between K5, 001 and K7, 000 while 9.1 percent were between K3, 001 and K5, 000. The variations could have been triggered by the different salary scales of civil servants.

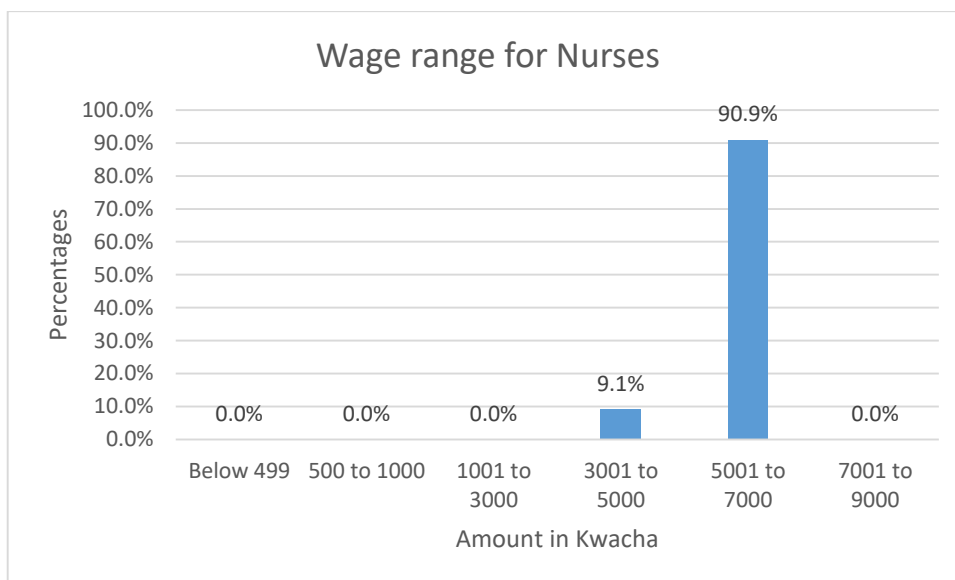


Figure 4 Wage range for Nurses

5.1.6. Waiters and Waitresses

The study also explored the wages of those who work in the hospitality industry. To these effect waiters/waitresses were asked to state their monthly income between January and June, 2021. Figure 5 shows the findings. Accordingly, the majority representing 71.4 percent of the respondents had an income range of K1, 001 and K3, 000 while 21.4 percent had a monthly income that fell between K5, 00 and K1, 000. Evidently, only 7.1 percent in this category were getting a monthly income that was between K3, 001 and K5, 000.

