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## Press Release

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) has noted with great concern that poor infrastructure, particularly in the area of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a hindrance to enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights especially for people with disabilities.

It is for this reason that the JCTR, are in the process of conducting baseline studies to map and audit public infrastructure with respect to enjoyment of specific economic, social and cultural rights by persons with disabilities.

The current World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics reveal that Zambia has 2 520 000 (**two million, five hundred and twenty**) persons with disabilities (PWDs). The WHO and the Central Statistics Office further reveal that **10 to 15%** of every Zambian community has at least one person with a disability.

It is our feeling at JCTR that the actual figure of PWDs is greater than the one currently reflecting in the WHO statistics, hence there is urgent need for Zambia Information Communication Technologies Authorities (ZICTA) and other stakeholders to engage in disability mapping or scoping studies.

We argue that ICTS are not luxuries, as they help PWDs to enhance their functionality in society. A check by the JCTR at **Zambia National Federation of the Blind** reveals that more than **83%** of PWDs are engaged in small scale businesses and they use mobile phones, internet and iPad to conduct businesses.

Some of the complaints raised by blind persons running small scale businesses were that there were too many voice prompts from mobile phones – that it was difficult to keep up with “press 9 for such and such and then press 3 for further information on this...”

And some deaf persons spoken to in Kitwe’s **Zambia Deaf Vision** complained that their key pads easily get damaged as they depend heavily on text messaging to conduct small business transactions.

Therefore, if PWDs are to enhance their, socio-economic status, ICT infrastructure should be designed as per disability category. For example mobile phone companies should reduce the number of voice prompts for pressing enquires especially for cell phone subscribers who are blind or have no limbs.

We urge sim card registration agents to include provisions on the filling in forms that will enable them know which of their mobile subscribers have disability needs per category. This kind of knowledge will provide a basis for mobile service providers to come up with social responsibilities and other incentives for persons with disabilities to enhance their livelihoods through ICTs such as reducing calling charges for PWDs running small scale businesses.

We appeal to other CSOs, government bodies working with persons with disabilities and the private sector to recognise and take part in scoping studies that will help come up with proper categories per disability need.

**For more information, contact Media and Information unit of  
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**“A Society where faith promotes justice for all in all spheres of life, especially for the poor”**