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**FOOD SECURITY IS KEY TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SAYS JCTR**

As Zambia mourns the passing of the late president H.E Michael Chilufya Sata, it is important to acknowledge the strides made by the late president and the PF government in the area of infrastructure development. It goes without saying that the efforts made will go a long way in boosting the positive economic growth that the country has been experiencing for the past 10 years. However for this growth to have lasting benefits it must translate into poverty alleviation for the majority of Zambians that are living in poverty. The high poverty levels of 60.5% living below the poverty line indicate the extent of hardships currently being experienced by households in accessing basic needs and these hardships are much more severe in the rural parts of Zambia where 77.9% of the population are living in poverty.

Even though inflation has been kept at a single digit, this has not curbed the upsurge in prices of food and non-food items. This certainly makes it a challenge for households to meet their required household needs and nutritional requirements. Millennium Development Goal number 1 is *Eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger by 2015* however this is one of the goals that Zambia will be unlikely able to meet. Food is the most basic of human needs and therefore hunger is a subject that cannot be ignored. Through our rural basket monitoring trips in particular Shangombo there is a family there that was surviving on cooking raw paw paw for their sustenance and as such they will not be able to actively participate in economic activities. That is simply unacceptable and there is need for social justice to prevail.

From the month of September 2014 to the month of October 2014, there has a steady reduction in the cost of living. This reduction comes at a time when inflation is said to have increased by the Central Statistical Office’s observation that it increased by 0.1% from 7.8% to 7.9% in October 2014. The cost of living for the month of October 2014 as measured by ***JCTR’s Basic Needs Basket*** (BNB) for an average family of five living in Lusaka is **K3, 635.83**. This shows a decrease of **K67.19** from September’s BNB which stood at **K3, 703.02**. The decrease is mainly attributed to the increase in availability of seasonal food items such as *Tomato, Vegetables and Beans*. The prices of the following food items contributed significantly to the decrease; *Kapenta* by **K41.32** per Kg, *Beans* by **K7.73** per Kg and Mealie meal by **K4.65** per Kg from the previous month of September. In contrast, other commodities showed marginal increases in pricing namely, Dry *Fish* which increased by **K38.79** per Kg, Charcoal increased by **K10.00** for a 90kg bag and *Onion* which increased by **K1.35** per Kg.

As the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) we appeal to the government to ensure that the quest for household food security be central to Zambia in order to improve every aspect of Zambian people’s lives. Every human being desires to lead a standard of life worth of adequate and nutritious food. Therefore, lack of realization of this fundamental need is a denial of the inherent dignity of each one of us and it is a denial of social justice. The government should safeguard the national economy by pursuing macroeconomic policies that promote inclusive and equitable development such as accelerating implementation of interventions in the area of food security, health, education and water and sanitation sectors.

**For more information, contact the Social and Economic Development Programme of**

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