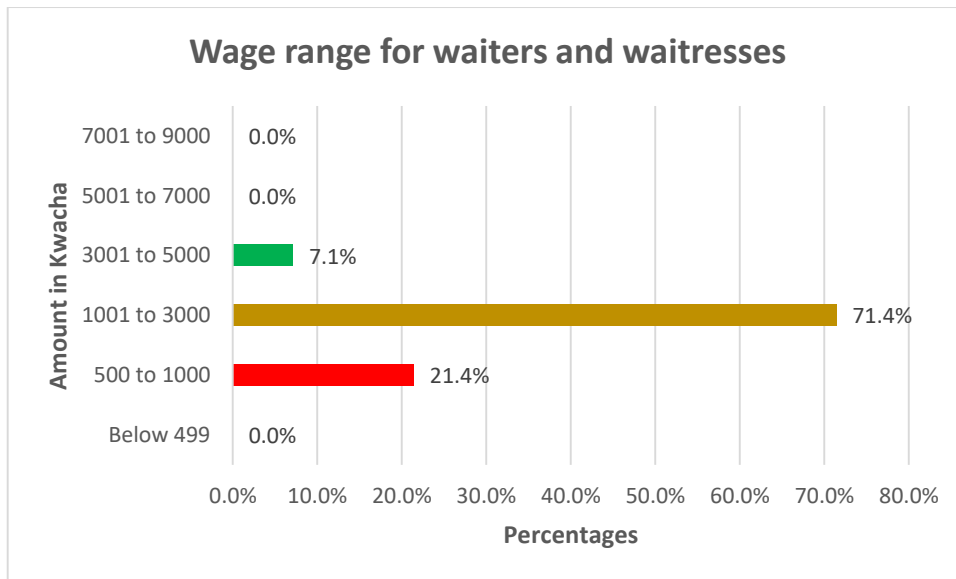


Figure 5 Wage range for waiters and waitresses

5.1.7. Drivers

Figure 6 shows the income distribution of drivers. The results showed that 71.4 percent of them had an income range that fell within the range of K1, 001 and K3, 000. The other group which accounted for 14.3 percent were within a range of K3, 001 and K5, 000 while 7.1 percent were in a range of K5, 001 and K7, 000. Interestingly, all those who had an income range above K3, 000 were managing their own transport businesses and owned more than one bus which operated within Kitwe and Mazabuka towns.

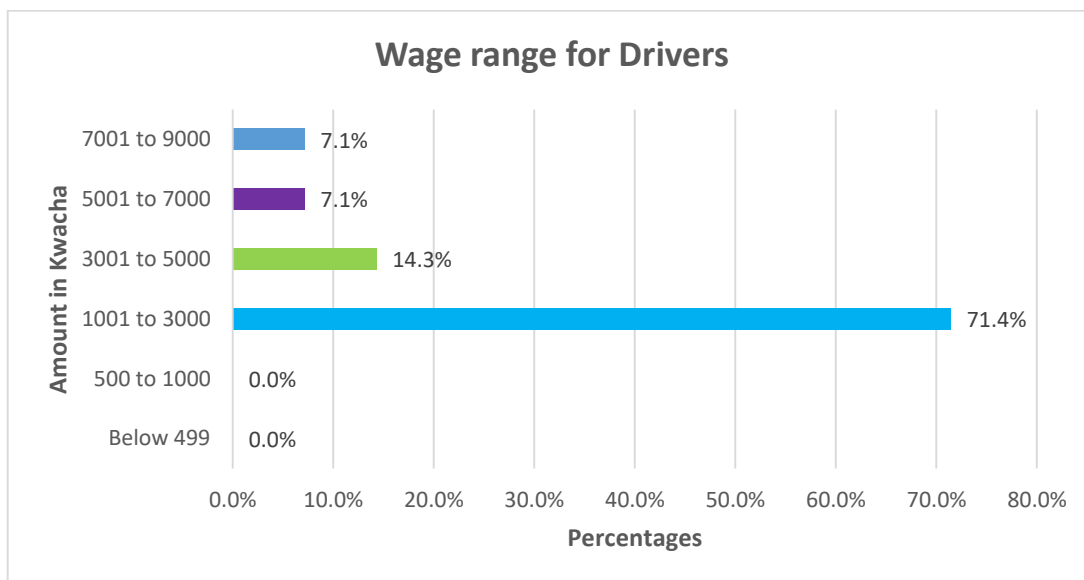


Figure 6 Wage range for Drivers

5.1.8. Construction Workers

Figure 7 provides information about the wages of construction workers between January and June, 2021. In this category, carpenters and bricklayers who were not attached to any construction company were interviewed. The idea was to have an insight into the monthly income of those workers who operate on a freelance basis. The findings suggest that 38.5 percent of them got a monthly income that was within the range of K1, 001 and K3, 000. Another proportion of 30.8 percent had a monthly income that was between K500 and K1, 000. Furthermore, 23.1 percent indicated that their monthly income was between K3, 001 and 5, 000 while 7.7 percent fell within a range of K5, 001 and K7, 000. Seemingly, those who operated from Livingstone, Mazabuka, Kabwe and Lusaka had slightly higher wages than those from other towns.

