



JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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BNNB Statement

May 31st, 2024.

Climate Change and Rising Costs in Zambia Become Increasingly Apparent as the Cost of Living Rises in May 2024

The nexus between climate change and the rising cost of living is undeniable. With the devastating effects of the prolonged droughts in the country, the impact has further highlighted already existing inequalities. As a driver of the rising cost of living, the climate crisis often escalates challenges in the food supply chain, leading to increased prices of food items. During the month of May, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) observed a rise in the Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) survey which now stands at K10, 701.13 representing a K352.87 increase in the total basket compared to the month of April. The increase in the basket was due to the observed increase in the price of charcoal which stood at K458.33 from K343.33 for a 90kg bag. Additionally, it was observed that the price of tomatoes also increased to K29.99 per kg from K16.38 per kg.

The most significant change observed in the basket was due to an increase in the price of charcoal. This increase was driven by several factors affecting the charcoal markets within Lusaka. Firstly, the ban on charcoal production in three districts — Shibuyungi, Itezhi-Tezhi, and Mumbwa— announced in April, took effect during the month under review. Additionally, the rise in fuel pump prices has increased transportation costs. Furthermore, extended hours of load shedding have led to higher demand for charcoal in households. This is despite the presence of seemingly cheaper alternatives such as gas for cooking and solar for lighting, which, upon closer inspection, may not actually be as economical especially for the common man.

In the context of the increasing cost of living and the challenges surrounding charcoal production in Zambia, it is essential to consider the perspective of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on

“A JUST ZAMBIAN SOCIETY GUIDED BY FAITH, WHERE EVERYONE ENJOYS FULLNESS OF LIFE”

care for our common home. Laudato Si' emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues. The rise in charcoal prices due to bans and increased demand highlights the tension between environmental stewardship and economic survival. On one hand, the ban on charcoal production in districts like Shibuyungi, Itezhi-Tezhi, and Mumbwa is a necessary measure to combat deforestation and protect the environment. On the other hand, it affects the livelihoods of many who depend on charcoal production as a livelihood.

As a Centre we remained committed to advocating for policies and initiatives that promote environmental stewardship and decent living conditions for every Zambian especially the poor and marginalised. Therefore, to address such a complex issue requires action and policy that is equitable, sustainable and responsive to the climate crisis while safeguarding the livelihoods of people. We therefore make the following recommendations:

1. *Promote Sustainable Energy Alternatives:* There is an imperative to expand access to and reduce costs of alternative energy sources, such as briquettes, which can be manufactured from readily available materials like wood shavings, sawdust, or recycled wood, paper, or leaves. Currently, limited options force many individuals to rely on charcoal for their energy needs, exacerbating environmental degradation and contributing to the rising costs of living.
2. *Enhance Agricultural Resilience:* Support the implementation of climate-resilient agricultural practices to ensure food security amidst changing climate conditions.
3. *Strengthen Local Economies and Livelihoods:* There remains need to develop and support alternative livelihood programs for those affected by the charcoal ban, including training in sustainable trades and crafts. Furthermore, the provision of microfinance opportunities can help rural communities engage in strengthening the value chains and linkages of agribusinesses.
4. *Implement Comprehensive Environmental Policies:* Enforce regulations that protect forests and promote reforestation and afforestation initiatives. Afforestation for one ensures restoration of environmental degradation. Replanting the trees and forest already depleted is still very relevant to restoring soil fertility and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

The observed price hikes underscore the intricate link between climate change and economic instability. The harsh effects of the climate crises are yet another wake up call to the urgency for the need to act and respond to this critical issue as the poor and marginalized communities bear the brunt of these changes, facing heightened food insecurity and economic strain. It is therefore key that we balance the immediate needs of the poor with long-term environmental goals, fostering sustainable practices, and ensuring that policies are inclusive and equitable. Through such an approach, we can work towards a future where both people and the planet can thrive together.

For further clarifications contact the Social and Economic Development (SED) Programme at the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on 0955295881 and 0954755319. Email: jctr.sed@gmail.com and jctr.info@gmail.com. Martin Mwamba Road, Plot 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park – Lusaka. P. O. Box 37774 Lusaka – Zambia.

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR)

JCTR Repository

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Statements

Advocacy on Living Conditions

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