

JCTR SAYS HIGH COST OF LIVING MANIFESTS WORSENING SOCIAL CRISIS AND CHALLENGES CG MEETING

The 16 June statement by the Zambia Episcopal Conference, as well as the recent report by the Zambia Social Watch Coalition, highlights the *social crisis* currently being experienced by the country. This is one issue that needs to be taken very seriously by the government, especially during the up-coming Consultative Group meetings, according to the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR).

The social crisis is manifested in the increasing inability on the part of the majority of Zambians to have access to proper health services, education, clean water, shelter and, most importantly, adequately balanced diets. According to Muweme Muweme, coordinator of JCTR's Economic and Social Development Research Project, the most recent food basket survey reveals an upward trend in prices.

For the month of June, the food basket for a family of six in Lusaka stands at K277,870. This is an increase of K7,950 from the K269,920 figure for the month of May. The basket does not include housing, water, electricity, fuel, transport, clothing, education, health care, recreation, etc.

According to Muweme, the increase reflects the continued fall in the value of the Kwacha in relation to foreign currencies. From the beginning of May to the end of June, the Kwacha fell by 5.42%, from K2,900/dollar to K3,110. Barclay's Bank estimates the fall will continue through the end of July, to K 3200. This depreciation has been pushing the prices of most goods upwards, with the exception of maize, which has declined because of a relatively higher supply at this time of the year.

The ever rising (with insignificant periodic declines) cost of the food basket has meant an ever increasing challenge to the majority of citizens to meet the barest minimum of necessities. "This underscores the fact that the country is moving towards a serious social crisis of unprecedented proportions," says Muweme, "if the trend is not reversed." Salaries of teachers, nurses, police officers and secretaries in the civil service to mention but a few are well below the estimated monthly food basket.

For this reason, the JCTR strongly urges government to look at more effective ways of addressing the current *social crisis*. Poverty reduction must be the number one agenda item of the CG meetings, which begins in Lusaka on 16 July. To echo the Bishops' sentiments in their recent pastoral letter, "There is no future development without healthy and educated citizens."

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FOOD SURVEY

BASKET

AN ESTIMATED FOOD BASKET FOR A
FAMILY OF SIX IN LUSAKA
FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2000

Commodity	Kwacha	Quantity	Final Total
Mealie meal	18,680	3 x 25 Kg bags	56,040
Charcoal	10,000	2 x 90 Kg bags	20,000
Cooking Oil	11,000	2 x 2.5 Litres	22,000
Vegetables	1,500	for 30 days	45,000

Meat (Brisket) 1 Kg	5,450	2 Kg/week	43,600
Eggs 1 unit	2,600	1 unit/week	10,400
Bread	1,100	1 loaf/day	33,000
Sugar 2 Kg	3,100	4 packets	12,400
Salt 1 Kg	750	1 packet	750
Tea 250 grams	6,690	2 packets	13,380
Soap (Geisha)	1, 200	6 tablets	7,200
Wash-Soap (Surf) 500 g	2,880	4 packets	11,520
Vaseline 100 grams	1,200	2 jars	2,400
K277,690			

This survey was conducted on 28 June 2000 by the Economic and Social Development Research Project of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection. Average prices were calculated on the basis of prices gathered from large retail shops at Northmead, Longacres, Town Centre and Soweto Market.

NOTE: This basket does not include housing, water, electricity, fuel, transport, clothing, education, health care, recreation, etc.

Totals for previous months:

Month/Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
January	170,592	197,700	186,950	240,920	263,370
February	185,580	194,200	190,350	244,810	265,320
March	188,163	197,100	194,550	252,160	272,810
April	192,420	195,700	197,550	252,740	273,790
May	184,172	192,000	198,200	251,770	269,920
June	182,750	175,500	201,200	251,890	
July	176,660	176,000	206,150	250,660	
August	179,548	172,800	215,350	243,100	
September	175,540	174,350	218,800	239,840	
October	179,980	179,600	218,520	242,790	
November	177,620	182,800	220,380	241,480	
December	189, 260	183,450	230,920	257,480	

Some comparative figures:

Salary of a School Teacher: Primary, K110,00 - K150,000; Secondary, K150,000 - K210,00

Salary of a Secretary in the Civil Service: K125,000 - K165,000

Salary of a Nurse: K125,000 - K175,000

Salary of a Police Officer: K100,000 - K180,000

Salary of a Security Guard: K40,000 - K150,000

Housing in medium density areas (Chilenje and Kabwata): One bedroomed, K80,000 - K95,000; Two bedroomed, K180,000 - K250,000; Three bedroomed, K280,000 - K350,000
Electricity, K70,000 - K100,000 and Water (fixed) K25,000

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