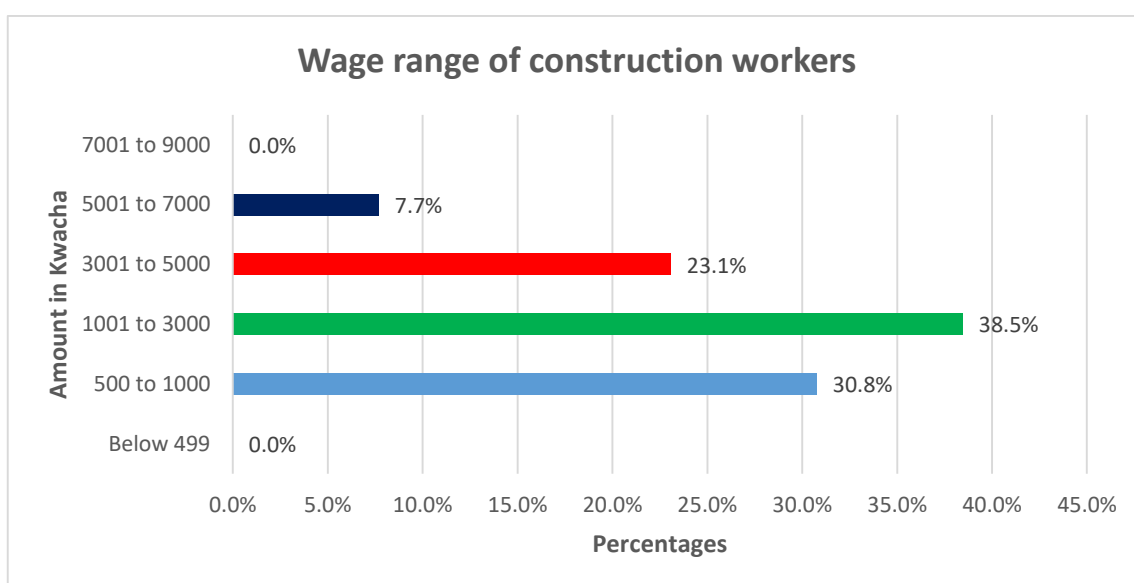


Figure 7 Wage range for construction workers

5.1.9. Primary School Teachers

The bar chart in figure 8 illustrates the wage range of primary school teachers in the seven towns where the survey was conducted. The results show that more than 50 percent of these teachers had a salary range of K3, 001 and K5, 000 whereas 35.7 percent indicated that their monthly income was between K5, 001 and K7, 000. However, there was a small proportion of 7.1 percent whose monthly income was between K1, 001 and K3, 000. The variation in income among these civil servants could be as a result of different salary scales among teachers based on their professional qualification. This trend was also observed among nurses.

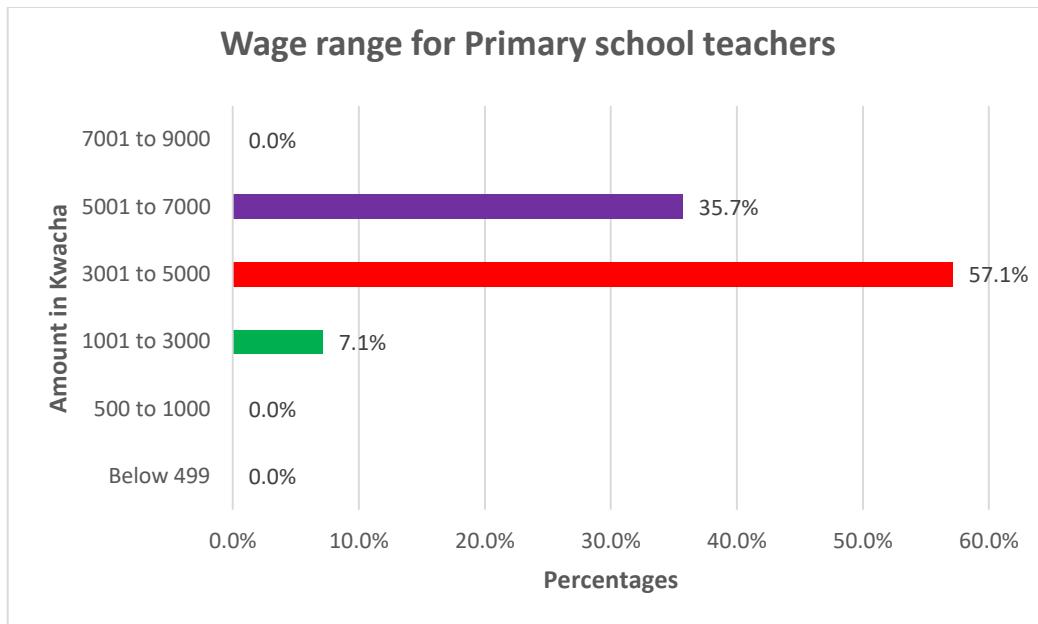


Figure 8 Wage range for Primary School Teachers

5.2. The sufficiency of the monthly wages of selected categories of workers in sustaining their cost of living.

The study also envisaged to establish whether the monthly wages were enough for these workers to meet their monthly basic needs. To meet this objective, participants were asked to explain whether they were able to meet their basic needs using their monthly income without outsourcing from elsewhere. *Figure 9* below illustrates their responses;

