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**Press Release**

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## **GOVERNMENT PLANS AND POLICIES SHOULD ADDRESS RISING COST OF LIVING**

The Zambian Government through Ministry of Finance recently issued the Green paper. The Green Paper is a tentative government report and consultation document of policy proposals for debate and discussion usually without any commitment to action. The Green Paper in this case therefore provides details of Government's current thinking as it prepares the 2015 Budget. The Ministry of Finance in its green paper states that the 2015 budget is premised on Government's unwavering commitment to enhancing inclusive growth and advance social justice, so that all Zambians can benefit from the impressive economic growth the Country have been experiencing.

The Medium Term Expenditure Framework is a three year government planning document that sets out its fiscal priorities. It provides a link between the annual budgets and the sector policies. The recent MTEF (2015 – 2017) projects that growth will exceed 7 percent per annum from 2015 to 2017 and that inflation will fall to under 6 percent by 2017. Government's broad objective in the green paper is to ensure that all Zambians benefit from the fruits of our nation's economic development. It plans to do this by facilitating further broad-based economic growth, creating employment opportunities and by improving access to basic socio-economic services such as agriculture, health, education, social protection and water and sanitation.

Government has again reinforced its commitment to accelerate growth through development of infrastructure and human capacities in an effort to alleviate poverty and inequalities which are wide spread in our country where 67% of the total population are living in poverty according to the 2010 living conditions monitoring survey. The MTEF is intended to facilitate a number of important outcomes such as greater macroeconomic balance, improved resource allocation and efficient use of public resources. In light of this it is hoped that the planning and subsequent budgeting will reflect government's efforts in curbing the rising cost of living to enable the people of Zambia access to their basic needs.

The cost of living for the month of August 2014 as measured by **JCTR's Basic Needs Basket** (BNB) for an average family of five living in Lusaka is **K3, 742.60**. This shows an increase of **K50.26** from July's BNB which stood at **K3, 692.34**. The increase is attributed to the continued increase in prices of the following food items; *Kapenta* by **K10.26** per Kg, *Cooking oil* by **K8.43** per 2.5ltr and *Onion* by **K4.03** per Kg from the previous month of July. In contrast, other commodities showed marginal decreases in pricing namely, *Charcoal* which decreased by **K2.50** per 90Kg bag and *Beef* by **K1.28** per Kg.

As the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) we appeal to the government to ensure that the plans in the MTEF are implemented as planned to enable the intended recipients benefit. It is our hope that the 2015 budget will clearly spell out how the government intends to mobilise resources for its projects which are largely capital intensive. As a centre we are glad that our aspirations of achieving social justice are shared by government as outlined in the Vision 2030 and the MTEF. The continued rise in the cost of living needs to be addressed to ensure that the livelihoods of the majority of Zambians who are living in poverty are uplifted so they can lead dignified lives. This can be achieved through effective and efficient domestic mobilization of domestic resources that can be channeled towards developmental projects such as infrastructure development.

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