



JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park

P.O Box 37774, 10101 Lusaka, Zambia

Email: jctr@jesuits.org.zm

www.jctr.org.zm

Tel: +260 211 290410 | Fax: +260 211 290759

Press Release

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Secure decent work for sustainable socio-economic development

On 1st may, 2017 during the Labour Day celebrations President Edgar C. Lungu in his address is quoted as saying that the PF government attached great importance to the promotion and realization of decent work without which, no sustainable socio-economic development could take place. He further went on to say that, government intended to create a minimum of 200,000 decent jobs on an annual basis in order to attain the goal of higher growth in employment. According to the 2014 Labour Force Survey, 83 percent of Zambians are in the informal sector and 17 percent in the formal sector. This implies that the majority of Zambian workers lack decent jobs as the informal sector is characterized by lack of access to social protection or social security and exploitation of workers' rights. It is therefore essential that the government invests in creation of decent jobs to enable people earn a decent living.

The **April 2017 JCTR Basic Needs Basket BNB** for a family of five living in Lusaka stood at **K4, 973.03** reflecting a **K44.06** decrease from the **March 2017 BNB** of **K5,017.09**. The reduction in the April BNB is attributed to reduction in the cost of some food items such as **beans** which reduced from **K40.1** to **K30 per kg**, **dry fish** reduced from **K103.43** to **K96.33 per kg**, **tomatoes** from **K6.33** to **K5.33 per kg**, **onion** from **K11.61** to **K8.5 per kg** and non-food items like **charcoal** which reduced from **K171.67** to **K143.33 per 90kg bag**. The reduction in food items is attributed to increased food supply as the harvest season begins. The April 2017 BNB however, shows an increase in the price of **Kapenta** from **K181.05 per kg** in March to **K208.17 per kg** in April. This has been attributed to scarcity of the commodity due to depletion of Kapenta species while demand has remained the same causing prices to rise.

The JCTR BNB has ranged between **K4, 500** and **K5, 300** in the past 4 months, this is far higher than the monthly urban average income of **K3, 152.00** as estimated by the Central Statistical Office in the 2015 Living Conditions monitoring survey. The United Nations recognized the importance of decent work and proposed sustainable development goal number eight of "promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". Where decent work means dignity, equality, a fair income and safe working conditions.

The JCTR acknowledges the President's pronouncements on the need to create decent jobs and urges his government to actualize the pronouncements. It is hoped that this commitment will lead to ensuring that more Zambian people find decent jobs that guarantee protection of their rights. The JCTR also takes cognisance that even though Zambia has a minimum wage law, there are still implementation challenges that hinder Ministry of Labour from ensuring that this law is fully implemented. Further, JCTR notes with dismay that workers such as those working for contractors in the mining sector still face low pay, job insecurity and unsafe working conditions. JCTR calls on government to seriously look into having sector specific minimum wages to protect its citizens and ensure decent work for all.

**For more information, contact the Social and Economic Development Programme
The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, P.O. Box 37774, 10101 Lusaka, Zambia**

Tel: 260-211-290-410 Fax: 260-211-290-759 E-mail: jctr@jesuits.org.zm Website: www.jctr.org.zm

Location: 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park, Lusaka