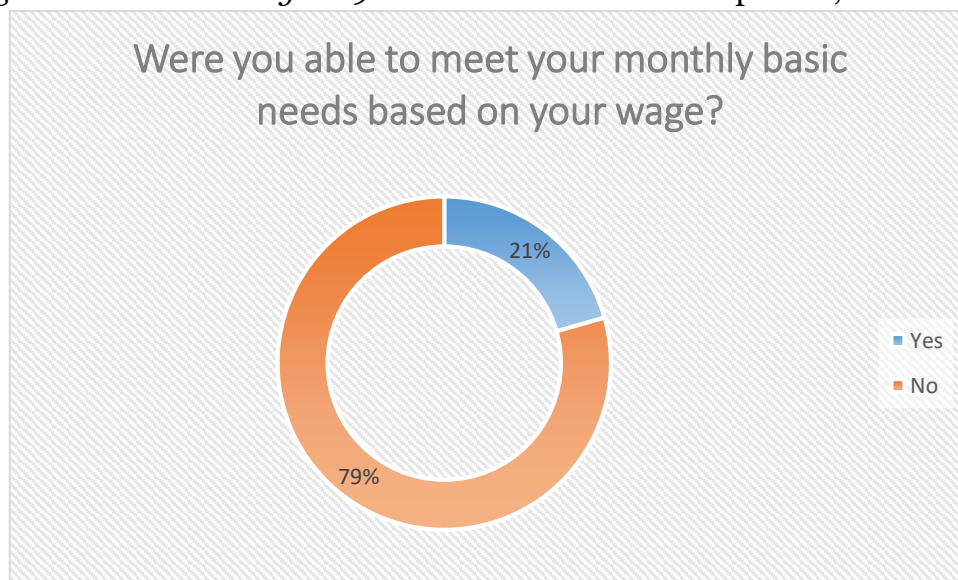


Figure 9 An Assessment of the ability to meet monthly basic needs

According to the diagram above, only 23 respondents out of 112 participants representing 21 percent were able to meet their basic needs using their monthly wages while 89 accounting for 86 percent of the total interviewed population were unable to. From those who could meet their basic needs, the majority were civil servants followed by drivers who were managing their own businesses and had more than one vehicle operating within that respective town.

Another group that was able to meet the basic needs included a few marketeers and construction workers.

Additionally, it is important to emphasise that within these groups there were still respondents who were unable to meet their monthly basic needs. For instance, among the construction workers, only 7.7 percent had a monthly wage above K5, 000 whereas among the drivers only 14.2% were above that threshold. Additionally, even among teachers there were less than 50 percent (35.7%) of those who had an income above K5, 000. However, the case was different among nurses as 90.9 percent of them were above K5, 000.

Unfortunately, among domestic workers, security workers and waiters/waitresses none of them had a monthly income that was above K5, 000. The findings also revealed that 100% of each of these categories of workers could not afford to acquire monthly basic needs.

5.3. Level of cost of living between January and June, 2021

The respondents were also asked to rate the cost of living between January and June, 2021. *Figure 10* provides an insight into how respondents viewed the cost of living during that period.

