

For Immediate Release to the Media

FLASH FLOODS; A HEADACHE FOR ZAMBIA WITH NO CURE?

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) sympathises with over 700 families affected by recent flash floods in some parts of the country. The damage caused is however a wakeup call for the nation to build capacity to deal with rain water in a safe and productive way.

Flooding is not new to Zambia and the damage caused by the floods is always an economic constraint to the country. The displacement of people is a humanitarian crisis and such eventualities should be avoided. It is ironic that money is readily available to support those affected with relief while there is no mobilisation for resources into research and planning.

With much edification, government, through the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) and its partners such as the Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS), are in place to aid the victims in rebuilding their homes and plant new crops. However, the intervention should not end here. There is need for permanent solutions to be tabled; either through relocating the people or building infrastructure that will make the management of floods efficient.

JCTR feels that the nation should have found solutions when such calamities first began to occur and those affected should have also contributed in finding lasting solutions. It is good to note that President Edgar Lungu has appealed to international partners to help Government address the negative effects of floods which have left some families homeless.

There is, however, no excuse for not planning for such eventualities which unfold each year; leaving the affected in the face of severe food insecurity and displacement from homes.

Recommendations

- Government should engage stakeholders like the University of Zambia's Engineering Department and the Zambia National Service to come up with

interventions prior to floods like the people of western Province who have since time immemorial placed systems to help them manage the flood plains productively.

- As JCTR, we feel that as long as climate change reversals are not in sight, droughts and floods will always be there. It is therefore, imperative that the Government engages and adequately funds the University of Zambia (UNZA) for proper research and designing of long term mitigating systems. It is not enough that each time there is a disaster government looks for money for immediate mitigation. The university can come up with designs that will allow for construction not only of earth dams in flood prone areas but also construction of canals that will drain water away from the areas to reservoirs for harvesting so that the same can be used in times of drought.
- The Lusaka Bombay drainage is a good example of a product of engineering ingenuity from cooperating partners and good political will. JCTR is of the view that in the same vein that the Bombay drainage was constructed, government should look to long term solutions to floods so that they are managed in a profitable way. More of such drainages can be of help.
- Distress calls should be the exception and not the norm. In the same vein that the President called on global partners to come to the country's aid through disaster risk strategies, he should also ask them to help Zambia put in place drainages that will not only flow water away from the people but also facilitate harvesting it for use during the dry spells that follow rains in Zambia.
- In urban areas, flooding is due to poor or lack of planning of settlements. The government should take it upon itself to enforce the Town Planning Act.
- Providing emergency cash to vulnerable families creates inertia in these families for they know that when another flood comes, the government will

bring money. The government should help those that dwell in the flood prone areas to put up structures that can withstand floods. It is good to be considerate of the vulnerable, but this should not mean making the vulnerable comfortable in their vulnerability.

- When faced with these challenges, leaders should take off their political hats and approach them as national issues. Therefore other players should offer solutions other than embark on embarrassing the Government over disasters it has no control over.
- More than 50 years after independence, it is time Zambia starts finding local solutions to such local problems instead of always running to cooperating partners. The country should exploit its local resources to come up with solutions that particularly respond to local climate change challenges. There is the National Adaptation Programme of Action of 2007 and the National Policy on Climate Change of 2016. These make reference to water stress (too little or too much water), including flooding. These should be used effectively.
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