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***SOCIALLY JUST DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS DECENT JOBS FOR ALL,  
SAYS JCTR***

The issue of job creation is a crucial development topic at the moment and equally important is that the jobs created pay enough to end poverty. According to the Central Statistics Office, approximately 60.2% of Zambians are poor and only 10% are in formal employment. The informal sector, albeit a major employer in itself is characterized by poor working conditions which is an infringement of the right to employment, says Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) Social Conditions Programme Manager, Ms Munyongo Lumba

According to Ms Lumba, “The JCTR Basic Needs Basket gives an indication of the cost of living and consequently what it takes for a family of 5 to meet basic needs to lead a dignified life. The BNB is also indicative of the fact that in an economic set up where the majority of food and non-food items require money in order to access them, it is imperative that individuals are employed on a sustainable basis with jobs that offer adequate income and good work conditions. Therefore Government needs to continue and sustain efforts at realizing the right to employment for all Zambians”.

The May 2012, BNB analysis shows that the cost of food items stands at K776,840 while non-food items are at K2,130,700. A notable change in the basket in recent times includes a reduction in the cost of mealie meal, a major source of household food supply in many homes. Other commodities such as charcoal have been affected by seasonal fluctuations in price although the basket has remained consistent at approximately K2.9 m for Lusaka.

“The right to employment is provided for in the Zambian constitution and in international, regional and national instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human rights which states that *“everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment”* Therefore although the right to employment does not assure a job for every individual, the state must always work at ensuring that this right is realized progressively by everyone by putting in place policies and strategies that create opportunities for all, says Ms Lumba.

The JCTR recognizes that it is imperative that long lasting solutions are found to the challenge of unemployment through locally driven research, guided by national statistics and therefore expectant, that Government targets for job creation are realised through progressive and concerted efforts. The JCTR conducts quarterly qualitative research into living conditions and quality of life to compliment the monthly Basic Needs Basket. JCTR advocates that positive linkages are essential to understanding, analyzing and interpreting cost of living, minimum wages, and living wage and continues to advocate for socially just development through research into formal job creation.

“Socially just development demands that that opportunities continue to be availed to people to escape poverty. As long as the cost of living remains unaffordable for many and unemployment levels are high, the majority of Zambians will continue to wallow in poverty. Therefore in order to move forward, there is need for in-depth understanding of the key determinants of the relationship between economic growth, poverty reduction and inequality”, says Ms Lumba.



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