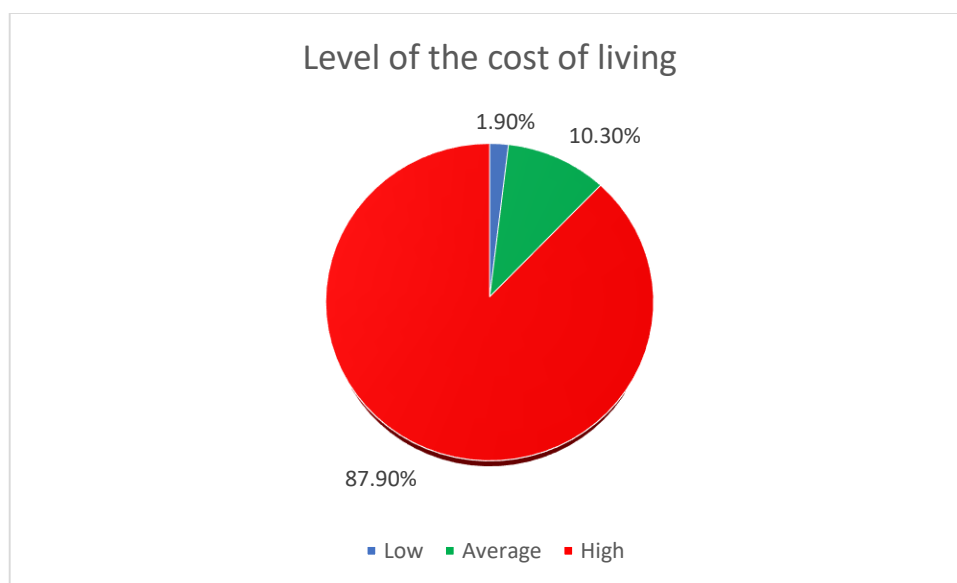


Figure 10 An assessment of the level of the cost of living

The results showed that 87.90 percent of the respondents perceived the cost of living to have been high during that period, 10.30 percent felt that the cost of living was average while a small proportion (1.90%) indicated that the cost of living was low. Clearly, the majority of them found the cost of living to have been high. This finding is in tandem with the findings of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection's Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) which revealed some upward movements in the cost of living in all the towns in most of the months of the first half of 2021.

With regards to the cost of living per town, the average figures extracted from JCTR's BNNB findings shown in *figure 11* suggested that Lusaka had the highest cost of living at K8, 537.74 followed by Kitwe and Kabwe with K6, 870.55 and K6, 789.98 respectively. Additionally, the southern province towns which are Mazabuka and Livingstone had their cost of living hovering slightly below K6, 000 with Mazabuka recording K5, 999.16 and K5, 951.48. Interestingly, the lowest cost of living was recorded in Kasama whose average was at K4, 200.03 followed by Mongu at K4, 723.12.

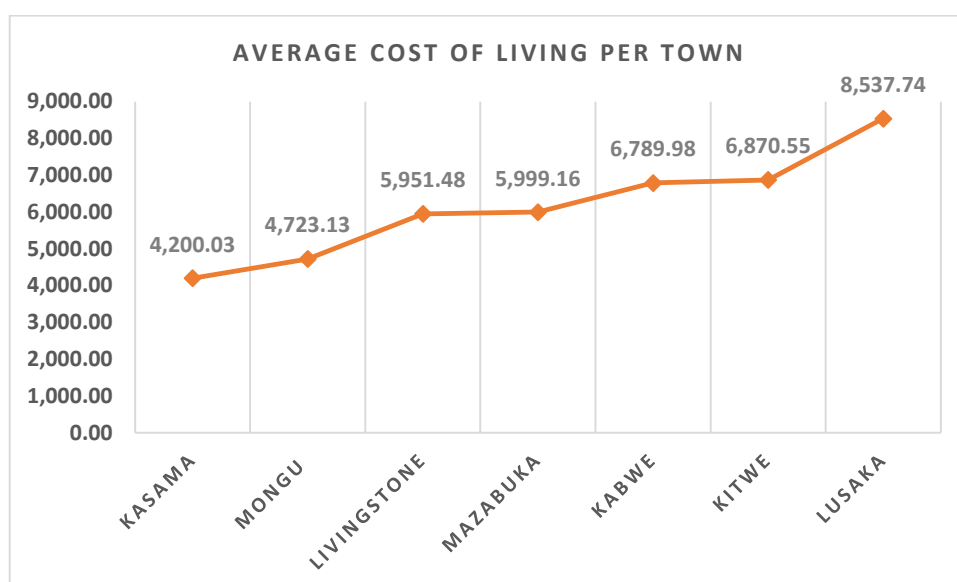


Figure 11 The average cost of living per town

Table 4 below illustrates the actual figures of the cost of living for each town from January to July;

