**BNB Press Release 10 th November, 2017.**

**Need to address the high levels of child Labour**

Minister of Labour and Social Security Joyce Simukoko said child Labour in Zambia, like other sub-Saharan African countries is an obstacle to achieving universal primary education and sustainable development goals. Mrs. Simukoko says Zambia has over five hundred and ninety five thousand child workers in various economic sectors and of these fifty eight percent are 14 years or younger. Mrs. Simukoko urged African countries to work together through the development of public and private partnerships that will directly address the scourge.

Child Labor is caused by a number of factors which include high poverty levels, huge demand for and supply of unskilled labor, high illiteracy levels, high cost of education and early marriages. The ever increasing cost of living especially in urban areas is also at the heart of Child Labor as Children opt to work than to go to school on account of inability to afford high cost of education and other basic needs. Child Labor has a number of negative consequences on the growth of children. It deprives them of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and is also harmful to their physical and mental development. It may lead to health complications not just because of the poor working environment children are usually exposed to but also because of undernourishment as their incomes are too low to support a balanced diet. Increased illiteracy levels of children caused by spending a lot of time in their workstations further condemns children to perpetual poverty.

The **October 2017** JCTR **Basic Needs Basket** (BNB) for a family of **five** living in **Lusaka** stood at **K4,869.47** which is **K14.1** less than the **September BNB** which was at **K 4,883.57**. The decrease in the BNB is attributed to reduced costs in some food items which include; **mealie meal** from **K59.85** per 25 kg bag to **K52.57** per 25kg bag, **Fish** from **K132.56** per kg to **K124.37** per kg, **tomatoes** from **K9** per kg to **K6.5** per kg and **Charcoal** from **K147** per 90 kg bag to **K140** per 90 kg bag. Price of other commodities like **Kapenta** increased from **K184.78** per Kg to **K192.75** per kg, **onions** from **K6.57** per kg to **K8.14** per kg. The continued decrease in mealie meal prices is attributed to the bumper harvest which was recorded this year. Prices for fish and tomatoes have also reduced because of the high supply in the market. Prices for kapenta continue rising because of the many costs involved before it reaches the market.

There is need for government to address factors that are escalating Child Labor in our country. Improving access to early childhood education and primary education is key to eliminating child Labour. The JCTR therefore urges Ministry of General Education to allocate more resources to this important but usually forgotten subsector of education. Government should further look at Establishing skill-based learning centers, vocational training centers and technical training institutions. This will help in improving literacy as well as skills levels and will contribute to the availability of skilled and trained workers in the job market. High national poverty levels at 54.4 % and continued high cost of living are contributing factors to rampant child Labour in various economic sectors. Other government social programmes such as social protection must also be targeted at addressing the problem of Child labor if significant impact has to be made. As a country we need a well-coordinated and multi stakeholder response by all stakeholders to the problem of Child Labor if the scourge has to be addressed.

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