

## About the JCTR

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is a project of the Zambia-Malawi Province of the Society of Jesus.

Our mission is to foster, from a faith-inspired perspective, a critical understanding of current issues. Guided by the social teaching of the church that emphasises social dignity in community, our mission is to generate action for the promotion of the fullness of human life through research, education, advocacy and consultation.

Cooperating widely with other groups, our Jesuit sponsorship directs us to a special concern for the poor, and assures an international connection in all our efforts.

We aim to promote an inculturated faith, gender equality and empowerment of local communities in the work of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Three projects of the JCTR include:

- Church's Social Teaching Project (CST) - promoting the values of the Church for social justice
- Debt and Trade Project - advocating for debt cancellation and fair trade to inspire pro-poor growth
- Social Conditions Research Project - advocating for improvements to the living conditions of the poor

Want to know more?  
Get in touch today!

This brochure is published by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection. For more information about the Basic Needs Basket and other activities, please contact us:

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You can also download more detailed historical and methodological information about the Basic Needs Basket from our website:

<http://www.jctr.org.zm>

We encourage you to visit our offices at:

Plot 5880 Great East Road,  
Luwisha House (opposite UNZA)

Please contact us to join our monthly Basic Needs Basket mailing list for your area.

## THE JCTR BASIC NEEDS BASKET



A tool for action by

Trade Unions

JOIN THE BNB MOVEMENT!

## What is the JCTR Basic Needs Basket?

The Basic Needs Basket (BNB) is an accurate monthly survey that shows the bare minimum cost of living for a family of six - the basic cost of essential food and non-food items needed by an average sized family to live with a decent and healthy lifestyle. It is truly a minimum, excluding additional everyday costs such as education, transport, healthcare and clothing.

The BNB is conducted by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) every month in several urban areas. For example, the figures for January 2006 are:

Lusaka	K1,415,650	Luanshya	K 922,290
Kitwe	K1,054,640	Livingstone	K1,251,900
Ndola	K1,160,720	Kabwe	K 917,140

The BNB is an important:

- **SNAPSHOT** of the socio-economic situation in select locations across Zambia
- **HIGHLIGHT** of the gap between the cost of living and the typical income of ordinary families
- **TARGET** for all of us to aim for when working towards a just and dignified society
- **TOOL** to use when advocating for change, justice, a better wage, a fairer policy or simply a dignified existence
- **GUIDE** for all households in deciding how best to budget to meet their basic needs

The BNB is useful to each and every one of us - households, employers and employees, community groups, church groups, trade unions, the public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations, and government - in understanding how the cost of living in Zambia affects us all.

## JCTR Basic Needs Basket: LUSAKA

\*January 2006

Cost of basic food items for a family of six		
COMMODITY	QUANTITY	PRICE (K)
Mealie meal (breakfast)	3 x 25kg	123,300
Beans	2kg	13,000
Kapenta (Siavonga)	2kg	70,600
Dry fish	1kg	40,000
Meat (mixed cut)	4kg	49,600
Eggs	20	10,000
Vegetables (greens)	7.5kg	15,750
Tomato	4kg	10,000
Onion	4kg	9,600
Milk (fresh)	2 litres	8,700
Cooking oil	4 litres	32,400
Bread	1 loaf / day	75,000
Sugar	8kg	36,800
Salt	1kg	2,100
Tea (leaves)	500g	9,400
SUBTOTAL FOR FOOD ITEMS		506,250
Cost of essential non-food items		
Charcoal	2 x 90kg	82,800
Soap (Lifebuoy)	10 tablets	13,000
Wash soap (e.g. Boom)	4 x 400g	10,800
Jelly (e.g. Vaseline)	1 x 500ml	5,800
Electricity (med. density)		113,000
Water (med. density)		34,000
Housing (med. density)		650,000
SUBTOTAL FOR NON-FOOD ITEMS		909,400

**Total: K1,415,650**

\*This January 2006 BNB is an example of a survey that is conducted every month in six urban areas.

## What does it mean to me?

This brochure is aimed at raising awareness of the JCTR Basic Needs Basket within Trade Unions. You are the leaders who fight for better conditions of service, who promote and protect workers' rights, and who strive to keep people at the centre of business and development decisions.

For Trade Unions, the BNB is:

- a **TOOL** with which to advocate for improved conditions of service, conditions of work and conditions of life
- a **SOUND BASIS** for arguing that the minimum wage needs to be tied to a poverty datum line, and that the PAYE Tax Exemption Threshold should be decided in consideration of the BNB
- a **GUIDE** to fulfilling your responsibility to educate workers on how best to use the money they earn to meet basic family needs
- an **INDICATOR** with which to point out how aid conditionalities have prevented government from fully supporting workers' interests in the past
- a **RALLYING POINT** around which to organise the currently divided, splintered unions into a unified, powerful force in support of the worker
- an **ILLUSTRATION** with which to educate foreign investors who may not be familiar with Zambia on the basic costs of living faced by employees
- a **REMINDER** to advocate for workplace policies that take into account issues of HIV/AIDS, nutrition and provision of ARVs
- an **INSPIRATION** to fight hard for the rights of Zambian workers, to fight poverty and its causes in Zambia, and to strive to achieve fair conditions for all workers

**"We as unions also have a responsibility to educate workers on how to live at home - we advocate for higher wages while misusing what we already earn."**

Participant at BNB Workshop

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR)

JCTR Repository

<https://repository.jctr.org.zm>

Brochure

Advocacy on Living Conditions

2006

# The JCTR Basic Needs Basket - A Tool For Action By Trade Unions

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection

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