Table 4 Cost of living between January and June, 2021

TOWN	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	AVERAGE
Lusaka	K8, 394.01	K8, 512.31	K8, 644.50	K8, 743.89	K8, 442.24	K8, 489.48	K8, 537.74
Kabwe	K6, 734.83	K6, 853.91	K7, 033.75	K6, 720.71	K6, 695.95	K6, 700.72	K6, 789.98
Livingstone	K5, 407.56	K6, 107.43	K6, 289.23	K6, 615.57	K5, 660.09	K5, 629.01	K5, 951.48
Mazabuka	K5, 027.35	K5, 759.64	K5, 953.66	K5, 970.53	K6, 555.64	K6, 728.12	K5, 999.16
Mongu	K4, 402.41	K4, 738.68	K4, 944.42	K4, 876.92	K4, 700.14	K4, 676.21	K4, 723.13
Kitwe	K6, 256.95	K6, 605.92	K6, 675.64	K6, 955.58	K7, 166.36	K7, 562.83	K6, 870.55
Kasama	K3, 854.99	K4, 140.66	K4, 276.64	K3, 973.17	K4, 278.53	K4, 676.21	K4, 200.03

Adapted from JCTR's BNNB statements for January to June 2021.

The BNNB results showed that the cost of living for Kitwe and Mazabuka continued rising throughout the first half of the year while in Lusaka, Livingstone and Mongu the rise was from January to April before recording a decline in May. On the contrary, Kabwe and Kasama saw an increase in the first three months of the year before recording a fall in the fourth month. It is evidently clear that indeed the cost of living was high for workers who had low income levels. Based on these findings it can be concluded that the most affected workers are those whose income levels were low. Specifically, in comparison with the cost of living in *table*

1, it can be concluded that the most affected categories of workers are those whose monthly income levels were below K5, 000. The section below presents the reasons why the cost of living was high based on the participants' responses;

5.4. Factors that triggered the upward movement in the cost of living.

The respondents were asked further to explain what they thought could have triggered the upward movement in the cost of living. Two common themes emerged from the data which are basic needs and low salaries. The majority of the respondents felt that the upward movement of the cost of living was triggered by the increase in the cost of basic needs such as education, food and housing (rentals). The participants indicated that it is a tradition for school fees and rentals to go up at the beginning of the year. The study also established that food was very expensive during this period and the cited food items were mealie-meal and cooking oil. On the rentals and food, one respondent who was getting below K1, 000 lamented that;

“Rentals increased in January 2021 from K350 to K450 and food also became expensive.”

5.5. Coping Mechanisms

Considering that most of the participants indicated that the cost of living was higher than their salaries, the study sought to establish how they managed to cope with the situation.

1. Reducing the number of meals per day

Two of the participants indicated that they reduced the number of meals as expressed in the following responses;

- *We reduce the number of meals in a day*
- *I stopped having my three regular meals in a day instead I started having one or two meals a day, I also stopped buying some necessities like clothes*

2. Small scale businesses

Venturing in business was another option for a considerable number of participants as evidenced in the following responses;

- *I started doing business such as selling beans, Kapenta and groundnuts just to meet my basic needs*
- *I started a small business at home of selling tomatoes and vegetables so that I can cope with the situation*
- *I do a business of selling popcorns*
- *I have a Kantemba (small trading structure or kiosk for conducting small scale business ventures).*

3. Piece works

Some respondents indicated that in order to cope with the high cost of living they engaged in different types of piece works. However, this activity was common among waiters/waitresses, domestic workers and security officers. The following were the responses illustrating the different types of works they were engaged in apart from their full time jobs;

- *Doing some piece works such as digging soakaways*
- *I used to do some piece works such as garbage collection*
- *I work as a Barber man sometimes*
- *I did some piece works when off duty*

4. Borrowing from money lenders, village banking, and work place and family members.

Some participants borrowed money from money lenders and village banking while others got help from family and friends to cope with the escalating cost of living during the first six months of 2021. Below are the responses;

- *I joined village banking where am allowed to borrow money when in need,*
- *I get help from my relatives*
- *I joined village banking where am allowed to borrow money when in need,*
- *I borrowed kaloba of K1, 500 and I paid back with an interest of K750 (Kaloba: money borrowed from local money lenders with 50% interest)*
- *I borrowed money from friends*
- *Got a salary advance*
- *I get help from my relatives*

5. Gardening and Farming

Gardening and farming became a means of sustenance for some families. Specifically, the participants indicated that they started gardening to stop spending on certain foods which they could produce for themselves. Below are some of their responses;

- *I had to start a backyard garden for home consumption and selling*
- *I Started Gardening and farming*
- *I do farming*
- *Farming became an alternative*

6. Discussion of Findings

The main objective of this study was to establish existing income levels across different categories of selected workers in order to strengthen JCTR's advocacy work. This objective was further divided into the following two specific objectives; to explore the wages selected groups of people got on a monthly basis and also to determine the sufficiency of the monthly wages of selected categories of workers in sustaining their cost of living. This section therefore will be organised according to the specific objectives.

