

JCTR *BASIC NEEDS BASKET* REPORT REVEALS AN ALL-TIME HIGH COST OF LIVING IN LUSAKA

The prevailing situation of cost of living in Lusaka today requires that a family of six spends K836,550 to meet its basic needs, says the Economic and Social Development Project of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR).

According to Muweme Muweme, Coordinator of the Economic and Social Development Research Project, "While this report is at present only referring to Lusaka, it is important to note that cost of living may be higher in other parts of the country -- particularly those with serious food deficits such as southern parts of Zambia -- than what the Lusaka report indicates."

Indeed this rise in cost of living is a reflection of the current problems of inflation, exchange rate, scarcities of food, depreciation of the Kwacha, etc., as noted recently by the Bank of Zambia. The disconcerting part of these problems, however, is the impact on poor people's ability to have access to food and other non-food essentials. The poor are having to bear most of the harsh consequences from these difficulties Zambia is currently facing.

According to the October 2002 report of the JCTR *Basic Needs Basket* -- a measure of cost of living in Lusaka -- a family of six requires K836,550 to meet its needs of food, housing, water, electricity, etc. If costs of health, transport, personal effects, etc., are added, the overall cost of the *Basic Needs Basket* would definitely be much higher than the figure of K836, 550 reported.

In the face of the current problems Zambia is going through, there is need for the country to address these problems in ways that will not lead the country into a deeper crisis. Muweme further says that "All measures designed to deal with the current economic difficulties of inflation, the exchange rate, etc., must take into account impact on the poor. The measures must not hurt the poor but must instead uplift them from their present poor living conditions."

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