6.1. Wages selected groups of people got on a monthly basis

The study explored the monthly income of nurses, primary school teachers, waiters/waitresses, security guards, construction workers, domestic workers and bus drivers. The wages were divided into the following ranges;

- Below K499
- K5, 00 to K1, 000
- K1, 001 to K3, 000
- K3, 001 to K5, 000
- K5, 001 to K7, 000
- K7, 001 to K9, 000

The decision to divide the wages into ranges was motivated by two reasons; the first one was that some respondents like bus drivers, marketeers and construction workers had no fixed monthly income as a result they could only estimate. Secondly, some of the respondents were not comfortable to reveal the exact amount they got every month so they opted to provide the interviewers with estimates.

The findings of this study suggest that only 20 (18%) out of 112(100%) had a monthly income of above K5, 000 while 92 (82%) were getting below that. Additionally, while other groups of workers such as construction workers, marketeers, teachers, nurses and drivers had income variations amongst themselves with others having an income that was either below or above K5, 000, 100 percent of the interviewed domestic workers, security workers and waiters and waitresses had an income level that was below K5, 000. Conversely, the highest earning group was that of nurses where 90.9 percent had a monthly income of K5, 001 to K7, 000.

Another important revelation of this study was that while the minimum wage for Domestic workers according to the Statutory Instrument number 69 of 2018 is K993,⁵ domestic workers who took part in this study were getting a monthly wage that was below K499 which is against the Zambian labour laws. This clearly shows that domestic workers are among the vulnerable group of workers who lack wage protection in Zambia. Therefore, governments must make sure that they are protected against any form of discrimination. In this case, there is need for the Ministry of Labour to monitor the implementation of labour laws at household level.

6.2. Sufficiency of monthly wages in sustaining the cost of living

To strengthen JCTR's advocacy work in promoting social justice, the study sought to establish the sufficiency of the selected workers' wages. To successfully do this, the monthly BNNB statements produced by JCTR were compiled to understand the cost of living in the selected towns between January and June, 2021. The Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket is a tool used by JCTR to measure the cost of living by tracking the cost of living for a family of five (JCTR,

⁵ <https://www.enotices.co.zm/download/statutory-instrument-no-69-of-2018-the-minimum-wages-and-conditions-of-service-act-pdf/>.

2020). The Basket is comprised of selected nutritious foods and non-food items⁶. The findings of the BNNB are tabulated in *table 1* in the findings section.

The findings showed that a family of five based in Lusaka, Kabwe, Livingstone, Mazabuka and Kitwe needed more than K5, 000 to meet their monthly basic needs while those in Mongu and Kasama needed an amount ranging from K4, 000 to K4, 900. Based on this finding, it can be argued that the monthly income of most of the workers was not sufficient. This is because the majority of them except among the nurses had a monthly income that was below K5, 000 as summarised in table 1 below;

Table 5 Distribution of percentages of workers' income levels per category

Category	Below K5, 000	Above K5, 000
Marketeers	92.9%	7.1%
Domestic Workers	100%	0%
Security workers	100%	0%
Nurses	9.1%	90.9%
Waiters	100%	0%
Drivers	85.7%	14.3%
Construction workers	95.5%	4.5%
Teachers	64.2%	35.8%

The figures in *table 5* clearly show that compared to the cost of living as measured by JCTR, the monthly income was not enough for most families to meet their basic needs. The upward movement could have been triggered by the cost of food during the COVID-19 lockdown, which according to JCTR's trends analysis conducted in Lusaka, Livingstone and Kitwe revealed that the cost of food in the first half of 2021 was high especially in the first three months of the year (JCTR, 2021). Additionally, while all the categories of workers had a population that struggled to make ends meet, the most affected categories were domestic workers, security workers and waiters whose monthly income for all of them fell below K3, 000. These aforementioned categories were followed by marketeers, construction workers, drivers who were working for others and teachers. The least affected group was that of nurses.

Furthermore, 87.90 percent of the respondents confessed that the cost of living was high during that period to the extent that some of them came up with unsustainable coping strategies such as reducing the number of meals a day. A reduction in the number of meals promotes malnutrition which is one of the major challenges Zambia is facing⁷. According to USAID, the main cause of malnutrition lies in systemic challenges to food, water and sanitation. This clearly shows that a low income has far reaching repercussions on the lives of citizens. While some mechanisms were unsustainable, other coping strategies like small scale businesses and farming are quite empowering. As the government of the republic of

⁶ See: <https://www.jctr.org.zm/bnnb>.

⁷https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tagged_Zambia-Nutrition-Profile.pdf.

Zambia is embarking on the fight against poverty, it can capitalise on the already existing initiatives through the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises to empower those with low income scales.

7. Conclusion

The study established that different workers had different levels of income. The domestic workers, security officers and waitresses had an income level of K3, 000 and below. This meant that these were the most affected groups regarding the impact of the high cost of living. Sadly, about 15% of domestic workers were getting an amount of K499 and below. Additionally, a family of five in towns like Lusaka, Kabwe, Kitwe, Livingstone and Mazabuka needed an amount that was above K5, 000 to meet their basic needs while those in Mongu and Kasama it was between K4, 000 and K4, 900. Against this background of the high cost of living, only 20 (18%) out of 112 (100%) had a monthly income that was above K5, 000 while 92 (82%) were below K5, 000. Therefore, it was concluded that the monthly income was not sufficient for the majority of the participants to afford the cost of living.

8. Recommendations

- a) **The Ministry of Labour should strengthen monitoring systems:** monitoring the systems will enable the Ministry to establish the extent to which the adherence to the stipulated minimum wages and statutory social security contributions are being implemented.
- b) **A periodic cost of living review and adjustments to salaries and wages:** The government through the Ministry of Labour should include a legislative requirement on emoluments by both state and non-state institutions for the periodic review of the cost of living and wages to stay abreast with the cost of living. Alternatively, the legislation on minimum wage should have a clause enabling a constant review of the minimum wages in line with inflation and cost of living. This can be done in collaboration with stakeholders such as JCTR among others who conduct monthly research on the cost of living.
- c) **Strengthening the mechanisms for small scale entrepreneurs:** to curb income inequalities between civil servants and other workers, the government should create an enabling environment for small scale entrepreneurs to thrive in their businesses to afford their basic needs. For instance, apart from the creation of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise, the government should increase funding to the Citizen Economic Empowerment Commission to enable it increase the number of people being empowered with business skills.
- d) **Comprehensive Support Programme in Practice to increase support to the local food security system:** Improving the local food security system and market by supporting local farmers to make food items more accessible and affordable to the ordinary citizens.
- e) **Government must prioritize the generation of timely data to know the true extent of vulnerability in the country:** Zambia has never had a comprehensive Living Conditions Survey to measure poverty and vulnerability since 2015. It is true that since 2015 a lot of things have changed and with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the levels of

vulnerability have gone up. However, in the absence of a comprehensive survey, it is difficult to know the actual number of vulnerable people. This means it is difficult to even target beneficiaries correctly.

- f) The Government should ensure the Social Protection Bill is enacted:** the enacting of the Social Protection Bill will ensure provision of social protection becomes law and the Government is mandated. This is going to be one way of guaranteeing the poor of much needed support. With rising inequality in Zambia, the social protection bill will ensure resource redistribution is enshrined in the laws of Zambia to ensure the poor are taken care of where markets fail to allocate much needed resources to them.
- g) The Government should prioritize the revision of the 2014-2018 National Social Protection Policy:** Since 2014 a lot of things have changed in social protection. Additionally, the 2014 policy was meant to be revised in 2018. However, this has not been done which means the policy continues to remain outdated and unable to address emerging issues in its current form.
- h) The Government must pursue innovative strategies for the mobilization of resources to fund social protection:** To ensure sustainability of spending on social protection, government needs to pursue domestic resource mobilisation strategies. This will ensure an increased pool of domestic resources.



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